

"Halo of Mystery."

OUR AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT VISITS FORT HERRESHOFF
UNDER A FLAG OF TRUCE.
HE IS RECEIVED WITH SUSPICIOUS CEREMONY, BUT IS PERMITTED
TO ENTER THE CITADEL,
AND HAS AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW WITH ITS COMMANDER.
A FULL DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW YACHTS THAT ARE BEING
BUILT TO DEFEND THE AMERICA'S CUP.

NEW YORK, Feb. 10.

AFTER performing one of the most daring and hazardous feats of modern journalism your correspondent reached home last night in an exhausted and penniless condition. Your cablegram instructing me to visit Fort Herreshoff, and obtain a description of the new yachts, fortunately reached here on my sober day, and found me not only willing but eager to perform the perilous task, or perish in the attempt, as becomes a follower of Russell Stanley, and Forbes. I am a little new at the correspondent business, but believe the above is in the proper opening style.

Hastily pocketing my *robe-de-nuit*, tooth-brush, and spare collar, I cashed your last draft at the corner grocery, and then, after bidding my family farewell, called on the undertaker and made a few kindly suggestions as to what might be done to make obsequies less formal and more enjoyable than the usual run of funerals. The train I took is known as a fast-freight, but as the company have not equipped it especially for the accommodation of the public, I was obliged to secure a seat on the buffer and submit at every stop to some unnecessary personal attentions on the part of the train-men. Arrived at Bristol, I sought the cheapest hotel in the place, and after signing my *nom-de-plume* backwards on the register, so as to baffle any spies who might be lurking around. I paid the clerk in advance for the room, and went to bed. The next morning was one of those lovely days that are only to be had in Rhode Island; there not being enough of this kind of weather to cover the whole country, Providence wisely selected the smallest State in the Union to be blessed therewith, thus enabling the supply to hold out over the year.*

After interviewing several prominent citizens, who in consideration of my permitting them to drink at my expense, were willing to impart what they wished me to believe was important information (you will find the little item mentioning what this extracted information cost, in my enclosed statement), and finding that my courage and money were fast leaving me, I determined at once to approach the fort and demand admittance. I use the word demand in the last sentence, as it sounds better than request or ask. Securing my handkerchief to a cane, I walked boldly forward, waving the flag as I advanced.

If the reader can endure the suspense, I should like to keep him suspended for a few moments while I describe this stronghold of Mystery, and bulwark of American genius. Fort Herreshoff stands at the water's-edge, and consists of a strong central castle surrounded by several smaller works; it has a parapet, a glacis, two or three demi-lunes, and a large collection of ravelines, bull-dogs, bastions, barb-wire fences, fiery Irish watchmen, and other devices known to military engineering. Unfortunately my opportunities for examining the fortress were limited and transitory, as two very social dogs kept my senses and limbs fully occupied, until the advance patrol on the demi-semi-quaver condescended to recognise my flag, after I had explained to him what it was. After an insulting remark about my facilities for having laundry work done, he received my card on the point of his bayonet and called the corporal of the guard.

Instantly the fortress was in an uproar; the drums sounded the thunderous call to arms, the shrill bugles took up the cry, and above the horrid din of weapons could be heard the cool, calm voices of the officers ordering the men to their stations, and urging them to fight bravely to the last, as the force about to assault the stronghold was only a newspaper-man, and from a weekly paper at that. I could see with my naked eye that firm determination sat on every brow along that Bristolian (*joke à la Punch*) parapet, and seriously meditated a retreat, as I noticed that one particularly aggressive gentleman kept his revolving cannon pointed exactly at the fourth button of my waistcoat, but wisely decided that it was safer to face the loaded gun than give the watchful and expectant dog a chance to grasp an opportunity and a mouthful of corduroy. Thus boldly I stood facing the warlike array, never flinching a flinch, while they turned the dazzling search-light and sizzling hose on my undaunted manhood.

At last, after some military ceremonies had been gone through, it was decided to recognise my flag and admit me under conditions such as I should indignantly refuse at the door of any other place of amusement but a fortress. In war-time it is foolish for a man to stand on his

* [Hence the chief town of the island is named Providence.—ED.]

OUR SUPPLEMENT

PROBABLY we have never yet given an illustration of a more celebrated craft than the tiny little ship which forms our supplement for this week. *Wee Winn*, as everybody knows, was designed and built by the Messrs. Herreshoff in America, for Miss Mabel Cox, and sent across the herring-pond last spring. She and her larger sister *Wenonah* have become notorious, or famous—just as you please—in this country, both as the champions in their respective classes, and as perpetual subjects for illustrating various arguments on the virtues and the vices of the bulb-fin keel. Holding, as we do, the very strongest abhorrence of this contrivance in what purports to meet the definition of a "yacht"—an abhorrence shared with us by the designer of these two boats—we are constrained to admit that *Wee Winn*, as represented in our plate, looks to be the *beau ideal* of a toy boat. In a craft of 16 ft. load-line one may easily overlook features which must prove disastrous when introduced for the sake of prize-winning into vessels of large size.

dignity; a truth that has struck several correspondents in this and other lands. A newspaper-man who retreats out of danger, does not run in the ordinary sense of the word, he simply "rustles." The guard turned out, and the officer in charge performed the same evolution with my pockets. He confiscated my pocket-camera, a two-foot-rule, and three powerful *Flor de Nutmeg* cigars as contraband of war, but kindly permitted me to retain my tooth-brush, lead-pencil, and air of assurance. As I objected to being blindfolded with my own handkerchief, they placed a section of drain-pipe over my head, and led me in through the barbican, over the drawbridge, and under the portcullis.

When the pipe was drawn off my head I found myself in the presence of the renowned commander of the fort, General John Herreshoff and his staff. Motioning me to stand further away from his pet corn, the general, in rather an indifferent tone, asked me what I wanted and where I came from. Noticing that his arm rested at the moment on a copy of the *YACHTSMAN*, which he had evidently been reading when I entered—(all prominent people in America are found reading the "New York Herald" when sought by an interviewer; this is the first exception)—I put a bold face on the matter, told him my name, age, date of last vaccination, and then, in dauntless tones, demanded in the name of the *YACHTSMAN* and the great British public a full and accurate description of the new boats.

One of his *aides*, enraged by my daring tones, made half a step forward and a motion as though to draw his week's salary out of my reach, but General Herreshoff checked the excitement with a graceful wave of his hand, and asked if what I had said was my ultimatum. I told him it was; but that, if he would act in a gentlemanly manner and be reasonable, I would soften it down by withdrawing the British public, and substituting the names of one Scotch designer and a British peer in the place thereof. My condescension evidently pleased him, for after a moment spent in deep thought, he smiled and said: "We have been honoured with visits from a number of correspondents during this present unpleasantness, but for non-capsizable check, and unalloyed sand-cast brass, you, my dear sir, take the highest award without honourable mention."

After thanking the General for this flattering, but not unexpected, compliment, I allowed him to proceed. He said his firm were anxious to obtain a good, hard, tenacious brass, and asked if I would mind parting with the secret of my composition. I told him I would be only too delighted to oblige, but, unfortunately, the recipe perished with my parents. Some desultory conversation followed, and then the General offered to confess all. He said that if I would agree, like Mr. George Kennan, not to say anything about what I saw until somebody offered to pay me for it, he would fling the deepest dungeon door open and let me view the cup defenders. As I could not conscientiously accept his terms, I told him I would take his word for the dimensions and the rest of the paraphernalia, after looking over the designs.

Here I met with my first rebuff; the man who carried the combination of the designing vault had gone to Boston to consult the editor of the "Globe" as to the advisability of placing the fore-sheet cleat two inches further aft. Noticing my disappointment, the General kindly borrowed a corkscrew from his chief-of-staff, and after pulling the wad of cotton-waste out of the key-hole, allowed me to peep through. From what I saw of the lines I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Watson will have to remove his coat and strike the hoe deep if he desires to prevent the grass from accumulating on his road to fame.

The following description and dimensions, given me by General Herreshoff, are substantially correct, as even the most sceptical must admit. The yachts will be built of materials, both metal and wood being used freely. They will have the usual number of sterns, bows, timbers, refrigerators, &c. Each will have a full suit of sails made of canvas, and also a set of spars. One boat will have a centre-board a trifle larger than one of our new Columbian postage-stamps, but not quite so artistic. I interrupted the General to say that I had heard from a prominent member of the syndicate that the hulls would be painted red below the water-line. I regretted the remark the next moment, for my host was angered. Turning to his staff, he said fiercely, "If I learn the name of the man who has so abused my confidence by betraying the secrets of this stronghold, I will never, gentlemen, build him another boat; let mediocrity design and build for traitors, genius scorns such work!"

The exact L.O.A. of the cup-defenders is the extreme length measured in the usual way; the L.W.L. is the same, *minus* the length of the overhangs; the beam is the breadth, and the draught measures to a thousandth part of an inch the water the yacht will draw when afloat. Until the newspaper editors make up their minds as to whether a modern single-masted vessel is a sloop-rigged-cutter or a cutter-rigged-sloop, the firm will not decide upon the sail plan; they are extremely anxious not to offend our national sentiment by winning with anything but our peerless American rig, that in three glorious contests has vanquished the British cutter, and secured to us beyond question the supremacy of the yachting world.

I have almost forgotten to mention that one yacht will be named the *Columbus* in honour of the great discoverer, while the other will be christened *Ysabel*, a delicate compliment to the memory of the noble woman and sainted queen, whose jewels went to soak for the needful, when Christopher was stumped for funds.

Gracefully thanking my kindly informant for the information, I tenderly shook hands with those of his staff who appeared to have no grounded prejudice against soap, and then bowed myself out into the extended arms of the guard, by whom I was conducted to the postern and dismissed with small ceremony, and an excess of boot-leather. I wish to notify this brutal myrmidon, that the next time I visit Fort Herreshoff, there will be concealed about my person five pounds of dynamite; if he dares to insult me in the manner he did yesterday, there will be an explosion, two disappearances, and no remains for a throng of sad-eyed friends and weeping relatives to follow with slow and solemn step to the grave.

THOS. FLEMING DAY.