

1863  
1864

VICE ADMIRAL SIR ALEXANDER MILNE, K.C.B.,  
AND  
THE NORTH AMERICAN AND WEST INDIAN STATION  
1860 - 1864

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Thesis submitted for the  
Degree of Ph.D. in the  
University of London,  
1967

The London School of Economics  
and Political Science.



### ABSTRACT

During most of the nineteenth century, Great Britain maintained eight foreign naval stations, for the protection of her subjects and commerce. This thesis concerns the North American and West Indian Station and its commander, Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, K.C.B., in the years 1860-1864.

The first year of Milne's command was relatively quiet and enabled him to learn the essentials, and to visit the important places of this, his first station command. The Prince of Wales had visited North America in 1860, but this had gone very smoothly. 1861 saw the beginning of the American Civil War and the 'testing' time for the admiral and his officers. Due to the poor communications with England, Milne made many of his own decisions; for example, he sent his warships to inspect the Federal blockade when it was just being put into effect, and there are many other instances of this initiative.

The offensive and defensive capacity of the station is examined at the time of the Trent affair, as well as the allied expedition to Mexico at the same time, December

1861. The second and third years of the war are concerned largely with the legal and diplomatic problems that arose: Milne's opposition to the sustenance and repair of blockade runners, conflicts with colonial governors over the role of naval officers vis-a-vis the belligerents, and other matters.

The administration and problems of the station are not neglected. The chain of command is explained and the two most endemic problems of the area: desertion and yellow fever, are examined. With the engagement between the Monitor and Merrimac, the conflict between ordnance and armour was accelerated. The introduction of the Armstrong gun and the reasons for its failure are detailed. This was a critical situation as it meant that a large part of the armament of nearly every British warship was, from 1861 to 1864, defective. The British view of American forts, weapons and warships is also recounted.

No serious writer has accused Milne of being partial to either side in the American struggle. But he was criticised for being more of a 'diplomat' than a 'fighter'. There can be no doubt, however, that his was a position of great delicacy and he handled the problems with consummate skill.

## INTRODUCTION

This is the story of the North American and West Indian Station during the four years that it was commanded by Sir Alexander Milne, K.C.B. Rear, later Vice Admiral. Milne served in American waters from the 15th of March, 1860, until the 15th of March, 1864. Before this appointment he had commanded several warships and served nearly twelve years as a Lord of the Admiralty, thus bringing great administrative as well as practical experience to his task. As far as the writer can determine, no one has ever made a study of any of the eight foreign naval stations maintained by Britain for a large part of the 19th century, the period of her greatest world-wide influence. These were the instruments behind the country's foreign policy, be it 'gunboat' or pacific. The years covered, 1860-1864, are particularly appropriate because after the Danish war of 1864, British prestige on the Continent diminished and the rise of Prussia begins. Later in the century, both the U.S.A. and Japan emerge as world powers.

From the favourable situation engendered by the settlement of their major disputes and the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1860, Anglo-American relations began



to deteriorate with the outbreak of the Civil War. Milne's Correspondence with Lord Lyons, the Minister to Washington, shows the desire of both British representatives to maintain a strict neutrality in the contest. Because of the lack of swift communications with England - the one-way voyage took ten to twelve days - Sir Alexander exercised great personal responsibility throughout his years on the station. He determined, for example, to inspect the Union blockade and sent out his warships for this purpose; he also set the precedent of sending a ship to protect British interests in the area of Federal operations against the Confederates. The navy co-operated with Lord Lyons to the fullest extent. Since great difficulties had arisen when the British consuls in the South attempted to contact the Washington legation by travelling overland, communication with the consuls by sea was decided upon and the initial voyage is recounted.

The Trent crisis measured the readiness of the station for a war with the U.S. Of Milne's three main bases: Jamaica, Halifax and Bermuda, the last was the most central and the most important. The history of its defences is traced as well as its state of preparedness in 1861. The ability of the station generally to withstand a war with

the North is covered, and also the final denouement of the affair.

The expedition, with France and Spain, to compel Mexico to pay her debts was planned before, and launched during the Trent crisis. This meant that Milne's force was divided between Bermuda and Vera Cruz, a dangerous but unavoidable situation. Commodore Dunlop, commander of the Jamaica Division of the Station played a principal role in this intervention. With his colleague, Sir C.L. Wyke, he succeeded in delaying allied military action until the ambitions of the French became apparent to both the Spanish and British. Then they could and did, leave Mexico without loss of honour. Since one-way communication with England took five weeks, Dunlop and Wyke also exercised a great deal of personal responsibility, and their decisions were later largely approved by Earl Russell.

As the Civil War entered its second and third years, Vice Admiral Milne found that his policy of trying to remain steadfastly neutral, was fraught with legal difficulties. He approved the initiative of his subordinate, Commander Hinckley in seizing - at Nassau - the Orto as a disguised warship. Although U.S. Secretary of State Seward said this was the first friendly British act during the war, the vessel was released on legal grounds and soon

became the Confederate raider Florida. Milne believed that the blockade-runners were violating the Foreign Enlistment Act and he forbade their use of the Bermuda naval yard for repairs; but these views were not shared by the home government. The most blatant infraction of Milne's neutrality orders to his captains was the prolonged visit to Charleston and the boarding of the C.S.S. Palmetto State by one of his officers in January 1863. Because this officer affirmed, with the British consul, that the blockade of Charleston was raised, due to a single attack of several Confederate warships, the North was enraged and Seward demanded that Lyons order the British captain out of Charleston. This incident might have led the Federals to close their ports to British warships, who would then be unable to gain information on U.S. movements, weapons, etc. More importantly, Milne would be 'blind' to any Federal force preparing to attack Bermuda or other British possessions in the area. But Sir Alexander promptly disavowed his officer's actions and transferred him to the Windward Islands; and the incident was soon forgotten. The visit of Milne to the North later in 1863 was probably the first such trip by any British admiral since the Revolution. He met Lincoln, Seward, etc., and Lyons said

later that the U.S. government thought that 'harmonious relations' between the two countries were maintained by Milne's 'judgement and firm but temperate and conciliatory conduct'.

The practical working of the station is not neglected. Some of the topics treated are: the chain of command, the elimination of excessive paperwork, the handling of the most persistent problems on the station: desertion and yellow fever, some comparisons between the Royal and Union navies, and the civil and naval functions of the fishery patrol on the Newfoundland coast.

Though the French had pioneered the ironclad ship, the first British ironclad battleship, H.M.S. Warrior, was launched the year that Milne began his command in North America. All of his sea-going warships were unarmoured steamers, most were propeller-driven. The changes in armour and ordnance that had begun in the earlier years of the century accelerated rapidly after the Monitor and Merrimac engagement of 1862. These were the years of genuine transition from wood to ironclad ship and from the old cast gun to whole new systems of cannon making. Such a system was the Armstrong gun, the first modern breech loader. Introduced on the station in 1861, it was with-

drawn in 1864; the reasons for its failure are examined. The strategic implications of this failure were serious as it meant that part of the main armament of nearly every British warship was defective. The British view of American weapons, forts, ships, etc., when reported to Milne led to an uneasiness on his part lest the North surpass Britain in naval and military development.

This study concludes with an appreciation of Sir Alexander Milne as well as the criticism that he was more of a 'diplomatist' than a 'fighting man'. Inevitably, because Britain was rarely a neutral in a maritime war, her policy: recognition of blockades, denial of entry to her ports of belligerent prizes, etc., favoured the power with the largest fleet, the United States. But the writer believes that Sir Alexander was a neutral in the truest sense and tried to hold his subordinates to this course. As his command extended over those years which saw the most sustained period of crisis - since the War of 1812 - in Anglo-American relations during the nineteenth century, his views and actions are of no small importance.

The completion of the Atlantic cable in 1866 ended, to a large extent, the personal power of the station commander. By 1869 there was a cable to Havana.

Thereafter, the great latitude exercised by Commodore Dunlop during the Mexican expedition would never again be seen.

From about 1870, naval officers became more and more the instruments and not the interpreters of foreign policy.

With Lord Fisher's reforms early in the 20th century, the station 'idea' of a permanent force maintained at elaborate overseas bases for the protection of British subjects and commerce was virtually eliminated. It was replaced by a series of highly mobile cruising squadrons. Because of the growing German menace, Britain was forced to concentrate her naval forces largely in home waters. The era of Scapa Flow begins and it is the end of those great years when H.M. ships were frequently seen cruising 'on the public service' from China to the coast of Labrador.

What if our Country must compete  
 Before the time is long,  
 With Russia's new 'unsunken' fleet  
 Or France's navy strong  
 Or Yankee gunboats - bosh and brag  
 We of Prince Edward Isle  
 Will trust our lives to Britain's Flag  
 And 'Heroes of the Nile.'

Chorus:

Then three times three for Britain's Queen  
 My Countrymen in style!  
 And three to greet her gallant men  
 The Heroes of the 'Nile'.

.....dedicated to the men of Milne's  
 flagship, H.M.S. Nile, by J. Lepage, a  
 resident of P.E.I., 20 August, 1862.

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(Contd./...

## CHAPTER V (Contd.)

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These are to be found in 'Papers Relating to Belligerent and Neutral Rights, 1861-1865', compiled by Prof. J.P. Baxter, American Historical Review, XXXIV, (1928), pp.77-84.

## CHAPTER I

### His Father's Command: Sir Alexander Returns to the Station

In 1860, when Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Milne took up his new command, Anglo-American relations were better than they had been for many years.<sup>1</sup> The previous year Britain had given the sovereignty of the Bay Islands and the Mosquito Coast to the Republic of Honduras, so that except for Belize, there was no longer a British 'presence' in Central America. In December of 1860, both countries agreed to submit the San Juan question to arbitration, although it was to be some years before this question was definitely settled.<sup>2</sup> There now seemed no legal obstacles to improved relations.

British North America was prosperous right through the fifties and sixties. The creation of a unified Dominion was still, in 1860, seven years away; but the movement toward Confederation would shortly be given a new impetus by American threats arising out of the Civil War.

<sup>1</sup> Williams, M., Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy 1815-1915 (London, 1916), p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> Ward, Sir A.W. and Gooch, G.P. (ed.), Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy (Cambridge, 1923), II, p. 488.

The defence of their North American colonies was a burden on the British tax-payer; one which Cobden, Bright and the other Manchester Free-Traders were anxious to be rid of. They argued that the expenses of colonial defence precluded any reduction of duty on British imports; 'Canada, New Zealand and South Africa were the worst encumbrances, because of perpetual wars or dangers of wars.'<sup>3</sup> While troops and arms were rushed to British North America during the Trent crisis, the military defence of the colony was to become, more and more, a local responsibility. The emphasis was on concentrating British troops at home.<sup>4</sup> For most of 1861, the entire garrison of Canada comprised only 4,200 men. The navy however, was to aid in the defence of these distant possessions. The fisheries of the North American colonies had often been a fertile source of dispute, both with the U.S. and with European powers. At this time the Reciprocity Treaty was in force between those colonies and the United States. For twelve years, from 1854 to 1866, it had a beneficial influence on the often turbulent fishermen of the area. It provided for mutual free trade in many products, including fish and fish products. While Canadians could fish south

<sup>3</sup> Clarke, D.P., The Attitude of the Colonial Office to the Working of Responsible Government, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1953, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Schurman, D.M., Imperial Defence 1868-1887, Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1955, p.20.

along the American's coast, the latter could take almost every kind of fish on the coasts of British North America, without restriction as to distance from shore.<sup>5</sup> Rear Admiral Milne kept a man-of-war on the fishing grounds from May to October to protect and help the fishermen, during the four years he was on the Station. Communications between England and the northern colonies were still rather slow. The Atlantic cable laid to Sydney, Cape Breton in 1858, had lasted barely a month; there was to be no new cable link until 1866. The regular Cunard packet provided the fastest communication between the old world and the new: Halifax to Liverpool in ten to twelve days.<sup>6</sup>

While the individual in the northern British colonies was enjoying greater participation in his local government at this time, the individual in the British West Indies was losing more and more of his governing privileges. Most of the B.W.I. were then governed by the Old Representative System.

<sup>5</sup> Graham, W., 'The Fisheries of British North America and the United States Fishermen', Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, XIV, (1910), p.19.

<sup>6</sup> 'Memo. relative to the N. American and W. Indian Station', MLN/105/6. The Milne papers are at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. See also: Staff, F., The Transatlantic Mail (London, 1956).

Under it the governors were appointed by, and responsible to, the Colonial Office in London. However, on some matters, particularly finance, a governor was usually dependent on a locally elected - and often irresponsible - House of Assembly. After the Negroes were emancipated in the 1830's, the Old Representative System broke down. With an uneducated majority, having no experience in parliamentary government, it was impossible to continue in the old way.<sup>7</sup> The power remained for a time in the hands of the wealthy whites. With the passage of the Sugar Duties Act in 1846, Free Trade came to the West Indies. The protective tariff barriers which had shielded them from the cheaper slave-grown sugar of Cuba and Brazil were completely eliminated by 1851. The Free Trade policy spelt the end of the family run sugar plantation and its paternal owner. Consolidation became necessary and the 'limited company' sugar estates were created. Yet these measures were only partially effective, so that in 1860, the West Indian colonies were in a depressed period.

The B.W.I. were also deprived of troops about this time. In the early fifties, most of the British garrisons in the islands were removed and concentrated in the military head-

<sup>7</sup> Augier, F.R., The Making of the West Indies (London, 1960) pp. 228-9; Lowenthal, D. (ed.) The West Indies Federation (New York, 1961), pp. 35-7. See also: Trollope, A. The West Indies (London, 1859), for conditions in the islands at this time.

quarters at Barbados. The Committee on Colonial Military Defence and Expenditure of 1861 recommended the entire withdrawal of West Indian troops, 'being useless for defence and unsuitable as police'.<sup>8</sup> There were then only 2,300 British soldiers in the Windward and Leeward islands. Communications from England came via Nova Scotia and the U.S. to St. Thomas and from there branch steamers, for example, the Trent, connected with Havana, Vera Cruz, Jamaica, Colón, the Windward Islands and Demerara. There were also frequent sailings of merchant ships, to whom mails as well as newspapers, etc., were entrusted. Rear Admiral Milne often used his cruising warships to deliver despatches and orders.

In 1865, the Jamaican natives revolted. Seeing that it would be impossible to give power to this uneducated majority, the legislature was dissolved and Jamaica became a Crown Colony in 1866. The other West Indian colonies soon followed this example and by 1875 only Barbados and the Bahamas retained their old constitutions.<sup>9</sup> The governor of a Crown Colony was appointed by the Colonial Office and he

<sup>8</sup> Rose, J.H., Newton, A.P., Benians, E.A. (ed.)  
The Cambridge History of the British Empire (Cambridge, 1940)  
 ii, p.832.

<sup>9</sup> Lowenthal, op. cit., p.33.



selected the members of his unicameral legislature. It was a definite retrogression from democratic forms but in the circumstances could hardly be condemned.

In England, Lord Palmerston had entered into his second and last ministry. It was to be a long one, from June 1859 until his death in October 1865. The reform of the franchise, while debated in the House, was shelved until 1867. Lord John Russell was at the Foreign Office, Gladstone was at the Exchequer, while the Duke of Newcastle was secretary of state for the colonies. The Duke believed that the colonies should pay most of their military expenses, but that naval protection should be given to them by the home government, '... To him the strongest link (of colony to mother country) was Great Britain's obligation to protect the colonies.'<sup>10</sup> Edward A. Seymour, twelfth Duke of Somerset, was the first lord of the Admiralty. The original lords of the Admiralty appointed in June 1859 and those who served while Milne held the North America command were:

<sup>10</sup> Clarke, D.P., op. cit., p.63. For a good description of Palmerston's government in the years 1859-1865, see Walpole, Sir S., The History of Twenty-Five Years, (London, 1904), vols. 1 and 2.

First Lord: the Duke of Somerset.

First Naval Lord: Vice Adm. Hon. Sir R.S. Dundas, K.C.B.,  
died in June 1861, replaced by Rear Adm. Sir  
F. Grey, K.C.B.

Second Naval Lord: Rear Adm. Hon. F.T. Pelham, C.B.,  
retired in June 1861, replaced by Capt. C.  
Eden, C.B.

Third Naval Lord: Capt. C. Eden, advanced in June 1861 to  
second naval lord and replaced by Capt.  
C. Frederick.

Fourth Naval Lord: Capt. C. Frederick, advanced in June  
1861 to third naval lord and replaced by Capt.  
J.R. Drummond.

Civil Lord: Samuel Whitbread, M.P., left March 1863,  
replaced by the Marquis of Hartington, M.P.,  
who left in April 1863. His replacement was  
James Stansfield, M.P., who left in April 1864.

Parliamentary Secretary: Rear Adm. Lord C. Paget, C.B., M.P.

Permanent Secretary: W.G. Romaine. <sup>11</sup>

The Admiralty in the period under study was between  
Sir James Graham's reforms in 1832 and those of the Right

<sup>11</sup> 'Manning-Personnel', MLN/P/B/2(a); Navy Lists, 1860-1865.

Hon. Hugh Childers in 1869. Graham had brought the Navy Boards under direct Admiralty control. Each Admiralty lord was responsible for one of the Civil Departments, formerly Navy Boards. These departments were headed by a principal officer who did the day to day work. They were: the Controller or Surveyor-General, the Accountant-General, the Storekeeper-General, the Controller of Victualling and the Director-General of the Medical Department. The five Admiralty lords were only collectively and not personally responsible for their departments and this was a source of frequent criticism.<sup>12</sup> The parliamentary secretary attended meetings of the lords and noted every decision arrived at; he also often spoke for the Admiralty in parliament. The second or permanent secretary received despatches from the different stations and was responsible for the daily routine of the office. The first lord, a civilian, was supreme. The first naval lord was his professional adviser. If there was any disagreement between the first lord and the naval lords, the latter could only register their disapproval by resigning. Public debate between the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty was not permitted. Somerset left office

<sup>12</sup> Bartlett, C.J., Great Britain and Sea Power 1615-1853 (Oxford, 1963), p.10. See also: Briggs, Sir J.H., Naval Administration 1827-1892 (London, 1896); Admiralty Administration, Its Faults and Its Defaults, n.a., LLN/189; Grey, Sir F., Admiralty Administration, a pamphlet at the Admiralty Library, written in 1866; Parl. Papers, V (1861) 'Report from the Select Committee on the Board of Admiralty'.

when the administration changed in July 1866. Sir Alexander Milne, writing in 1888 said, 'no better arrangement could be made for Admiralty work. I worked this system for nearly twelve years from 20th December, 1847 until 1859, as a junior Lord and Superintendent Lord of the Store, Victualling and Transport and Medical Department'.<sup>13</sup> Palmerston's was a remarkably stable government due largely, perhaps, to absence of any burning domestic issues.

But there was distraction enough in the foreign problems of the early sixties. At this time, Edmund Hammond - that typical Victorian - spoke of Napoleon III as 'the devil's own child'.<sup>14</sup> There was a French scare for three main reasons. Louis Napoleon's annexation of Nice and Savoy, the growing complex of dockyard, arsenal and fortification at Cherbourg - less than a hundred miles from England - and the launching of the first iron clad man-of-war, the Gloire. When this vessel went down the ways in 1859, there was deep concern over the apparent French lead in this new form of offensive weapon. Britain's undefended coastline and harbours seemed to invite French aggression and fortifications were built at many of the principal ports. The Volunteer movement spread

<sup>13</sup> Milne's 'Notebook', Milne Home papers uncatalogued at the National Maritime Museum.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, M.A., Edmund Hammond, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1854-1873, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1956, p.87.

rapidly after its inauguration in May 1859. The 'Illustrated London News' for 1860 is full of 'Volunteer Reviews'. Ordinary citizens gave up their week-ends to prepare for the arrival of a second Bonaparte. They were not regulars, but they had learned the rudiments of discipline and drill. Although they had just concluded a Free Trade treaty and had fought together in the Crimea and in China, yet John Bull was almost incurably suspicious of France, whether Imperial or Republican. As Palmerston said of Louis Napoleon in June 1861 '..... at the bottom of his heart there rankles a deep and inextinguishable desire to humble and punish England....' 15

When Sir Alexander Milne arrived at Bermuda in H.M.S. Emerald on the 8th of March, 1860, he was no stranger to the North American and West Indian Station. He had served there as a Midshipman in his first ship, the Leander, in 1817. 16 This was the flagship of his father, then Rear Admiral and later Admiral, Sir David Milne, one of the most distinguished

15 Palmerston to Somerset, private, 23 June 1861, Somerset papers, County Record Office, Aylesbury, Bucks.

16 DNB and 'Autobiographical Material', HMN/P/C/1-3 for information on Milne. This is the first study of the N. American and W. Indian Station. British naval forces had been in these waters since the 16th Century. In 1823 the station, heretofore three separate divisions, was combined into one command. See Adm. 1 and Adm. 128 series for the records of the early and later years of the station, at the Public Record Office.

seamen in British Naval history. During a career in the navy spanning sixty-six years, he had blockaded Boston harbour during the War of 1812, taken a prominent part in the bombardment of Algiers in 1816 and served as commander-in-chief on the North American Station from 1816 to 1819. Sir David built a home on the Tweed with prize money earned during the French and American wars. It still stands today; his portrait by Raeburn hangs in the dining room and in a glass cabinet are the swords and decorations of Sir David and his sons. Sir Alexander had served on the Brazilian and North American Stations and in 1837, while captain of H.M.S. Snake, he had captured two slavers. In this early period of his career he had spent five years on the North America Station, and was then posted as Flag Captain at Portsmouth and Devonport. After that he served from 1847 until 1859 as a junior lord of the Admiralty.

While at the Admiralty, Milne was responsible for many improvements. He was the author of the Good Conduct Badge scheme, a great boon to steady men; he established the new ratings of Chief Petty Officer and Leading Seaman and was the moving force behind the adoption of a more systematic uniform for petty officers and seamen, with their distinguishing emblems. Sir Alexander also revised the signal books of the fleet and introduced new signals which were

required for steam vessels. He had the contracts for salt meat thrown open to all countries; it had formerly been limited to British bidders and they had often sold inferior foreign meat to the Admiralty. The Crimean war revealed a lamentable degree of inefficiency and mismanagement in the services. In May 1855, Sir James Graham, who had just left the office of First Lord of the Admiralty, gave evidence before a special committee of the House, enquiring into the reasons for this incompetence. Graham praised Milne's handling of the Transport Service and he believed that if Milne could have devoted his attention exclusively to it '... it would have been more efficiently conducted than by any Board.' <sup>17</sup> For his work during the war, he was made a K.C.B. (Civil) in 1858, and promoted to Rear Admiral of the Blue that same year.

This then, was no ordinary naval officer who came out to the station in the spring of 1860. It was a fifty-four year old administrator with a solid background of Admiralty experience. No swivel-chair sailor, he had served in six different ships and commanded three. After officially relieving Vice Admiral Sir Houston Stewart, Milne began a tour of the islands in his command. The limits of the North

<sup>17</sup> 'Evidence of Sir J. Graham', etc., Milne Home Papers.

American and West Indian Station were:

On the North by the 55th degree of N. Latitude.

On the South by the coast of South America to Cape Orange, the northernmost extremity of Portuguese Guiana.

On the West by the shores of America.

On the East by the 36th degree of W. Longitude. <sup>18</sup>

The station was subdivided into a Jamaica division with headquarters at Port Royal and a Barbados division with its command centred at that island.

Making up to eleven and a half knots in Emerald, the rear admiral stopped first at Antigua. He was satisfied with the condition of the dockyard but noted a sad result of the policy of concentrating British troops at Barbados. The natives were poverty-stricken because their only source of regular income - doing the soldier's laundry - had disappeared. On arrival at Barbados the admiral landed in state:

Such a Fuss. A great crowd of people of all descriptions, a Guard of Honour of the 49th Regiment and Band and a salute of 13 Guns from the Royal Artillery and then pop into the Governors Carriage with a Black mounted policeman at each window of the carriage. All the Blacks calling out and cheering there go de New Admiral. He be very young Admiral. 19

<sup>18</sup> Standing Orders for the Squadron Employed on the North American and West Indian Station (Halifax, 1862) MLN/108.

<sup>19</sup> Milne to J. Milne Home, private, 3 April 1860, MLN/107/3.



On 5 April, writing on one of his favourite subjects - the supply of coal to H.M. warships - he complained of conditions at Barbados. Milne told Pelham, the second naval lord, that all dust is received and paid for as coal'.... it does not do for an old member of the Store Department to come out to a Foreign Station, I think ere long I will be able to do you some good in many small ways.' <sup>20</sup> From Barbados, Sir Alexander visited the naval base and hospital at Port Royal, Jamaica. Thence to the Central American coast; he touched at Colón and Greytown. Turning eastward, Milne visited Havana and returned to Bermuda in late May. At Port Royal he praised the high state of efficiency of the naval establishment, but said that the captain of the Guard Ship, '... is getting dried up into a mummy, any man who serves in Port Royal Harbour is certainly deserving of consideration.' <sup>21</sup> The captain had been there for nearly three years and was seeking a transfer.

The rear admiral's first contact with American war ships occurred at Colón. The heavy frigates Roanoke, Flag Officer McCluney, and Sabine were there. Milne thought Roanoke 'immense' but slow. <sup>22</sup> With some of his officers he

<sup>20</sup> Milne to Pelham, private, 5 April 1860, MLN/107/3.

<sup>21</sup> Milne to Dundas, private, 20 & 21 April, 1860, MLN/107/3.

<sup>22</sup> Milne to Baynes, private, 25 April 1860, MLN/107/3.

travelled as free guests on the railroad, to Panama on the Pacific side. Built - in 1855 - and run by Americans, it consisted of a single track, except at stations, where sidings were provided for trains to pass. The passage from Colon to Panama took three to four hours. Sir Alexander thought it 'admirably conducted' and considered that:

... I never met a more civil and obliging set of people. But the Americans keep a sharp look out on their own interest. They are never without a ship of war and generally two at each end....<sup>23</sup>

H.M.S. Clio was on the Pacific side waiting with seven invalids for another British warship which was to take them home via Cape Horn. Paying the railroad \$5 apiece, Milne took these men back to his ship. As Emerald was to return to England at the end of the month, a journey of five to six months around South America was avoided. The station commander urged the Admiralty to make further use of this valuable link between the two oceans. In the next four years, replacements (supernumeraries) were frequently transferred from one side to the other.

<sup>23</sup> Milne to Dundas, private, 9 May 1860, MLN/107/3;  
Milne to L(ords) C(ommissioners) of the A(dmiralty),  
2 May 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

Sir Alexander thought that his wife Euphemia and their four children would be at Bermuda when he returned from his tour of the West Indies. He had expected them to embark in his permanent flagship, H.M.S. Nile 90, at Plymouth on April 4. As Milne had reached Bermuda in just over twenty days, he felt certain that the Nile would be there when he arrived in late May. But his flagship did not arrive until the 2nd of June, forty-five days from England. Contrary winds and storms had blown her off course and lengthened her voyage. The Milne children were David Alexander, nine years old, Berkeley, five - later to become an admiral - and the two young girls, Grace Alice, six, and Margaret Alice, seven. At sea - after a single day's sea-sickness - the children had done their lessons beneath canvas awnings. They studied from ten till twelve and two till four every day. His mother wrote that Berkeley had exactly the build of a sailor and '...is the funniest little figure in his sailor dress... hitches up his trousers just as sailors do'. During the trip he was the 'plaything of... all the idlers in the poop.' But when the Nile arrived at Bermuda, Sir Alexander had then been without sleep for two days from worry and 'was looking very pale' said his wife. 24

24 Lady E. Milne to the Dowager Lady Milne, private, 5 June 1860, Milne Home papers. W.H. Henderson was a 15 year old Midshipman in Nile at this time and gives a lively account of the trip. His papers are at the National Maritime Museum, HEN/1/4.

The family had barely settled in when the squadron was off to Halifax for the summer. It was customary for the station commander to spend the winter at Bermuda and the summer at his base in the north. They left Bermuda on 14 June and arrived at Halifax six days later. Milne was exceedingly pleased with his flagship. The Nile, built as a sailing ship in 1839, had received engines in 1854 and these had been lately improved at Devonport for this three year commission. Nile could sail at thirteen knots and Sir Alexander thought she had a fine ship's company.<sup>25</sup> With his family lodged in Admiralty House, overlooking the dockyard, the commander-in-chief began to sort out his problems.

Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, was eighteen that summer. The Queen, in response to appeals from British North America and from the United States, consented to his tour of the colony and the Republic. The Hero, bearing the Prince, sailed from Southampton on July 9, 1860, with Flying Fish and Ariadne as escorts. It was the first visit of a British heir-apparent to the North American continent. That July, Sir Alexander wrote, concerning the colonies:

<sup>25</sup> Milne to Pelham, private, 20 June 1860, BLK/107/3. From 1875 until 1953, Nile served as a training ship for merchant navy officer cadets. See Hasefield, J. The Conway (London, 1931).

... the greatest loyalty and good feeling towards the Throne and Mother Country seems to animate all parties, however much they may be at variance on questions of purely local politics. 26

The royal party's first landing was at St. John's, Newfoundland, on 23 July. There the whole pattern of the tour was illustrated: meeting dignitaries, inspecting troops and receiving addresses from various groups. The local officials read fourteen separate speeches of welcome and loyalty.<sup>27</sup> H.R.H. arrived at Halifax on 30 July and was greeted by Rear Admiral Milne and the colonial authorities.

Sir Alexander was in a dilemma at this point. He had received no instructions from home other than to give the Prince 'all due honour'. H.R.H. was scheduled to go with his three-ship squadron to Quebec. He would then leave them and take a shallow draught commercial paddle steamer up to Montreal, without a naval escort. Milne noted that many Canadians had come to Halifax and were asking how many ships would be going on to Quebec and Montreal. He knew that five or six ships would be at the U.S. when the Prince's tour was completed. Sir Alexander believed that the Canadians would feel slighted if they received less attention than the Americans; he also

<sup>26</sup> Milne to LCA, 26 July 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

<sup>27</sup> Lee, S., King Edward VII (London, 1925), p. 88.

felt it would be a good thing to have some of H.M. ships present when the Prince opened the new two-mile long Royal Victoria railroad bridge at Montreal. But Milne did not wish to offend Commodore Seymour, who represented the naval element in the Prince's entourage, by putting him in a secondary position. As no one on H.R.H.'s staff could give him any definite advice; for 'political' reasons, he decided to go. Newcastle, a member of the Prince's group, thought he had made the right decision.<sup>28</sup> Thus when H.R.H. arrived at Quebec on 18 August, in addition to his own three ships, he was greeted by Milne's warships: Nile, Valorous and Styx. At Quebec Sir Alexander left Nile for the lighter draught - 19 feet - Valorous, in order to accompany the Prince to Montreal. When the small paddle steamer with the royal heir reached Montreal, it was welcomed by Valorous, Styx, and Flying Fish.

At Montreal occurred the first tragedy of the journey. Valorous and Flying Fish had four men killed and several badly injured while saluting. The gunners seemed to have rammed the powder cartridge home with the sponge instead of the rammer. The sponge apparently had several burning pieces

<sup>28</sup> Milne to Dunlas, private, 4 Aug. 1860, MLN/107/3; Milne to LCA, 5 Aug. 1860, MLN/103/1/A. The Duke of Newcastle said however that he had asked Milne to go to Quebec. Newcastle to Somerset, private, 6 Aug. 1860, Somerset papers, the County Record Office, Aylesbury, Bucks.

from the previous cartridge stuck to it. These burning fragments exploded the charge prematurely and the men were 'blown from her guns'. Milne wrote, 'I am terribly distressed about this.' 29

Lady Milne had come from Halifax with their oldest boy, Alexander David, to see the ceremonies. With Sir Alexander they accompanied the royal party to Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Niagara Falls. At Ottawa, H.R.H. had laid the foundation stone of the new Parliament House. The Falls were illuminated for the Prince's visit and the daring Frenchman, Blondin, performed his balancing feats high above the roaring cataract. The royal party entered Detroit on 20 September for the American half of their tour. The Milnes had returned to Montreal, joined Valorous and sailed for Quebec on the 6th. On their arrival that same day, Alexander David was suddenly taken ill. After only a few hours of sickness, he died of scarlet fever on 7 September. Writing to Sir Richard Dundas, Milne said 'My wife is keeping up but there is a sad blank with us'; and to Pelham, 'We can only bear up and say Gods will be done.' 30

29 Milne to no name or date, MLN/107/3; LCA to Milne, 14 Sept. 1860, MLN/105/1.

30 Milne to Dundas, private, 18 Sept. 1860, MLN/107/3; Milne to Pelham, private, 19 October 1860, MLN/107/3.

The Prince's reception in New York was a good example of the warm welcome he received in the United States. Five thousand people attended a Ball in his honour and later, while he stood on his hotel balcony, six thousand firemen bearing torches marched past, a chain of flame in the night. Scarcely a week before, another type of torch-light parade took place in New York City. 'Five Miles of Wide-Awakes in the Streets', said the headline in the New York World for 4 October. This was a Republican Party demonstration in favour of 'Honest Old Abe - the Rail Splitter'.

On the 20th of October, the Prince of Wales drove through the streets of Portland, Maine and down to his waiting squadron. Yards were manned and Nile, Styx, Ariadne, Flying Fish and the Prince's own ship, the Hero boomed salutes across the water. Milne accompanied H.R.H. out of the harbour and then Nile and Styx returned to Halifax, while the future king sailed for home. Of what permanent value to relations between countries was a tour such as this? J.L. Motley, American historian and diplomatist, who was in London in 1861, believed that the great welcome given to the Prince by the U.S. helped to form English opinion on the Civil War.<sup>31</sup> This seems rather doubtful. Sidney Lee, Edward VII's biographer, said, 'Gratitude to the North for

<sup>31</sup> Lee, S., op. cit., p. 109.



the attentions recently bestowed on the son swayed the political judgement of the parents'.<sup>32</sup> Certainly the Prince Consort did help the Union by softening Palmerston's crucial despatch during the Trent crisis.

Early in the new year, Milne wrote to one of his officers on the coast of Mexico, about conditions at home, 'I have not one word of any news ... everything is stagnant.'<sup>33</sup> Whatever the situation in England, the station commander would certainly be busy in the new year. The Federal Union in the United States was on the point of dissolution and before 1861 had ended, an American war with Britain seemed to be a distinct possibility.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Milne to Aldham, private, 27 Jan. 1861, MLN/107/3.

'Could You Forward a Letter for me to Antigua?':

The First Problems Raised by the American Conflict.

Early in the winter of 1860, Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Milne could be reasonably contented with the condition of the station under his command. He had visited many of the islands and had met most of the colonial administrators under his protection; he had introduced to North America the first heir to the British throne ever to visit that continent, and the admiral's preparations had enabled that royal personage to sail from the harbour of Portland, Maine, without any untoward incident. Moreover, that September, one of Milne's officers, Commander Nowell Salmon, had skilfully eliminated the most dangerous of the American filibusters, William Walker, without any international complications. In short, at the end of the first year of his first foreign command, the fifty-four year old rear admiral could view the passing year with some satisfaction.

His two main problems were those endemic to the North American Station: desertion and Yellow fever. He was taking energetic measures to deal with both. Milne's official and private correspondence during this period reveals little comment on American affairs-his concerns were those of any officer on a 'shakedown' cruise: his men, his ships and the care of British

interests in the vast area under his command.

The first official hint of possible trouble in the United States was an Admiralty despatch written on 22 December 1860.

This cautioned Milne to abstain:

...from any measure or demonstration likely to give umbrage to any party in the United States, or to bear the appearance of partizanship on either side, if the internal dissention in those States should be carried to the extent of separation. I

As was often the case, this despatch was accompanied by several others sent to Milne, 'for your information' and intended as a guide.

- I LCA to Milne, 22 Dec. 1860, MLN/105/I. Professor J.P. Baxter's articles are the only specific studies to date of Sir Alexander Milne and the N.American and W.Indian Station during the American Civil War. They are: 'The British Government and Neutral Rights, 1861-1865', American Historical Review, XXXIV, (1928), pp. 9-29, and 'Some British Opinions as to Neutral Rights, 1861-1865', American Journal of International Law, XXXIII, (1929), pp. 517-537. The 1928 volume of the American Historical Review also contains Milne's instructions to his cruisers in the 'Papers Relating to Belligerent and Neutral Rights', compiled by Prof. Baxter, pp. 77-84. Since these articles have appeared, Capt. A. Milne Home, RN (ret'd.), a descendant of the admiral, has donated a large collection of Sir Alexander's papers to the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, in 1949 and 1965. These include hundreds of private letters as well as much of the admiral's official correspondence.

In the first enclosure, the British minister to Washington, Lord Lyons, urged Lord Russell, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, not to allow a British man-of-war to appear off the coast of South Carolina '... at the present moment ... under existing circumstances it could hardly fail to be misinterpreted'. Russell replied, on 21 December, in a second enclosure, that HM Government would not send a warship to Charleston or any other place unless British persons or property were endangered. Milne was often given 'indirect' instructions in this manner. He would frequently receive, besides Admiralty despatches, consular reports, Foreign Office memoranda, Law Officers' opinions and sometimes advice from the various colonial governors on the station. Consular reports, particularly those of the able E.M. Archibald at New York City,<sup>2</sup> were of great value to the rear admiral. From the British Consuls, both north and south, Milne procured many things of value, ranging from copies of Wheaton's Elements of International Law, to data on the armaments of both belligerents. Most of the information Milne subsequently received was first channelled through the Foreign Office, to the Admiralty and then out to the

2 For an informative, though not sufficiently detailed study of this distinguished Nova Scotian, see Life and Letters of Sir E.M. Archibald, KCMG, CB (Toronto, 1924), by a relation, Edith J. Archibald. He served as British Consul at New York from 1857 till 1883, and was generally, as his biographer says, p.127, pro-Northern in his political sentiments during the Civil War.

commander-in-chief of the station. It is a measure of the confidence in which he was held as well as of the sagacity of those in the Palmerston government that their naval man-on-the-spot usually had the latest and best information on any current question between Britain and the belligerents. In several cases Milne was given the opinion of the government and then left to deal with the situation largely as he saw fit. The joint British-French and Spanish expedition to Mexico in 1861-62 is a good illustration of this fact. It will be dealt with in detail in the fourth chapter.

Sir Alexander also benefited from frequent correspondence with the British Minister at Washington, Lord Lyons. Beginning about December 1860, the minister and the admiral kept each other fully informed of their respective situations; their private and official correspondence only ceased when Milne left the station in March 1864. As Sir Alexander had spent twelve years at the Admiralty before his appointment to the station, he had many friends in Whitehall. Milne enjoyed letters from his old friend, the First Naval Lord, Sir R. Dundas,<sup>3</sup> and when that admiral died in June 1861, his successor, Sir Frederick Grey, took up the task of keeping Milne privately informed on home affairs.

3 Vice Admiral Sir Richard S. Dundas was, in 1855, the commander of the naval forces in the Baltic during the Crimean war.

The civilian First Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Somerset had never written privately to Milne, the rear admiral felt that the Duke was disinclined to do so.<sup>4</sup> However, as American affairs became more serious, Somerset too became a not infrequent contributor to Milne's private mailbag. It will be seen then, that the station commander was not merely a cypher taking orders from an impersonal authority; rather, Sir Alexander was often able to influence and shape policy according to his own view of the particular circumstances.

After the initial Admiralty warning in December 1860, regarding a possible American conflict, there was a lull in station affairs. As was the custom, Milne left Halifax that December and sailed south to winter at Bermuda. In early January, he toured the West Indies, as he had done on first assuming the command in the previous year. Visiting Antigua, Barbados, Trinidad, Port Royal, and Nassau, he then returned to Bermuda. With the exception of Trinidad these were his main bases on the southern half of the station. He was thus fully au courant with the capabilities as well as the limitations of his Caribbean outposts. Milne delayed his departure from Barbados so as to welcome Prince Alfred, second son of the Queen. The Prince, a midshipman in the

4 Milne to Grey, private, 27 June 1861, MLN/107.

battleship St. George arrived in February 1861, and was immediately taken on an unceasing round of receptions, picnics and balls. Though the Queen had sent the seventeen-year-old lad out to the colonies thinking the trip would benefit him, Sir Alexander feared that the unacclimatized youth, subjected to such great exertions in a warm climate, might fall victim to Yellow fever. <sup>5</sup> Happily, as with the Prince of Wales' visit the previous year to North America, all went well-Victoria's progeny seemed to have had unusual stamina. With time out for leave, Alfred stayed on the station until February 1862, when he was sent home because of the death of his father, the Prince Consort. Milne thought well of the young prince and in later years Alfred often sought his advice.

#### Initial British Policies

In the early spring, disquieting messages arrived from several sources. Consul Archibald at New York advised the Foreign Office on 6 April that several U.S. armed vessels, among them the Powhatan were to leave that day on an unknown mission. Some people, he wrote, believed they were going to relieve Fort Pickens in Florida or Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The consul thought that the expedition was going to Texas to protect the western frontier of that state. Archibald's 'confidential agent' -who was tidily paid

5 Milne to Dundas, private, 26 Feb. 1861, MLN/107/3.

by Milne from his pettycash fund - assured the consul that the armaments and complement of the Powhatan were correctly stated in the newspaper. This information was speedily sent to Sir Alexander on 20 April 1861.<sup>6</sup> The Powhatan reinforced Fort Pickens in Florida and the rest of the small squadron under Gustavus Fox went to the relief of Fort Sumter. But Fox was too late; the fort was being shelled by the State of South Carolina when his ships appeared off the bar; the little force returned to New York; the Civil War had begun.

Milne had arrived at Bermuda from his station tour on 25 April. The next day he received a note from the Consul General at Havana, Joseph Crawford, informing him that hostilities had broken out between the Northern and Southern sections of the United States.<sup>7</sup> Information and advice soon began to flow in to Admiralty House in Bermuda. On 4 May, the First Naval Lord wrote to Sir Alexander that he believed a conflict 'inevitable', noted that there was much talk of letters of marque and blockades, which subjects he said the Law Officers of the Crown were then considering; and offered Milne some 'unofficial' advice:

" make no unnecessary show of force in any quarters and above all things to be strictly neutral ... if blockades are declared by either party you will have no questions to ask, except to consider whether the force to maintain them is effective... all British vessels however will be entitled

6 LCA to Milne, 20 April 1861, MLN/105/2.

7 The Admiral's Journals, entry for 26 April 1861, ADM 50/303, from the Public Record Office. Other material from this source cited as F.O. (Foreign Office) and PRO 30/22 series, the Russell Papers, as well as C.O. (Colonial Office) and W.O. (War Office).



to due notice of every Blockade and due warning before they can be legally captured or prevented from quitting a blockaded port.<sup>8</sup>

Adm. Dundas told Milne to advise British ship masters to show 'excessive civility' to 'Yankee officers', but 'never to concede undoubted rights'. This was the veteran admiral's last letter to Milne. He died on 3 June 1861 and Sir Frederick Grey became First Naval Lord.

But Sir Alexander himself, previous to the receipt of Dundas' letter, had been giving some thought to the problems raised by the nascent American conflict. Though not officially informed of the fact as yet, he knew by 1 May of Lincoln's initial proclamation of 19 April ordering the blockade of southern ports. He also knew of President Davis' invitation to privateers to accept letters of marque. On 1 May, then, he wrote the Admiralty for advice on several relevant questions. These enquiries reveal the as yet unsettled state of international law regarding belligerent naval rights and obligations. Though there existed some rather tenuous judicial precedents arising mostly from prize cases, the only substantial international agreement on these rights had been the Declaration of Paris, in 1856.<sup>9</sup> This document had never been signed by the U.S.,

8. Dundas to Milne, private, 4 May 1861, MLN/107.

9. For further information on the Declaration of Paris, and the diplomatic misunderstanding it engendered; see E.D. Adams' Great Britain and the American Civil War (New York, 1925), i.137 ff.

primarily because, as a nation without a large standing navy, she had in her previous wars always relied to a large extent on privateering, which the Declaration had abolished. The three other rules adopted by Britain, France and several other powers at that time were:

2. The neutral flag covers enemy's goods, with the exception of contraband of war.
3. Neutral goods, with the exception of contraband of war, are not liable to capture under the enemy's flag.
4. Blockades, in order to be binding, must be effective, that is to say, maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the coast of the enemy. 10

Milne was therefore responsible for asking the first specific questions in an actual wartime situation, regarding the generalizations of the Declaration of Paris. His letter of 1 May asked, regarding the North and South:

1. Are they to be considered in a state of actual war?
2. If so, how far is the Paris Declaration of 1856 in respect to free ships making free goods, if not contraband of war, and neutral goods, not contraband, not being seizable in Enemies ships, to be considered applicable to British ships conveying goods, the property of either of the Belligerents; or their ships conveying British goods?
3. Are the Belligerents to be allowed to visit and search our Merchant Ships on the High Seas?
4. Contraband of war will probably be defined by each of the Belligerents?
5. The validity of a Blockade held to be dependent on its efficiency? 11

The admiral ended his letter by noting the 'extreme importance' these rules had to British commerce generally, and especially questions 2, 3, and 4 as regards 'our lines of Packets, both ocean and inter-colonial'. He thus anticipated the problems raised by the Trent affair.

10 Ibid., p. 140.

11 Milne to LCA, 1 May 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

The Admiralty, after consultation with the Foreign Office and the Law Officers, answered Milne's questions exactly one month later. Their Lordships affirmed that a state of war was to be considered as in effect between the North and South. As to Milne's second question they pointed out that as neither side had signed the Declaration of Paris '... the rules laid down in that Declaration will not be applicable to British vessels and goods.' Both sides could search British vessels; except as to obvious contraband such as ammunition and military stores, each belligerent should define what they consider to be contraband. Lastly, the Admiralty stated that the 'validity of a Blockade must be held to be dependant on its efficiency'.<sup>12</sup>

On 12 May, Lyons wrote to the rear admiral apprizing him that the present British policy '... is to keep entirely aloof from the

<sup>12</sup> LCA to Milne, 1 June 1861, MLN/105/2. The Federals issued a list of the goods they considered contraband. It was sent to Russell by Lyons on 25 May, FO 414/17, Confidential. Among the items listed was coal. While a member of the Board of Admiralty, Milne wrote a Minute on 24 May 1859 which held that if Britain were at war with a maritime nation, '... then I think there can be no doubt that that country would declare coal to be contraband of war', and that 'if a coal depot were allowed to be kept on shore, or afloat, it would be considered a breach of neutrality.' He asked the Law Officers' opinion on these points. On 10 June 1859, the Law Officers agreed with Milne that if coal was declared contraband, it could not be sold to a belligerent from a neutral's government stores, but it might be purchased from private merchants. MLN/P/B/3 (h) Coaling 1852-1870. This opinion was confirmed by Russell when he prohibited the belligerents from establishing coal depots in British ports but permitted them to purchase coal, in limited quantities and at stated times, from private sources in British possessions.

quarrel', that Her Majesty's warships '...should not interfere either with the Blockade or with the Southern Privateers'. But Lyons added that the protection of British persons and property was of paramount interest. The minister thought the most important thing was '...to have the means of communicating with you as fast as possible in case of need'.<sup>13</sup> As Milne was then at Bermuda and could only be reached by ship- a three to five day trip from the mainland- Lyons was understandably worried. The rear admiral however, soon left Bermuda and arrived in Halifax on 21 May. This enabled him to be in telegraphic, packet, postal and personal messenger communication with Lord Lyons. The month of May 1861 was an anxious one for the British naval and diplomatic representatives in North America. Milne agreed fully with Lyons about the inexpediency of any British naval force appearing off the American coast unless absolutely necessary.<sup>14</sup> The Admiralty advised Milne on 18 May to 'exercise your discretion' in sending any of his ships to U.S. or C.S. ports.<sup>15</sup>

During the summer of 1861, Lord Lyons was daily becoming more and more worried about a possible war with the North. He came to believe that Secretary of State Seward was determined to re-unite the shattered country by means of a foreign war.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Lyons to Milne, private, 12 May 1861, MLN/107.

<sup>14</sup> Milne to Lyons, 10 May 1861, MLN/103/10/J.

<sup>15</sup> LCA to Milne, 18 May 1861, MLN/105/2.

<sup>16</sup> Adams, op. cit., p.124.

One of the initial shocks to Lyons' composure was Seward's declaration in May that a Canadian steamer, the 'Peerless', then rumoured to be fitting out on Lake Ontario as a rebel privateer, would be seized regardless of her ownership. Troubled by the 'arrogant spirit' of the American Government, Lyons reminded Seward 'of the extreme susceptibility which had at all times been manifested by the Americans themselves on the subject of any interference with vessels under their own flag'.<sup>17</sup> In the event, little further was heard of the incident. Lyons told Russell in December of the 'ludicrous' outcome; the vessel, he claimed, had all the time been purchased by the U.S. Government itself.<sup>18</sup> It is doubtful if Seward knew of the purchase when he protested; probably the local authorities bought the ship without telling Washington at the time.

#### Her Majesty's Warships on the American Coast

At Halifax, Rear Admiral Milne was carefully watching the developing situation; he was preparing to inspect the blockade. Russell had written to the Admiralty on 1 May asking them to reinforce the station and all through that summer ships and supernumeraries were arriving from England. As he had not yet

17 Lyons to Russell, Confidential, 2 May 1861, FO 414/17.

18 Same to same, Confidential, 6 Dec. 1861, FO 414/17.

received an answer to his despatch of 1 May to the Admiralty-  
 he was not to receive their instructions until late June <sup>19</sup> -  
 Milne sent a telegram to Lyons on 24 May. As soon as the packets  
 from both Boston and Liverpool reached Halifax thus giving him  
 the latest advices from both Lyons and the Admiralty, Milne pro-  
 posed to dispatch ships to cruise 'in the Gulf of Florida and  
 on the coast of the Southern States'.<sup>20</sup> Sir Alexander asked  
 Lyons where his ships might communicate most conveniently with  
 the minister and asked his opinion about their appearing off  
 blockaded southern ports. Milne considered it inadvisable that  
 his ships should actually enter any of the southern ports-bloc-  
 kaded or not. Lyons replied on the next day, agreeing with all of  
 Milne's plans and intimating that no time should be lost in  
 protecting British commerce, as'...Privateers are already at work  
 at New Orleans'.<sup>21</sup> The British minister believed that HM warships  
 were only necessary on the American coast at this time to protect  
 British merchant vessels from privateers;'...but for this purpose'  
 he added, 'the presence of British men-of-war may be very necessary'.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Supra., p. 47 ,for these instructions.

<sup>20</sup> Lyons to Milne, 25 May 1861, FO 5/764.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. The main British objections to privateers, of whatever nation,  
 can be summed up in Lyons to Russell, 18 April 1861, FO 5/763:  
 'Privateers are not ordinarily very scrupulous in discriminating  
 between hostile and friendly flags when profit is to be acquired  
 and risk of detection seems small'.

<sup>22</sup> Lyons to Milne, 25 May, 1861, FO 5/764.

While he had no specific objection to Milne's ships communicating with British consuls in southern ports, he concurred with the rear admiral in believing that they should go there as infrequently as possible. Lyons confided to Milne at this date that 'an officer of the U.S. is under considerable temptation to obtain for himself popular applause by violent proceedings against Great Britain'.<sup>23</sup> In six months these words were to become ironically true - but not because of any conflict between a British cruiser and a Union blockader.

On the 31st the rear admiral thanked Lyons for his advice of the 25th and told the minister that he had on the previous day, sent out two ships with sealed orders, which were to be opened on leaving the harbour. HMS Jason 21, Capt. von Donop, was 'to cruise between the south and southwest coast of Florida and the mouths of the Mississippi, calling fortnightly at the Havana'. HMS 'Gladiator 6, Commander Hickley, was to cruise 'between Cape Fear, North Carolina and New York where she will call once a fortnight to communicate with the British Consul there'.<sup>24</sup>

23 Lyons to Milne, 25 May 1861, FO 5/764, a shorter note written on the same date as that of his main despatch quoted above.

24 Milne to Lyons, 31 May 1861, MLN/103/10/J. Many of the actual sailing orders to each ship are in : Sailing Orders, MLN/110/1/CC.

Milne noted that some of his instructions embraced certain points 'upon which although HM'S Government have not furnished precise instructions, it was my duty to advert' so that his officers in this 'delicate duty' might be prepared '... to act with confidence and not solely upon their own responsibility'.<sup>25</sup>

On 6 June HMS Racer 11, Commdr. Lyons, arrived at Halifax and left on the 11th to cruise between the southern part of Florida and Cape Fear.<sup>26</sup> On 30 May Milne had instructed Commandore Hugh Dunlop, the commander of the Jamaica Division, that because of the relative isolation of Port Royal naval station from the American coast, he should make his temporary headquarters at Havana. Scarcely a month then, after Lincoln's announcement of the blockade of southern ports and a fortnight after the Queen's proclamation of neutrality had been printed in the American newspapers (28 May), Admiral Milne had an effective system of inspecting the Federal blockade and rendering assistance to British subjects in full operation. By August British warships were covering the

25 Milne to Lyons, Confidential, 31 May 1861, FO5/765.

26 Algernon McLennon Lyons was a cousin of Lord Lyons. He had been on the station since 1860. Though Lyons irritated Milne by grounding his ship several times and by 'reprimanding' a British consul, strictly a Foreign Office function, yet he matured rapidly. His reports on the blockade and on U.S. defences in November 1862 amply prove his intelligence and insight. He commanded the station from 1886-1889.



entire U.S. coast from Texas to Fortress Monroe. If the blockade was found to be deficient at any port the commanders of the British cruisers were to apprise the nearest Union blockading officer of the fact. This somewhat offensive procedure was discontinued in October 1861.<sup>27</sup> Milne's principal reason for inspecting the blockade was, he told his officers, '..... so that any British Sufferers, whose right to claim redress might eventually be recognised by HM Government may have the benefit of reference to your reclamations made on the spot'.<sup>28</sup> These ships were usually relieved every three months. They continued cruising all that summer, fall and winter, only being recalled when, after the Trent crisis, Lord Russell recognised, for all practical purposes, the efficiency of the Union blockade.<sup>29</sup>

27 Milne to Commanders of Steady and Racer, Confidential Memo, 16 Oct. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

28 Baxter, J.P. 'Papers Relating to Belligerent and Neutral Rights' American Historical Review, XXXIV (1928), pp. 77-84. This document section contains Milne's complete instructions to his cruisers, together with all changes suggested by the Queen's Advocate.

29 The French squadron in American waters, though with fewer ships and on a smaller scale, also inspected the Union blockade in 1861: 'pour montrer le pavillon et détermina autant que faire se pourrait l'efficacité et la force du blocus'. From a report by HIMS Catinat, in Lyons to Russell 5 Sept. 1861, F.O.414/20. The French government asked for a copy of Milne's Instructions which were given to the French admiral in North America. The C-in-C of the French station told his officers in late July, 'Pour le moment jusqu'à nouvel ordre, ces blocus sont reconnus effectif...' French Archives, MAR BB4 798, Adm. to officers,<sup>25</sup> July, 1861. See this number for reports of French warships that inspected the blockade. They seemed to have stopped this practice early in 1862, at the same time as the British.

The station commander's original instructions to his cruisers were supplemented on 20 June after he had received the Law Officers' answers to his questions of 1 May. On 25 June he received the observations of the Queens Advocate to his original instructions of 30 May. Lyons considered the observations 'superfluous', but they were incorporated into the instructions. The only important point, Lyons thought, was that of British subjects captured as privateersmen. The Federal authorities had threatened to hang southern privateersmen as pirates and the British Minister was concerned, as 'there are four British Subjects in this plight now on trial at New York'.<sup>30</sup> Article nine of Milne's original instructions held 'that British subjects, who are only hostile privateersmen cannot rightfully, when captured as such on the high seas, be treated as Pirates "jure gentium" by President Lincoln'. The four Britishers were threatened with hanging by the New York Court. President Davis, however, said if they were hung he would hang an equal number of Union prisoners; the Federals backed down and the privateersmen were saved from the gallows. In the event, British cruiser commanders never had to deal with the possibility of Federals hanging British privateersmen - so, on the station, that article of the instructions turned out to be of

<sup>30</sup> Lyons to Milne, private, 8 July 1861, MLN/107. 'Punch' magazine, usually so sensitive to slights on British subjects believed that any such, caught as Privateersmen, should be hanged, buried at the foot of the gallows', and let their epitaph be "A good Riddance of bad Rubbish", quote from the issue of 1 June 1861, p.220.

minimal importance. Probably the only important addition to the instructions made on 20 June was the closing of all British and Colonial ports to prizes of either belligerent. Lord Russell felt that this order 'ought to be considered a friendly act',<sup>31</sup> by the North, as indeed it was. Though his prediction was not to prove correct, Seward said it 'would probably prove to be a death blow to Southern Privateering'.<sup>32</sup> The last additions to Milne's instructions were made on 12 November 1861. Two of these were based on the experience of the station's cruising warships; Article B stipulated that in cases of British vessels debarred from entry or exit to blockaded ports, no British naval officer would interfere - the matter would be settled by Her Majesty's Government. This was a direct outgrowth of the Alliance case which will shortly be examined. Article D ordered HM naval officers as a general rule to 'abstain from making known the particular nature of the orders you may be acting under'. This was an outgrowth of the Jason imbroglio at Pensacola, which episode will also be recounted.<sup>33</sup> After the additions of 12 November 1861, these instructions remained the 'standard orders' for HM Ships dealing with the Northern and Southern belligerents, until the end of the war. There were, however, additional orders issued from time to time to all cruisers to cover specific situations.

31 Russell to Lyons, private, 22 June 1861, PRO 30/22/96.

32 Lyons to Russell, 17 June 1861, F.O. 414/17.

33 Dunlop to Milne, 1 August 1861, ADM 128/56.

Lyons, in a letter to Milne of 10 June 1861, which was received by the admiral four days later, heartily agreed with the instructions to the cruisers. He added, however, confidentially, 'I do not regard a sudden declaration of War against us by the United States as an event altogether impossible at any moment. If I think the danger imminent and am precluded from telegraphing in cypher I will send you the following telegram: "Could you forward a letter for me to Antigua?" <sup>34</sup> There was a great deal of agitation against England at this time both officially and in the newspapers largely because of the Queen's Proclamation of Neutrality, which led, in the North to a feeling of 'betrayal' by the Mother Country.<sup>35</sup> Lyons put his finger on an important distinction between the belligerents in this same letter:

We should I suppose, make a slight shade of difference as far as honours and such things are concerned, between the United States which we recognize as de jure and de facto as a friendly and legitimate Government and the Confederates whom we only regard as de facto belligerents.

As can be imagined Milne was immediately alarmed by Lyons' fears. He wrote to the Admiralty on 27 June informing their Lordships that

34 Lyons to Milne, Private, 10 June 1861, MLN/107.

35 Mr. E. Cunard of the shipping family, writing to Lyons from New York on 29 May 1861 believed the North had some grounds for resenting British neutrality '... when we remember the large quantity of powder, arms and provisions which were purchased by our Government in this City during the Crimean War and shipped in American Vessels to England, and direct to Sebastopol.' FO 5/765.

he had sent a secret telegram to the Bermuda Dockyard commandant. It read 'Most secret be on your guard. States may declare war suddenly, tell Governor'. If the Federals should suddenly concentrate their blockading forces, the rear admiral thought that Bermuda 'might offer great temptation to an enterprising American commander'. Milne also sent warnings to his cruising ships. He wished, on receiving Lyons' warning, to collect all of his forces at Halifax; but he realized that the demands for the protection of British commerce on the American coast prohibited such a move. In June, therefore, the rear admiral requested a further immediate increase of ships, 'especially Frigates and Corvettes' - small vessels useful in American shoal waters. Milne wrote at length to the Admiralty describing the inadequate defences of his command. He had a total of twenty-five ships and only 'one available ship for any special service'.<sup>36</sup> The home government had reinforced the troops in Canada that summer and also steadily increased Milne's force. By November 1861, there were over thirty effective ships on the station and the Trent crisis brought an immediate strengthening of the squadron to over forty men-of-war. This was the largest force seen on the station since the War of 1812.<sup>37</sup>

36 Milne to LCA, Secret, 27 June 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

37 For a month by month indication of the station's strength during the Civil War see the Lists of Ships in Commission: ADM 8/139-43.

One of the principal reasons for Lyons' anxiety at this time, was the 'Southern Ports Bill'; one of whose sections would close all the southern ports by legislative fiat. This would effect a 'paper' blockade, something which Britain would always oppose as it meant that British merchant ships could be intercepted anywhere near one belligerent's coast without the other belligerent being forced to undertake an expensive and hazardous blockade. On 19 July Russell notified Lyons that England 'would not observe a 'legislative closing' of the southern ports'.<sup>38</sup> The Bill was passed by Congress that month but Seward told Lyons that it was merely an 'enabling not operative Act, that it depended entirely upon the President whether or not it was even put into execution.' Seward said that anything from England which irritated the Northern people, might render it impossible to postpone bringing the Bill into operation by Proclamation.<sup>39</sup>

Seward certainly did not believe in veiled threats. The U.S. Minister to Britain, C.F. Adams, in one of the few times he seems to have been at cross purposes with his chief, confided to Lord Russell that such a proclamation 'would be a violation of the Constitution of the United States which requires all the ports of the Union to be equally open'.<sup>40</sup> But like so many of these early 'alarums and excursions', the crisis evaporated. On 16 August Seward told

38 Adams, op.cit., p. 248.

39 Lyons to Russell, Private and Confidential, 20 July 1861, PRO 30/22/35.

40 Russell to Lyons, 6 July 1861, PRO 30/22/96.

Lyons 'confidentially..... that there was no question now of issuing the Proclamation closing the Ports'. 'He had no doubt', Lyons added, 'heard of the increase of Admiral Milne's Squadron. A little success in raising money and a small turn of fortune in the field, may render a further sedation of the same kind desirable'. 41

### A Dangerous Place for a Neutral Warship

The only incident of any importance involving Milne's cruising ships occurred when Captain von Donop of HMS Jason anchored off Confederate-held Pensacola in late June. The New York Times for 9 July announced that a British steam frigate was then at Pensacola; its commander, the Times asserted, had given Milne's views on the blockade:

The Treaty of Paris has not laid down any rules by which we may know what is and what is not an effective blockade. Admiral Milne makes up for the deficiency. Here is his definition as furnished by one of his subordinate commanders:

1. No port is blockaded efficiently if any vessel can enter or depart from it unknown to or in spite of the guarding men of war.
2. An efficient blockade necessitates the complete cutting off of all maritime ingress or egress, except in regard to harbor islands having no outlet to the sea, save under the guns of the fleet.
3. The escape of the third vessel from the blockading squadron signalizes the invalidity of the blockade.

41 Lyons to Russell, 16 August, 1861, PRO 30/22/35.

Milne was troubled by these 'preposterous statements' and felt 'that in the present feverish anxiety of the commercial world' on the subject of the blockade great importance might be attached to them.<sup>42</sup> Lyons added to the admiral's vexation by saying his supposed rules had 'created some sensation' in Washington but that the minister when asked, claimed that the Times' 'rules' were not those of the British admiral.<sup>43</sup>

From Halifax, on 15 July, Milne wrote to Commodore Dunlop, von Donop's immediate superior in the Gulf and asked for an explanation of the incident. Pensacola, being in Confederate hands, he noted, was one of the places to be avoided, principally because it was undesirable to place HM ships in the position of having to render honours to the Secession-Flag.<sup>44</sup> Captain von Donop in his report to Milne said that as 'Jason' passed the blockading ships before Pensacola 'they played our national air'. There being no specific instructions against it, the captain there upon decided to pay a visit to the Union naval officers. He was politely received and the Federal officer expressed a 'desire to see our Armstrong Gun, and as it was getting dark, I determined to anchor for the night to enable him to see it'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Milne to LCA, 17 July 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

<sup>43</sup> Lyons to Milne, private, 22 July 1861, MLN/107.

<sup>44</sup> Milne to Dunlop, 15 July 1861, MLN/103/15/0.

<sup>45</sup> Von Donop to Milne, 1 July 1861, ADM 1/5759P.



It was apparently at this time that the New York Times reporter spoke to one of Jason's officers or perhaps concocted the story himself regarding Milne's blockade orders. The Armstrong was just being introduced to the navy in 1861 and though it was to prove faulty, this did not become evident for some time. Another U.S. officer who inspected Jason's new cannon that summer was David Dixon Porter and he wrote to his old friend, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Gustavus Fox, on 5 July:

I went on board a small English screw sloop the other day (the Jason) and with her one Armstrong gun (which some folks say is a failure, but which I say is not) she would whip the largest ship in the Navy out of her boots, or more properly speaking her pumps, as ships don't wear boots. The point blank range of this Armstrong gun is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles which settles the question for none of our guns will more than reach that with the greatest elevation.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, the station commander knew nothing of the confidential correspondence between Porter and Fox. In the event, Milne approved of the Union officers being shown the new piece of ordnance.

The New York Times was, however, not quite finished with the British rear admiral. From Fort Pickens on 7 July came another long article entitled, 'The British Admiral's Opinion of the Blockade, His Report to the British Admiralty, He Considers the Blockade Totally Inefficient'. It was printed on 25 July and was more sinister than the first as it professed to be an actual despatch from the commander-in-chief of the station to the

<sup>46</sup> Thompson, R.M. and Wainwright, R. (ed.) The Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox, 1861-1865 (New York, 1918), II, p. 75.

Admiralty. In the article, Milne cast scorn on the confusion and mis-management of the blockade. He spoke of the:

'perfect inefficiency of the men-of-war, in regard to the stopping of commercial intercourse with ports before which they have appeared... the lack of vigilance of the U.S. squadron. I sent Cpt. von Donop of the 'Jason' to look after the interests of our shipping ... He mentions numerous cases of ships ... escaping the cruisers.'

On 7 August an exasperated Milne wrote the Admiralty, calling the 'despatch', 'utterly devoid of foundation'.<sup>47</sup> The Yankees had certainly made the most of Captain von Donop's visit; but the rear admiral may unwittingly have also scored a point with Porter's vivid description of the new British long range cannon to the Secretary of the Navy's chief assistant.

What did Sir Alexander himself think of the struggle in these first few months of the war? It is difficult to say; his personal correspondence was seldom speculative - it was usually directed at an immediate problem or idea. On the 12 July he did however, write to his stepmother, the Dowager Lady Milne, at Inveresk, Scotland:

<sup>47</sup> Milne to LCA, 7 August 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

'... I see no hope or chance of reconciliation and yet I cannot bring myself to believe that a vast country is to be broken up into separate states, a few weeks must decide the question, for the present proceedings must bring ruin in both North and South.' 48

It can be said that the Station commander-in-chief as the agent of his government, pursued in the early stages of the war the policy of his superiors: that of steadfast neutrality.

From June onwards Milne's cruising ships sent highly accurate reports through him to the Admiralty. They showed many weaknesses in the blockading forces; but a glance at one chart compiled by HMS Gladiator's Cmmdr. Hickley, for June, July and August 1861 shows the increasing appearance of Federal warships before the southern ports. Milne informed the First Naval Lord on 5 September that while the blockade south of Cape Henry had not been effective, the Union ships in the Gulf 'are very efficient and always on the move and very zealous'. 49 Two of his officers also noted that 'all the naval officers of the United States Ships are very civil..' 50

48 Milne to the Dowager Lady Milne, 12 July 1861, private papers of the Milne Home family. Capt. A. Milne Home RN (ret'd.) of Elibank, Scotland, has kindly given the writer permission to read many of Sir Alexander Milne's private papers. The Captain has donated, in September 1965, most of these as well as the papers of Admiral Sir David (d. 1845) and Admiral Sir Berkeley Milne (d. 1938) to the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

49 Milne to Grey, private, 5 Sept. 1861, MLN/107, Parl. papers LXII (1862), p. 77

50 Milne to Grey, op.cit., MLN/107.

The British government, as the world's largest naval power, considered the blockade as a weapon which if not uniquely its own ranked high in its armoury of offensive instruments.<sup>51</sup> The British were understandably loath to question too closely the workings of this weapon by the Federals, lest precedents be set which could one day be used against her. As early as 6 November, Russell, while asking Lyons' opinion on the matter, thought that the conclusions which 'I draw from these [Consular] reports compiled with the information received from the commanders of HM Cruisers is that the blockade must be regarded as generally effective against foreign trade'.<sup>52</sup> Two days later, the Foreign Secretary allowed that 'British interests may profit to some extent by the imperfect manner in which the blockade may be maintained and

51 Milne's famous father Admiral Sir David Milne, (1763-1845) commanded, for a time during the French wars, the Cherbourg blockading Squadron. During the War of 1812, he blockaded Boston harbour. For an interesting account of these operations see: 'Report on the Manuscripts of Col. David Milne Home of Wedderburn Castle, N.B.', Historical Manuscripts Commission (London, 1902), pp. 145-176. Sir David maintained a close blockade of Boston, writing on 30 May 1814: 'they [the Americans] are very much disappointed when I would not even allow them to trade along the shore'. For an authentic record of the often high-handed British manner of blockading see Capt. Basil Hall's Fragments of Voyages and Travels (London, 1840), e.g., p. 47, wherein the author notes that he has often seen several dozen ships, lying a league or two off the port of New York, waiting to be searched for French goods by British ships. This was before the war of 1812 and the vessels were mostly American. Capt. Hall's son served with Milne on the station in the 1860's.

52 Russell to Lyons, Confidential, 6. November 1861, F.O. 414/20.

it is questionable how far they would be advanced by the attention of the U.S. government being called to the ineffectiveness of the blockade'.<sup>53</sup> Despite his earlier pessimistic thoughts on the ability of the Federals to blockade three thousand miles of coastline, by the fall of 1861 Lord John was evidently willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. That November, Lyons wrote to Russell that though vessels could run the blockade

'... it is very far from being a mere Paper Blockade.... if it were as inefficient as Mr. Jefferson Davis says... he would not be so very anxious to get rid of it.'<sup>54</sup>

It will be seen then that Russell had really acquiesced in the Union blockade some four months before his letter of 15 February 1862, which, published in the Parliamentary Papers of that year, caused such distress to Southern statesmen. This letter put the seal of British approval on Northern efforts to shut off the south from sea borne succour. It declared:

Assuming that the blockade is duly notified, and also that a number of ships is stationed and remain at the entrance of a port, sufficient really to prevent access to it or to create an evident danger of entering or leaving it, and that these ships do not voluntarily permit ingress or egress, the fact that various ships may have successfully escaped through it ... will not of itself prevent the blockade from being an effective one by international law.'<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Russell to Lyons, Confidential, 8 Nov. 1861, F.O. 414/20.

<sup>54</sup> Adams, op.cit., ip. 254.

<sup>55</sup> Russell to Lyons, Confidential, 15 Feb. 1862, F.O. 414/20; also in Baxter 'The British Government and Neutral Rights', op.cit., p.12; see also Parl. Papers, (1862) LXII, pt.1.

A Pitfall Avoided

Rear Admiral Milne himself was involved in a rather bizarre incident with a blockade running skipper in the summer of 1861. It is a good illustration of the judgement of the station commander as well as of the unsettled state of the finer points of blockade law at the time. On 6 August Milne received a letter from a Samuel D. Forest, Master of the 'Alliance' of Liverpool. Capt. Forest said that he was sailing from Halifax on the 14th to Havana on a trading voyage. He asked Sir Alexander's advice on the following points:

How near the Blockaded coast can I approach, without being subject to have my papers overhauled and endorsed by U.S. Cruisers. If ... disabled and unable to reach my destination or a port beyond the limits of the blockade offering proper facilities for repair, without serious risk of loss of vessel, cargo and crew, should I bear away for the nearest Port on the blockaded coast? Would my vessel and cargo be liable to forfeiture for approaching the coast under such circumstances? 56

Captain Forest did mention that on a previous trip from Liverpool to Charleston he had been warned off the coast by a Union warship.

Milne answered Forest on 8 August, avowing that he could not withhold his advice because he realized that the Captain probably could not obtain experienced legal counsel on the subject from any other source. Sir Alexander explained that his opinions were in

'no way binding on the American cruizers, Belligerent's courts, interpreting their own prize law'. He believed '.... that a Belligerent Cruiser has a perfect right to endorse notice of Blockade on a Neutrals' papers which notice is good for the voyage'. Milne thus tacitly admitted that the U.S. warships could endorse a neutral's papers at any stage of that party's journey. Secondly, he advised the captain of the 'Alliance' that, if disabled, he should make for a British port or failing that, a Northern port. If this was impossible, Milne said the captain should try and contact a U.S. Cruiser from whom he would receive assistance. The rear admiral closed his letter with a warning to take 'great care ... that the entries in your log shall be correct as to prove that your proceedings are bona fide and above suspicion which of course I assume they would be'. 57

The next we hear of the 'Alliance' is in a report to Milne by one of his ships cruising to inspect the Union blockade. Cmdr. Hewett of HMS Rinaldo reported on 1 October that the Alliance and another blockade runner, the Gondar were in Beaufort, N.C. when he had lately passed that port.<sup>58</sup> The British vice consul there, William Walker, told Hewett that since both ships had entered Beaufort on 23 August and, he claimed, no blockade was effected till 6 September - both ships were entitled to leave. Walker pointed

57 Milne to Samuel D. Forest, 8 August 1861, MLN/103/11/K.

58 LCA to Hammond, Confidential, 30 Oct. 1861. FO.414/20.

out that Seward's' rules allowed ships in southern harbours to leave up to a fortnight after the blockade commenced.<sup>59</sup> There followed a long, acidulous and tiresome correspondence involving Lyons, Consul Bunch, the U.S., the Confederates and Milne to find the true facts of the case. The U.S. claimed that the blockade had been established before either ship had arrived and that they had both slipped in illegally; Bunch upheld Vice Consul Walker, while Captain Hewett of Rinaldo advised both skippers not to try to run the blockade out of Beaufort while the case was being investigated by the British government. The correspondence between Bunch, the British Consul at Charleston, and the Federal naval officers before Beaufort, became so bitter that Bunch, said Milne:

'... not long ago wrote to a vice consul [Walker] stating that he would recommend the captains of HM Ships to use force if two ships then in Beaufort were molested by the Blockading ships. I have called Lord Lyons attention to the subject.'<sup>60</sup>

Lyons was 'aghast' and promptly censured Bunch, telling him

'... that surely so serious a matter as making war upon the U.S. is not to depend upon the view which he and a captain of a man of war may happen to take of a Blockade question.'<sup>61</sup>

Milne on 11 October wrote to the Admiralty noting that Lord Russell had decided his advice to the Alliance's captain was 'correct and judicious' and informing their Lordships that the ship had run the blockade into a southern port. 'I therefore congratulate myself'

59 Hewett to Milne, 1 Oct. 1861, ADM 1/5759P.

60 Milne to Grey, private, 17 Oct. 1861, MLN/107.

61 Lyons to Milne, private, 24 Nov. 1861, MLN/107.



he added,

that the reply I gave was couched in such guarded terms, as it is now evident that her Master wished to entrap me into giving him such advice as would in a manner have justified him in keeping closer to the blockaded coasts than was necessary in making an ordinary voyage to the West Indies where he proposed he was bound... <sup>62</sup>

Sir Alexander ended his despatch with the rueful comment

'... no such name as 'Samuel D. Forest' appears among the Certified Masters in the Merchant Navy List of 1861'. The wily Captain Forest's ship never did escape from Beaufort; for on April 26, 1862, Fort Macon, N.C. surrendered to the combined Union land-sea forces under Commander Lockwood and Brigadier General John G. Parke. Both the Alliance and Gondar, still in Beaufort, were captured when the fort, which protected the harbour, capitulated. <sup>63</sup>

### Diplomatic and Naval Communications.

Early in the conflict it was realized that the communications between the British diplomatic representatives in America - Lord Lyons - and the representative of British naval power - Rear Admiral Milne - would have to be as speedy and reliable as possible.

62 Milne to LCA, 11 Oct. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

63 Navy Department, Naval History Division, Civil War Naval Chronology 1861 - 1865 (Washington D.C., n.d.) Part II - 1862 p. 56. Hereafter cited as CWNC.

In May Milne and Lyons agreed on a numerical code based on Wilmot's Boat Signals, 1857 edition, to be used in cases of necessity. The U.S. authorities allowed this code to be sent on the normal telegraph lines in the North, but, to indicate their pique, for a time they charged the full price for one word - for each number sent. Before the authorities agreed to reduce the price Lyons had some very costly telegraph bills: for the last quarter of 1861 the British Legation spent £30, in cypher telegrams.<sup>64</sup> The U.S. Post Office was another source of friction. In June Lyons told Milne that a report from the naval storekeeper in the Bahamas destined for the admiral had been opened at the U.S. dead letter office in New York. At that time all mail had to be prepaid and the storekeeper had neglected to do this. As a result, said Lyons, all the details of the naval armaments stores in the Bahamas had fallen into Union hands. This incident reinforced the determination of the British representatives to avoid using the regular U.S. post, if at all possible.<sup>65</sup>

From that summer, Lyons had messengers at Boston and New York to meet the weekly English packets. They would receive from the British Post Office agent aboard any despatches or letters for Lyons and then go directly to Washington. The packets stopped

64 Milne to LCA, 29 Nov. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

65 Lyons to Milne, 26 June 1861, ADM. 128/56.

fortnightly at Halifax and Milne often sent his letters to Lyons by this route. In addition, the consuls at Boston and New York had orders to send a messenger directly to Washington if any letters of special importance were received from Admiral Milne.<sup>66</sup> The ships detailed to inspect the blockade would leave their reports with the consul at New York, whence other Royal Navy ships or British packets with a mail agent aboard would take them to Halifax. From the New York consul the ships would often pick up the crews' and officers' mail forwarded from Halifax. Thus the two northern consuls - Lousada at Boston and more especially E.M. Archibald at New York - were indispensable links in the chain that kept British communications, if possible, always in British hands. As has been pointed out earlier, when Sir Alexander was at Halifax his links with the British Legation in Washington were very satisfactory; by telegraph: one day or less; by ship: about two days. From early 1862 onwards the naval commander always tried to have one or two ships at New York City to facilitate this connection with Lord Lyons. There was at this time an American owned telegraph station at Cape Race, Newfoundland, the eastern most part of the North American Continent. Small boats would intercept the west bound mail packets and wire short excerpts of the latest news directly to the States, three or four days before the packet reached New York. Thus communications between Europe and North America were reduced to seven or eight days; of course

<sup>66</sup> Lyons to Milne, 21 July 1861, ADM 128/56.

one still had to wait the usual eleven or twelve days for the complete details furnished by newspapers, weeklies, letters, etc., brought by the packet.<sup>67</sup> As this service at Cape Race was operated by an American press agency, it wasn't used directly by either Milne or Lyons.

When, however, Sir Alexander was at Bermuda as he usually was from November to May, it was easier for him to keep in contact with his ships and stations than with Lyons, because he was then centrally located, almost equidistant from his two ancillary naval bases at Jamaica and Halifax. There was a monthly mail steamer from Halifax to Bermuda at this time, and after the Trent crisis Milne usually kept two warships at Fortress Monroe, to be at the immediate disposal of Lord Lyons. The Fortress was about three days by steamer from Bermuda. Sir Alexander had another reason for wanting to keep some of his officers at Fortress Monroe. The district was the great depot and staging area for Federal movements against the Confederates and the British admiral wanted to keep it under his surveillance. The Federal authorities in the area offered their complete facilities to the British men-of-war: coal, hospitals, ship repairs, and all manner of supplies. Milne cautioned his ship captains not to use these facilities unless absolutely necessary, e.g., he insisted they purchase coal from civilian contractors so as not to deplete Union supplies at the Fortress, and of course as a symbol of British neutrality.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> 'Cape Race, Newfoundland', The Illustrated London News, 24 August 1861, p. 193.

<sup>68</sup> 'Memoranda Relative to the Civil War in America,' MLN/105/6.

The U.S. and Royal Navy officers often exchanged visits and not infrequently dined together.

Communication with the southern consuls was another matter.<sup>69</sup> After the Mure-Bunch incident in August, when Mure a friend of Robert Bunch, British Consul at Charleston, was intercepted in the North with private letters and the consul's despatch bag - the contents of the former seeming to implicate Bunch in a 'negotiation' with the rebels - Seward withdrew Bunch's exequatur in October 1861. Bunch had been trying, on Foreign Office instruction, to get the Confederates to agree to the Declaration of Paris. Lyons wrote to Russell on 24 September that:

the Southern Governments were wonderfully judicious and discreet on their part. But for the ill luck of the seizure of the foolish private letters which Mr. Robert Mure was so imprudent as to carry, the object would have been attained, without any drawback.<sup>70</sup>

The Confederate Congress did accept the Declaration of Paris on 13 August, except for the article on Privateering, which form of warfare was of course, their chief naval weapon.

<sup>69</sup> For a study of this topic see Bonham M.L. The British Consuls in the Confederacy (New York, 1911). The author appears to have used various American sources but only British printed documents.

<sup>70</sup> Lyons to Russell, 24 Sept. 1861, PRO 30/22/35.

Clearly, the safest and least complicated method of communicating with the British consuls in the South was by sea. The Federals, when announcing the blockade, agreed to let neutral men-of-war enter southern ports. Lyons believed it was necessary to communicate with the consuls as quickly as possible. He had heard little enough from them after the war broke out and there were complaints of British subjects drafted into the Confederate armies, rumours of the confiscation of the property of British subjects and other equally unpleasant violations of neutral rights. In addition, Lyons wished to hear regularly from the British consuls their opinions on the internal state of the Confederacy as well as their views on the efficiency of the blockade. Lord Russell also wished a speedy explanation of the 'Mure' incident from Consul Bunch, though Lyons had sent Steady to Charleston a short time before this request from the Foreign Secretary was received, and was gratified that he had anticipated Russell's orders. Secretary of State Seward agreed to facilitate this communication and caused the following notice to appear in the newspapers on 18 September:

It is ascertained at the Department of State that hereafter, communications between the British Government and its Consuls in the Ports of the Insurrectionary States will, with the consent of our Government be carried on by means of a British Vessel of war. This course will obviate the embarrassments which hitherto attended these communications through other channels. <sup>71</sup>

Accordingly, HMS Steady 5, - certainly the right name for a ship on a mission of this sort - sailed that September from New York

<sup>71</sup> Lyons to Grant, 19 Sept. 1861, MLN/104/2.

for Charleston. Lyons' instructions to Bunch, followed in the main by all British warships which communicated with the South during the war, show the caution emphasised by the British government toward both belligerents:

1. You will make such arrangements for receiving and sending Despatches to the boat of the 'Steady' as will make it unnecessary for the officer or crew to land.
2. You will detain the boat as short a time as possible.
3. You will take precautions to prevent any necessity for the officers' communicating with the shore otherwise than through yourself.
4. You will bear in mind Her Majesty's Ships are positively enjoined not to enter any harbour of the Southern States, and that it is desirable they should remain as short a time as possible in the immediate neighbourhood of any such harbour.
5. You will be careful to avoid everthing likely to place the 'Steady' in a position to be tendered compliments by the local authorities or in a position in which compliment may be expected to be tendered by her to those Authorities.
6. You will in particular recollect that Her Majesty's Ships are positively ordered not to salute the Confederate Flag, and it is very undesirable that they should be placed in an embarrassing situation by being saluted themselves by a Confederate Ship or Fort.
7. You will, of course, consider these instructions as applicable not to the case of the 'Steady' only but to that of any other of HM Ships that may communicate with you. <sup>72</sup>

Lyons added that despite Milne's 'strong objections' to sending his warships to southern ports, the admiral, after Lyons request, agreed to permit it. But the British Minister would use such facilities 'sparingly' and if it became inconvenient 'not at all'. Lyons instructed Bunch to have the consuls in the other southern

72 Lyons to Bunch, Immediate and Very Confidential, 19 Sept. 1861  
MLN/104/2.

states send their despatches through him. Milne's orders to Steady's Cmmdr. Grant were similar to Lyons' orders to Bunch with the exception that if any of the Confederate forts or warships saluted the British flag 'you have my authority to return it'. <sup>73</sup> Happily this form of 'recognition' did not occur. The saluting of a flag as a form of recognition may seem to be very small beer indeed, but Seward was extremely sensitive to any sort of foreign acceptance of people whom the North considered as rebels and insurgents and he had as resident British Minister, Lord Lyons, a determined neutralist.

With caution then, HMS Steady on 28 Sept. 1861 approached Charleston harbour, her British flag flying. The Union blockader 'Vandalia', Cmmdr. L.P. Lee, sailed out, with her men at quarters and put a shot across 'Steady's bow. Cmmdr. Grant immediately cleared for action and sent a boat to the Vandalia to demand an explanation.<sup>74</sup> Cmmdr. Lee apologized profusely, maintaining however, that even though Steady showed her British flag,

a smart steamer moving under false colours (which we know is done and which your great Naval Authorities Admirals Nelson and Collingwood, admitted an enemy has a right to use) bent on running the Blockade can slip by a sailing vessel lying to, without steam and near the bar.... <sup>75</sup>

73 Milne to Grant, 9 Sept. 1861, MLN/103/15/0.

74 Grant to Milne, 7 Oct. 1861, MLN/104/2.

75 L.P. Lee to Grant, 28 Sept. 1861, MLN/104/2.



The consul accepted and delivered up his despatches without further incident and when Grant reported the shot across his bow, Milne chose to overlook it. But this was the beginning of a whole series of proceedings of this nature, especially after the Florida in September 1862 ran into Mobile flying British colours. Finally, Sir Alexander issued an order on 25 March 1863 notifying his warships that while strong representations would be made to the Federal authorities when these incidents occurred '... at the same time Her Majesty's Ships when approaching Blockading Squadrons are to take every care in steering, regulating their speed etc., so as to give no ground for the Federal Cruisers to suspect that a deception is being practised on them.' 76 The next month the Secretary of the Navy Welles also issued an instruction to U.S. warships which stated:

'... in order to preserve a friendly feeling .... it would be well, as a rule to have one small gun loaded with blank cartridge to be used by day as the preparatory signal of warning in accordance with the usage of the sea service.' 77

For some time communications with the southern consuls were continued on this irregular basis, the warships of the French North American squadron often alternating with those of their British opposite numbers in receiving and delivering despatches for both countries.

76 Admiralty Letters, MLN/105/6.

77 Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the war of the Rebellion (Washington, 1894-1927), Series I, vol. 14, pp. 122-3. Cited hereafter as ORN. For the visits of French warships to the CSA, see Ibid., pp. 443, 494.

## British 'Shadows' for Federal Operations

The year 1861 was in many ways a bitter and disappointing one for those who upheld the Union cause. The first engagement of any importance, the battle of Bull's Run ('Yankee's Run' Lord Palmerston called it) had resulted in a Union rout. The huge navy yard at Norfolk had fallen into the Secessionists' hands and despite the belated firing of the lofts, ships and stores, approximately three hundred new Dahlgren guns had been seized by the rebels.<sup>78</sup> By August the newly appointed General McClellan was directing the defences about Washington and beginning to turn the raw levies of the North into the Army of the Potomac. In November he would be commander-in-chief of all the Federal armies. Plainly the war was to be a long and earnest one. The only Northern success of any importance in 1861 was the capture of Port Royal, South Carolina. This was a necessary victory, not only from the standpoint of Northern morale but also for the efficiency of the blockading forces. At the time the U.S. coast from the Chesapeake to the Rio Grande was seeing more and more Federal warships anchored and cruising off the major southern ports. The blockade was rapidly being organized on a regular basis; on 18 September Captain S.F. DuPont was appointed to command the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, comprising the area from South Carolina to the tip of Florida; Flag Officer Goldsborough assumed

78 Soley, J.R., The Navy in the Civil War (London, 1898) 1: The Blockade and the Cruisers, p.22.

command of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron on 23 September, which covered the coasts of Virginia and North Carolina.<sup>79</sup> Two other blockading squadrons were also created for the Gulf - one to close the area from Florida to the Mississippi and the other from that river to the Rio Grande. The only repair and coaling station south of Hampton Roads was then at Key West, Florida. It was often almost unusable because of Yellow fever and the heat. Obviously, an intermediate base was needed on the east coast. Britain quickly discouraged Federal ideas of using the Bahamas as a coaling depot. After much discussion in Washington, Port Royal, S.C. was selected for two reasons: it was almost equidistant from the tip of Florida and Fortress Monroe, and it possessed an excellent harbour.

The massive preparation for the assault did not go unnoticed by the British Minister. On 14 October Lyons wrote to Milne of an expedition being formed which would include some 15,000 troops and many warships. Its destination he said, was unknown. Some thought it was going to attack Savannah, others said New Orleans.<sup>80</sup> Among the British diplomatic and naval representatives in North America the question then arose: what protection should be given to British subjects in the area to be attacked? Milne disliked the idea of any of his ships actually following the expedition as it would, he believed, excite 'great jealousy' among the Union forces.

79 CWNC, Part I - 1861, p. 27.

80 Lyons to Milne, private, 14 Oct. 1861, MLN/107.

He, however, sent HMS Immortalite 51, newly arrived from England, to New York so as to be immediately available to use as Lyons saw fit.<sup>81</sup> In the end, Lyons told Sir Alexander

'that an Admiral was essentially more competent than a Minister to judge of the probability of a Ships being wanted to protect British Subjects.'

There were rumours that the French intended to have a ship accompany the expedition, or be in the area and Lyons thought that

.... we might have had a great outcry in England if we had shown less willingness to protect our subjects than the French did .<sup>82</sup>

Milne told the Admiralty that this argument was the determining factor in his decision to send a British warship to 'observe' the U.S. expedition.<sup>83</sup>

Accordingly, HMS Immortalite left New York on 8 November for the scene of action. Milne established this precedent 'with some hesitation' which is reflected in his orders to Immortalite's captain, George Hancock, whom the admiral termed 'an officer of discreet and sound judgement'.<sup>84</sup> Hancock was told 'to afford any legitimate protection to HM Consul and HM Subjects residing at the Ports or Places attacked'. He was to tell the commander of the U.S. forces that 'your orders are on no account to precede or in any way to cause embarrassment to the expedition but simply to

81 Milne to Lyons, 30 Oct. 1861, private (draft), MLN/107.

82 Lyons to Milne, 9 Nov. 1861, private, MLN/107.

83 Milne to ICA, 8 Nov. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

84 Ibid.

be ready to give protection to British life....' 85 These orders closed with a characteristic Milne warning to economise on coal. This was a necessary precaution at this time of relatively inefficient steam engines which had a high fuel consumption. Steam power was to be reserved for emergencies, such as manoeuvring in dangerous American shoal waters. From fear of complications, Lord Lyons gave Captain Hancock neither written nor verbal despatches to any of the British Consuls in the South. This was to be clearly a trial run.

When Hancock sailed from his anchorage at Staten Island, New York, he had no precise idea where the U.S. expedition was, nor what was its destination. He believed it to be at Charleston, but falling in with the U.S.S. Susquehanna off that port, he learned that DuPont's force was at Port Royal, S.C., and that on the 8th it had captured the Confederate batteries in that harbour. Hancock sailed directly for Port Royal and on 20 November presented his reasons for being in the area to Flag Officer DuPont in the Wabash, flagship of the expedition. 86 Hancock was perhaps fortunate in that the commander of the Federal squadron was Commodore Samuel F. DuPont,

85 Milne to Hancock, 31 Oct. 1861, MLN/110/1/CC.

86 Hancock to Milne, 17 Dec. 1861, MLN/104/2. The Immortalite was one of a class of frigates laid down by the Admiralty to match the five 'large' frigates voted by the U.S. Congress in 1855, of whom the Wabash was one. Immortalite was a 600 HP screw steamer displacing 3059 tons, with a crew of 570 and 51 guns. The Wabash displaced 3200 tons, carried 50 guns, a complement of 500 men and was also a screw steamer.

a naval officer of the 'old school'. Fifty-eight years old in 1861, DuPont had been in the navy since 1815 and had served in most quarters of the globe. He had taken W.B. Reed, the U.S. minister to China, to that country in 1858 and while there had made firm friends with many British naval officers, including Sir Michael Seymour and Captain W. King Hall. <sup>87</sup>

After mentioning the purpose of his mission, Capt. Hancock said his admiral had instructed him:

.... that I am most carefully to abstain from any act or from any movement, that you may consider prejudicial to your plan of operations ... my officers have been strictly prohibited from carrying any information; letters papers, etc., from one port of the coast to another ... under these circumstances I trust that my presence generally in the Neighbourhood of your operations will not be deemed by you, as in any way prejudicial to those operations, but you will ... consider that I am only affording that protection to Her Majesty's Subjects which they may rightfully expect and claim... <sup>88</sup>

DuPont replied the next day. Stating that he fully understood the necessity for Hancock's visit, he having been on the same type of service in his career, DuPont said '... I shall be most happy ...

<sup>87</sup> DuPont's voluminous correspondence with various British naval officers is available at the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Delaware, U.S.A. Hancock and DuPont exchanged many letters after their initial meeting at Port Royal; Hancock tried to convince the commodore that the Union could never be reconstructed as it once was, while DuPont maintained that it would be. See also: Rear Admiral S.F. DuPont USN, H.A. DuPont (New York, 1926). DuPont visited Admiral Milne when that officer was at New York in 1863.

<sup>88</sup> Hancock to DuPont, 20 Nov. 1861, MLN/104/2.

to add my own assistance to your efforts, whenever it can contribute to the security or convenience of your Countrymen'.

But the Flag officer added '... I would deem it objectionable to be followed systematically in my progress from Point to Point'. He concluded by offering Hancock 'the highest proof of my confidence' which would be the revelation to the British officer of the expedition's next point of attack, so that Hancock could judge whether his presence was necessary in the area.<sup>89</sup>

Capt. Hancock stayed at Port Royal from 20 November until 10 December 1861, replenishing supplies, giving Milne a vivid account of the battle and exchanging visits with Union naval officers. Hancock believed that the plan of attack on Port Royal was conceived in a 'bold and able manner, and that it was carried out with much Gallantry and Skill... all my intercourse with him [DuPont] as also with all other members of the Expedition has been most gratifying and agreeable'.<sup>90</sup> The British captain believed that the effect of the ships' fire on the batteries was remarkable. Previously, it had been the usual custom for ships attacking fortifications to anchor and then fire - often with little success against any well constructed fort. 'The Attacking Fleet, you will perceive', he wrote to Milne, 'kept under weigh and working upon an elliptic arc kept passing and repassing the Batteries on either side and always at a variable though prearranged distance, thus their shot all

89 DuPont to Hancock, 21 Nov. 1861, MLN/104/2.

90 Hancock to Milne, 17 Dec. 1861, MLN/104/2.

told whilst those from the Batteries never got the range correctly'.<sup>91</sup> Hancock praised the restraint of the Federal forces, was saddened by the gutted 'Villas' of Beaufort and noted that much of the cotton in the area had been left unpicked.<sup>92</sup>

The Immortalite was at Port Royal when the news of the Trent incident was received. Hancock spoke of the Union officers' 'uneasiness' concerning Captain Wilkes' proceedings, 'they readily admit the madness it would be on the part of their Government to do anything to promote a War with England'.<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, satisfied that British subjects would not be ill treated by the Federals and anxious to reinforce Milne at Bermuda, as well as to be out of range of Union guns, Hancock left Port Royal on 10 December and arrived in Bermuda on the 17th. Before he left, the captain wrote a last message to Commodore DuPont. He thanked him and his officers for their kindness:

'... and the recollections of my sojourn in these waters will always cause me to feel a deep sympathy and high regard for those gallant men who are obeying their country's call and doing honor to the Flag they serve - and to the old stock from whom they sprung'.<sup>94</sup>

91 Hancock to Milne, 24 Nov. 1861, MLN/107.

92 same to same, 17 Dec. 1861, MLN/104/2. see CWNC, Part I -1861 pp. 30-34 for details of this expedition, the largest combined naval and military force ever assembled by the U.S. to that date. It comprised 77 vessels, with 16,000 troops. The Port Royal area swiftly became the workshop and liberty port for blockaders on the east coast. Writing from there on 19 Feb. 1863, DuPont said: 'If I had not induced the Department to establish a floating machine shop, which I had seen the French have in China, the blockade would have been a total failure'. CWNC, Part. III-1863, p.31.

93 Hancock to Milne, 17 Dec. 1861, MLN/104/2.

94 Hancock to DuPont, n.d., Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, op.cit.



Immortalite was thus the first British warship to remain in the area of Union military and naval operations for the express purpose of protecting British subjects. Milne wrote to the Admiralty on 18 December expressing his approval of the correspondence between Hancock and DuPont adding

'.... it is satisfactory to me to find that my intentions in sending the 'Immortalite' .... were not misunderstood by the Commadore'.<sup>95</sup>

The precedent having been established, Sir Alexander occasionally sent his warships on similar missions to the embattled American coast. A rather unfortunate example was the attempted visit of HMS Liffey, Capt. G. Preedy, C.B. to New Orleans. This fifty-one gun frigate arrived about 15 April 1862 at the mouth of the Mississippi with the intention of going to New Orleans to protect British subjects during the expected Federal attack on the city. But the Liffey drew twenty-four feet and was unable to cross the bar at the entrance to the river.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps it was just as well; the Federals attacked on 24 and 25 April 1862, forcing their way past the Confederate batteries and obstructions in the river. The French warship Milan was then at New Orleans and its commander graciously offered his vessel as a refuge for any distressed British subjects in the area.

<sup>95</sup> Milne to LCA, 18 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

<sup>96</sup> Coppel to Lyons, 9 May 1862, ADM 128/57.

As the year 1861 waned, Lord Lyons became, though always anxious, rather more settled in his relations with the Federal government. On 29 September he wrote to Milne that 'things are still going on smoothly here',<sup>97</sup> and on 11 November, 'I have no immediate apprehensions, certainly none of anything sudden'.<sup>98</sup> Yet four days before Lyons wrote this last letter to Milne, the event which was to produce the greatest crisis in nineteenth-century British-American relations had taken place. But in the seven months of the conflict before the Trent affair, the British diplomatic representative in the United States and the British naval representative in American waters had, with tact and firmness, served well both Britain's subjects and her interests.

97 Lyons to Milne, 29 Sept. 1861, private, MLN/107.

98 Lyons to Milne, 11 Nov. 1861, private, MLN/107.

CHAPTER IIIThe TRENT Affair and the Station's Capacity for Offensive and  
Defensive Action

It may honestly be said that the greatest crisis in British-American relations of the 19th century has, for Anglo-American historians of the 20th, become one of the greatest bores. The amount of material devoted to the intricacies of this incident has been enormous; much of it can be found listed in any standard history of the period.<sup>I</sup> This chapter will attempt to cover the crisis primarily from the hitherto neglected viewpoint of Rear Admiral Milne: his appreciation of the defence problems of the two main bases, Bermuda and Halifax; his co-operation with colonial officials to construct an adequate defence in the area, and his correspondence with the home authorities on the measures needed to conduct a war against the North.

On 8 November 1861, the Federal warship San Jacinto 8, Capt. Charles Wilkes, stopped the St. Thomas bound W. Indian mail steamer Trent, in the Old Bahama Channel, close by the Cuban coast. Capt. Wilkes forceably removed the two Confederate Commissioners, James M. Mason and John Slidell and their

I The definitive diplomatic account remains E.D.Adams', Great Britain and the American Civil War, op.cit., i, ch.7. See also Parl. papers, XXV, (1862), 'Correspondence respecting the Trent', and Dr. K. Bourne's, 'British Preparations for War with the North', English Historical Review, LXXVI, (1961), pp.600-632.

secretaries, and proceeded to Fortress Monroe. The Federal captain acted on his own responsibility, having heard that the Confederates were in Cuba awaiting passage to St. Thomas and thence to Europe. Ironically, on 4 November, the San Jacinto had fired a shot across the bow of another British ship, the man-of-war Landrail 5, which was en route to Key West and from there via the Bahamas to Bermuda. Capt. Wilkes was apparently annoyed as Landrail had carelessly delayed the hoisting of her flag and pennant; for which her captain was censured by Milne.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to conjecture what would have happened if Landrail had been in the Old Bahama Channel—a short distance from her actual position—when Wilkes stopped the Trent. The British warship's captain, Cmmdr. T.H.M. Martin knew that belligerents could search British ships, but he had no instructions relating to the seizure of private persons from such vessels.

The only occasion when the commander-in-chief acted directly to protect the mail packets was on 5 December 1862 when Milne authorized the senior officer at Bermuda to use force if any Federal cruiser stopped the St. Thomas to Halifax packet.

He had heard a rumour that Wilkes, then cruising in the area, in command of a Union squadron, had determined to seize the vessel

<sup>2</sup> Milne to Martin, 29 Nov. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

if Confederate officers were found aboard her. This order was speedily countermanded by the Admiralty, though Sir Alexander later explained that it had become cancelled when he returned to Bermuda on 29 December, from a trip to Nassau.<sup>3</sup>

Lyons heard of the Trent affair on 15 November, the very day that Wilkes sailed into Fortress Monroe with his prisoners. On the 16th, the British Minister telegraphed in cypher to Milne informing him of the event. Sir Alexander was on the point of leaving Halifax for Bermuda and thence to Vera Cruz to command the British contingent in the Mexican expedition. This event dislocated his plans. He decided to proceed to Bermuda but to postpone his departure for Vera Cruz until he had received the mail of 17 December which would bring the latest advices from home. On 20 December the boat arrived with orders from the Admiralty. Their Lordships instructed Milne to remain at Bermuda because of the U.S. situation, they advised him to keep in close touch with Lyons and, while directing him to look to the safety of British colonial possessions, said 'we do not consider it advisable... to fetter you by any detailed orders.'<sup>4</sup> That same day, Sir Alexander wrote to Commodore Hugh Dunlop, commander of the Jamaica Division, ordering him to proceed to Mexico with the

3. Baxter, J.P. 'The British Government and Neutral Rights', op.cit., p.19; Milne to LCA, 25 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/6/F.

4. LCA to Milne, 1 Dec. 1861, MLN/105/6.

British forces. The vice admiral - he had been given that local rank on 15 November - then turned all his energies to organising his command for a possible war with the Federals.

### The Defences and Facilities of the Station

The most important naval bases on the North American and W. Indian Station in 1861 were those at Halifax, Bermuda and Jamaica. There were small naval installations at Nassau and Antigua, but at the former only ships drawing less than twelve feet could enter the harbour, there were few defences, and a shortage of water; while the latter, though possessing several good harbours, was inconveniently situated to leeward, with obsolete facilities and as Milne said, the defences were 'utterly nil'. Barbados was the military headquarters of the W. Indies, and the depôt for the gold bullion furnished to the banks in the other islands. Its harbour however, was open and untenable for any vessel during the stormy season. The defences were weak; its governor stated in October 1863 that if a large force attacked the island and there were no naval vessels there, then 'we are gone'.<sup>5</sup> The one big advantage of Barbados over Antigua was that its favourable position in the path of the prevailing Trade Winds enabled a sailing vessel to reach any

5. C[olonial] O[ffice] to LCA, 27 Nov. 1863, ADM 1/4849.

other part of the W. Indies on sail power alone. In those days when steam was still looked upon as an auxiliary to sails, this was a great benefit. Jamaica had excellent naval facilities, and a large hospital, but as to defences, Milne noted in June

1861 '..... works badly contrived and worse executed, unserviceable guns, decayed gun carriages, corroded shot, the absence of stores of all kinds, and of ammunition, with dilapidated and damp powder magazines.' 6

In addition, Jamaica was awkwardly situated for ships operating on the American southern coast. Milne had asked Commodore Dunlop, in the summer of 1861, to repair to Havana so that British Warships could, with greater convenience, inspect the Union blockade. Although the Spanish authorities made supplies readily available to the commodore, the great defect with Havana was that it was a pest hole. That summer, several British warships in the area were crippled by Yellow fever; Milne disliked, when there was any chance of infection, sending his ships to the Cuban port.

The one big advantage of all the British bases was that they had coal supplies. Thus in the W. Indies ships of the Royal Navy could count on coal and protection, however minimal, from six British sources: Jamaica, Antigua, Nassau, Barbados, Trinidad and Belize. The Federals had at this time no protected coal depôts in the W. Indies except those at Key West and Colon.

In 1863 they did establish one other, at Cape Haytian, with the permission of the Haytian government. But by then the situation in the Gulf was much more favourable to the Union forces: New Orleans surrendered in April 1862, and Pensacola with its navy yard was taken in the next month. Nevertheless, cruising British warships in the W. Indies, were never far from coal, largely supplied from their own bases. On the northern part of the station coal was available directly from the mines at Cape Breton and Pictou, N.S., as well as from depôts at St. John, N.B. and St. John's, Newfoundland. Of course, the Federals in the north had ample coal at Fortress Monroe, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, New York, Portland and many other places.

While the coal was plentiful, docking facilities on the station were the great want, there was no naval dock yard in the entire command. Various civilian blocks and grid slips were available, e.g., at St. John, N.B. and Dartmouth, near Halifax. But only the smaller ships could use them and they were often unsafe; in 1863 HMS Barracouta 6, slipped off the blocks at St. John, N.B., causing some damage to her hull. At Havana there was a floating dry dock suitable for vessels up to 2000 tons and 22 feet draught - but as most of the British ships of the larger class were over 2500 tons, and it was very expensive,



Milne used it only twice.<sup>7</sup> In the 18th and early 19th centuries this want of docks had not been a problem. Bermuda, Jamaica and Halifax all had careening wharves where, by means of capstans on the dockside, ships could be pulled over on their sides, scrapped, recoppered and repaired. But in 1861, though the ships were still wooden, they were all steamers and too heavy for the primitive methods of the past. Not until 1869 was there a floating dry dock, capable of handling most of the larger ships, established at Bermuda. The Federals had a clear advantage here, for they had excellent dry docks at New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Portsmouth, N.H., and Norfolk when that base was recaptured in May 1862.<sup>8</sup> These docks were of vital importance because much of the American coast was bordered by shallow water. In the W. Indies and Bermuda, the tidal variation was very slight so that once a ship had run aground, there was often little hope of refloating her. If a vessel, by lightening and the assistance of other ships, finally became free, she was likely to have sustained considerable damage in the process.

If American facilities were not to be used for the repair of his larger ships' defects, then the commander-in-chief had no

7. 'Memorandum relative to the North American and West Indian Station', MLN/105/6. This memo contains much valuable information on the facilities of the station.

8. 'List of the Chief Ports of the Federal Coast of the United States', etc., compiled by the Admiralty Hydrographer, 15 December 1861, MLN/105/6.

alternative but to send them to England. On several occasions Milne used the services of a Mr. Murphy, a professional civilian diver, to make absolutely necessary repairs on ships' bottoms; but for stern post reinforcing and other major repairs, the civilian yards of the North were generally used.<sup>9</sup> Sir Alexander told his captains to use, if at all possible, only civilian yards so as to maintain their neutral status.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, several times his officers were forced to use government facilities because of the unavailability of private yards. Cmmdr. Watson of Peterel II, while at Charleston delivering Lyons' despatches in January 1863, had to repair his rudder. The Confederate Commodore Ingraham offered him the use of the C.S. naval yard, but Watson refused and had the necessary work done at a civilian establishment. HMS Vesuvius 6, one of the few paddle ships still on the station, had her hull repaired in the U.S. naval dockyard at Boston, in 1863. But this last had a political element. When Milne visited Washington in October of that year, Secretary of the Navy Welles urged the station commander to make use of Federal dockyards if necessary. Since Vesuvius needed repairing, Sir Alexander

<sup>9</sup> Because of the propeller's vibration in the wooden hull, repairs to the sterns of Milne's ships were very common.

<sup>10</sup> Milne to Archibald, 21 March 1862, MLN/103/II/K.

accomplished two objectives: the repair plus a detailed account of Federal ironclads and armaments from Vesuvius' observant captain, Richard Vesey Hamilton.<sup>11</sup>

Halifax naval dockyard had no fortifications of its own. It was within the town itself and lay some four miles from the mouth of Halifax harbour. Before an enemy squadron could reach the dockyard, it would have to pass batteries and forts on both sides of the harbour. Founded in 1758, the naval base had the advantage of being ice free all the year round. The harbour was easily entered and provided draught and space for the largest warships. It had been used as a supply base for ships blockading the American coast during the War of 1812; here the proud HMS Shannon towed in the defeated American frigate Chesapeake in 1813. In 1861 the town had as yet no railway communication with the rest of British North America.

Major General Hastings Doyle, commander of the troops in the Maritimes, wrote to the Secretary of State for War on 28 November 1861. Regarding the defensive capabilities of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Prince Edward's Island, he stated that they were:

..... almost in a defenceless state, both from want of sufficient number of troops and the means of defence being

<sup>11</sup> Capt. R.V. Hamilton to Milne, 3 Dec. 1863, ADM 1/5821.

in many instances totally inadequate for the purpose..... I must therefore look to the Militia, but in vain..... it exists alone on paper ..... generally speaking too old for service, totally ignorant of drill and without adjutant or staff. 12

Doyle thought that there were, however, about three thousand Volunteers, a separate organization, in an efficient condition in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; he lamented the local legislatures lack of interest in voting funds for the Militia. As to the defences of Halifax, he said that 'three sides of the principal battery for the defence of this harbour, (Fort Charlotte)

[on St. George's Island] are in ruins and others are so much exposed that they would be very soon rendered useless by an enterprising enemy.' Doyle believed that both in Nova Scotia and on the coast of New Brunswick, 'we must at present look chiefly to our Fleet for protection.' 13 In a report on the defences of the harbours and coasts of British North America made on 10 December 1861, Capt. J. Orlebar, who had many years experience in charting the region, echoed Doyle's thoughts on Halifax: 'Unless assisted by a naval force it is by no means strong enough to resist even the attack of a few frigates well armed.' 14 The first obstacle encountered on entering the harbour was York Redoubt, which Orlebar considered an

12. Doyle to Secretary of State for War, 28 Nov. 1861, C.O.217/228.

13. Ibid.

14. 'Report on the Harbours and Coasts of British North America', Capt. J. Orlebar, 10 Dec. 1861, ADM 7/624.

inefficient work. Once got by, a warship would have to pass Point Pleasant battery, then George Island and Clarence forts '..... all must be passed within 1000 to 1400 yards but as few of these forts are well armed they would offer but small resistance to a determined enemy.' Orlebar noted that privateers could easily lurk in the many good harbours in the Halifax area, none of which had any defences. The science of mine laying, they were then called 'torpedoes', was in its infancy in 1861. The Russians had made limited use of them during the Crimean war - one of theirs from that time is at the National Maritime Museum - but it remained for the Confederates with their mined booms, galvanic detonators, etc., at Charleston and elsewhere, to make significant contributions to the science of harbour protection. In 1861 Halifax had no mines or other underwater defences. Because of the Trent incident, the home government sent some 10,500 men that winter, to reinforce the troops in North America. This provided for a total British force of about 12,500 men in Canada and over 5,000 in the Maritimes.<sup>15</sup>

The Halifax Citadel, 150 feet above sea level, commanded the harbour by a plunging fire - which type of fire created such havoc among Union warships running the gauntlet at Vicksburg. Nevertheless, the citadel alone, remarked the able and

15. Bourne, op.cit., p. 614.

ubiquitous Lt. Col. F.D. Jervois in his January 1865 report,

'would not prevent an enemy's squadron entering the harbour and burning the dockyard and military storehouses, or capturing or destroying any of our ships that might be laying or refitting there.' 16

To prevent this, the fortifications leading to the dockyard must be made efficient; Jervois believed they offered little protection against a modern naval attack. The defences then consisted of some 12, 24 and 32 pounder guns and a few 10 inch howitzers. York Redoubt, he said in this report written in the fall of 1864, was an old tower of weak rubble masonry at the entrance, mounting three, 24 pounder guns; in all fifty four guns constituted the sea defences of the harbour, none larger than the 32 pounder. Apparently little progress had been made in the years since the '61 scare, although several works were then in process of construction, Jervois recommended additional batteries; some to feature the new Coles' turret, as well as barracks and floating obstructions. Halifax was not particularly vulnerable to land attack as much of the surrounding country was covered with thick forest and the citadel could not be taken without a regular siege. Jervois believed that any attack which came from the sea would be on a comparatively small scale. This was because the nearest harbour suitable for use in large troop landing operations was Ship Harbour, some forty-five miles

16. 'Report on the Defences of Canada and the British Naval Station in the North Atlantic', etc., Lt. Col. W.F.D. Jervois, Jan. 1865, MLN/P/13/1/K.

from Halifax.

During the crisis, Milne kept only Hydra 6, and later Orlando 50, at Halifax; while believing that some naval force should be kept there he felt that because of the cold his ships would be of only limited effectiveness to the defences.<sup>17</sup> After the Trent affair no ship was left there during the winter months, while Sir Alexander held the command. His successors, however, Vice Admirals Sir James Hope and Sir Rodney Mundy kept a ship there in the winter of 1865-67 because of the Fenian threat to Canada. Admiral Mundy observed that due to the cold the ships had to be roofed over and were thus unavailable for any immediate action.<sup>18</sup> When he left the station in March 1864, Milne said that while the defences of Halifax were being improved:

I imagine in the event of a war, that the military would still look to the Navy to assist in protecting the Port, and that it will be in vain to point out as I have often had occasion to do that a Naval Port should serve as a place of refuge where a fleet may be protected while refitting, etc., and the dismantled Fleet should not be relied on for the protection of the Port.<sup>19</sup>

As to the valuable coal mines at Sydney, Cape Breton, Capt. Orlebar said in December 1861 that they might be rendered 'useless for months by the destruction of the machinery at the pits' mouth. ' There existed then only a small volunteer force at the mines; in 1864, there was still no regular defence, only a

17. Milne to Lyons, private, 3 Nov. 1861, MLN/107.

18. 'Memo. by Vice Admiral Sir Rodney Mundy', August 1869, ADM 128/114.

19. 'Memo. relative to the N.American and W.Indian Station' MLN/105/6.

volunteer battery at Sydney. The coal mines at Pictou, N.S. were also guarded by only a small volunteer force. Orlebar felt that the French Canadians in the area could be depended upon in a war with the U.S., but in the event of a conflict with France, he thought that they would 'hoist the tricolour'.<sup>20</sup> Milne also feared that in a French war the enemy would attempt to seize Cape Breton so as to supply their steam warships with coal. In October 1860, Sir Alexander noted ominously that Napoleon III had just sent a gold communion service to the Catholic church at Arichat, N.S. and had given a present to the church at Sydney. He also said at that time that a Frenchman had recently visited Cape Breton 'whose sole occupation appeared to be, taking the number and names of all the French inhabitants, and in some instances correcting the spelling of the names that appeared through ignorance to have been altered from the original French.'<sup>21</sup> Milne wrote in January 1861 that this person had been at Cape Breton for two years and that 'there are others persuing the same course in Lower Canada.... Sydney is the headquarters of the French ships from whence they receive supplies, their letters, etc... confidentially ... my informant is the Roman Catholic archbishop at Halifax'.<sup>22</sup> The station commander sent

20. 'Report on the Harbour', etc., Capt. J.Orlebar, op.cit., ADM 7/624.

21. Milne to LCA, 14 Oct. 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

22. Milne to Dundas, private, 26 Jan. 1861, MLN/107/3.



one of his ships to the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, off the Newfoundland coast, to see if any plans, offensive or defensive, were in preparation. His officers reported in the summer of 1860 that all was quiet at the islands and that their defences were minimal.<sup>23</sup> But Sir Alexander was right to be uneasy about the mines at Pictou and Sydney. Though their coal was not as good as Welsh, yet they were the most important coal resources in British North America; they both had excellent deep harbours and by means of a small railroad at both places, the coal could be loaded directly from the mines to a ship.

The defence of the Great Lakes were seldom mentioned in Milne's reports or correspondence. He had gone up the St. Lawrence with the Prince of Wales when that royal heir visited North America in 1860. At that time the station commander had visited Quebec and Montreal and with his family, went as far inland as Niagara Falls; but later because of the American conflict, he spent his time exclusively on the coasts and islands of the station.

The Americans had an overwhelmingly superior number of ships of all kinds on the lakes, though only one warship,

23. Milne to LCA, 11 July 1860, ADM 128/19. The writer has read the reports of the local French naval officer, for 1860-61, and those of the commander at the islands and can find no trace of any war-like preparations. French Archives, MAR BB4, 786, 795 and 797.

the Michigan, because of the stipulations of the Treaty of 1818.<sup>24</sup> However, as was done for the blockade of the South, many of the fast lake steamers could be armed at short notice. It was true that Britain had the advantage over the Americans of being able to pass ships through the canals from the sea to the lakes; but the largest warship able to navigate the shallow canals was the Nimble Class, a five gun, eightyhorse power gun-boat displacing twelve feet, and even these ships would have to be substantially lightened for the journey.<sup>25</sup> Of course, from December to April the canals were frozen over and while Milne was on the station, none of his ships went into the lakes; they seldom went further up the St. Lawrence than Quebec. A British report of September 1862 recommended that iron plated vessels should be kept ready 'at Ottawa and other convenient places ... whence they could be taken into Lakes Ontario and Erie.'<sup>26</sup> In February 1865, Rear Adm.R.S. Robinson, the Comptroller of the Navy, wrote that any vessel used on the

24. In 1861 the U.S. had 1,229 ships with a tonnage of 223,953 on the lakes compared to the Canadian 356, with a tonnage of 75,659. The number of steam vessels at that time with their tonnage were: U.S. 94; 67,032 and Canada 78;25,669. 'Memo. of Sir J. Burgoyne on the Defences of Canada,' Feb. 1862, MLN/P/B/1/K.

25. 'Vessels suitable for the protection of the North American Lakes', 22 Feb. 1865, Robert Spencer Robinson, MLN/P/B/1/K.

26. 'Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider the Defences of Canada', Sept. 1862, Strictly Confidential, MLN/P/B/1/K.

lakes must be armour plated, and considering the limited size of the locks,

'it seems impossible to construct on this side of the Atlantic anything that could pass from our harbours into the lakes, and be on its arrival a match for what would be found there....'

Robinson recommended that the parts for turret ships could be built in Britain and assembled at Kingston, Ontario, but, 'the cost' he warned, 'would be prodigious.' 27 In the end, the British never embarked on an extensive system of naval defences for the lakes. Milne's successor, Sir James Hope did however, during the Fenian troubles at the close of the Civil War, use his officers and men to man Canadian steamers converted into gunboats: four on the St. Lawrence and two on the lakes.

As the naval commander, Sir Alexander gave a great deal of his attention in those weeks of crisis to the defence of his most important naval base: Bermuda. In December 1861, he did have one ship at Barbados and one at Port Royal, Jamaica, but the bulk of his squadron, then about twenty-five seagoing warships was concentrated at Bermuda and Havana. In January 1862, an additional force of five ships was sent out, including three - over eighty gun battleships - which raised the station's strength by the end of January to six battleships, as well as many frigates and smaller craft. The paper strength of the station was given as forty-two ships on 1 January 1862. This

27. 'Vessels suitable' etc., R.S. Robinson, op.cit., MLN/P/B/1/K.

can be quite deceptive because it includes ships only suitable for harbour defences, e.g., Terror, Onyx, Nettle, as well as tugs and hulks: Pyramus, Kite, Imaum, Weymouth and Cuba. The list also includes those vessels kept at New York: Rinaldo and Racer; the one at Halifax: Hydra, and the wrecked - on 29 December 1861 - battleship Conqueror. In addition, Steady was cruising to watch the American blockade while Cadmus was guarding Barbados and Cygnets was performing the same duty at Port Royal.<sup>28</sup> The force at Havana had used that port only as a rendezvous, it left there in late December for Vera Cruz to take part in the joint expedition to Mexico. This force remained stable at about ten warships while those ships available to Milne at Bermuda for offensive operations varied from five to about sixteen, for the period December 1861 - January 1862.

28. The actual location of warships at any one time is an important indication of the station's defensive and offensive capability. Sources for this information are in the ADM 53 series, ships logbooks; Milne's personal notebook, donated in Sept. 1965 to the National Maritime Museum and uncatalogued as yet, and the Admirals' Day-to-Day Journals: ADM 50/303-45. The lists of ships on the station given in ADM 8/139-143 tell when a ship left England but not when it arrived. This list needs to be cross-checked with other sources as it is sometimes inaccurate.

Sir Alexander wrote to the senior officer at Port Royal, Jamaica, on 20 December, advising him of the possibility of war. The officer was told to look to the defences of the forts, to put guns on the guardship Imaum 'and moor her in the best position to command the entrance, arming any small vessels or boats fit to carry guns for the defence of the harbour'.<sup>29</sup> There were few defences at Port Royal; a report to Milne in the spring of 1861 stated that there were 88 guns, 59 of which were supposed to be serviceable. The dockyard, it said, might be easily destroyed at a distance, 'and with little damage to an enemy'.<sup>30</sup> The British troops in the W. Indies had been concentrated since 1853 largely at Barbados; they received no reinforcements during the crisis and their strength remained at a little less than five thousand men. None of the other British colonies in the W. Indies received any additional forces, they could only look to their local militia and whatever limited defences they possessed at the time.<sup>31</sup>

'If Bermuda were in the hands of any other nation,' [Sir Alexander wrote on 31 December 1861], 'the base of our operations would be removed to the two extremes, Halifax and Jamaica, and the loss of this Island as a Naval Establishment would be a National misfortune.'<sup>32</sup>

29. Milne to Senior Officers, 20 December 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

30. Milne to Maj. Gen. P. Taylor, 29 March 1861, ADM 128/44.

31. Bourne, op.cit., pp. 615, 623.

32. Milne to LCA, 31 December 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

This group of islands, which contained the most centrally located naval base on the station, were then only three days by steamer from the American mainland. They comprise five main islands, the aggregate being about twenty five miles long, and at no point does their width exceed a mile and a half. St. George at the eastern end was the chief commercial port of the colony, while Ireland Island at the western end was the site of the naval installation. Dangerous reefs surrounded the islands on all sides with the exception of the southernmost coast. The naval dockyard at Ireland Island had been established in 1809 and shortly after that date fortifications to protect it had been commenced, first by slave and latterly by convict labour. They were still being added to in the years of Milne's command.<sup>33</sup>

33. An excellent privately published book on Bermuda and her defences is U.S. Marine Col. R. Willock's Bulwark of Empire, Bermuda's Fortified Naval Base 1860-1920 (Princeton, 1962). Willock maintains that the extensive system of fortifications undertaken from 1865-89 were designed expressly for the protection of the naval dockyard, p.36. Sir John Fisher, First Sea Lord, 1904-1910, downgraded Bermuda to a stand-by condition as he wished to pay more attention to home waters because of the growing German menace. Some informative books on Bermuda: Trollope, A. The West Indies, etc. (London, 1859); Codet, Dr. T.L. Bermuda, Its History, etc. (London, 1860) and Ogilvy Dr. J., An Account of Bermuda, Past and Present (Hamilton, 1883). There are a few modern books on the islands but a comprehensive history of Bermuda remains to be written.

There had been commissions in 1823 and 1857 which recommended various plans, modifications and additions to the growing fortress. The trouble was, as an officer who had served in the garrison, wrote in 1857:

'It has been remarked that the places in Bermuda which are almost impregnable by nature, are well defended by art; but that the weak points are left wholly defenceless.'<sup>34</sup>

What the officer was calling attention to was the anomalous situation then existing in the islands: the only way for large ships to reach the dockyard at Ireland Island was by a tortuous passage, rightly called the Narrows, lying at a distance of 800 to 1,000 yards from the land and which was well covered by fortress artillery. However, virtually the entire southern coast of the islands, where an enemy force might easily anchor in seven to ten fathoms, and march on the dockyard, this coast was almost without protection. The defences of Bermuda were grouped at both extremities of the colony. If an enemy squadron succeeded in passing the forts at the Narrows, it would not come under fire again until it was before the dockyard. The basic plan of defence had been formulated before the introduction of steam and the increased range of ordnance had created new problems. The 1857 report stressed that an attack through the Narrows:

34. A Field Officer (F. Whittingham) Bermuda, A Colony, A Fortress and a Prison. (London, 1857), p.8. This is a critical and interesting study. It has a good description of convict life at Bermuda.

'would appear to have been the only mode of attack contemplated in the present system of Defence, for the whole of the southern coast, about 18 miles ... have been left totally open and unprotected by works. 35

The largest ships, it noted, could lie only 200 to 600 yards from the shore. This was true, for the 1823 report, unconcerned with steamers, did warn that boats might land on the southern coast without difficulty if the wind was northerly; but that the primary objective of Bermuda's defences was the command of the main channel - including the Narrows - as its retention would enable the defenders to receive assistance from the sea. 36

Reliance was placed on the intricacies of the reefs. It was felt that a local and presumably loyal pilot would be needed to navigate safely through them. But since Bermuda drew nearly all of her food supplies from the States, many American shipmasters were familiar with the hazards of the islands. The dependence of Bermuda on outside provisions is well illustrated in a letter written by Milne in February 1862, when there were many British men-of-war at the islands:

35. 'Report upon the Defences of Bermuda', 17 July 1857, W.O. 55/1551, p.6. This report - over a hundred pages - was the most detailed study at that date of the defences of the islands.

36. 'Report on the Defences of Bermuda', 1 Sept. 1823, W.O. 55/1551.



'We are giving leave here but altho only one week has elapsed since it was given there is no more Grog in the place and if the big ships are kept here there will be a famine in the Island, there is nothing to be got, no poultry, no eggs, no vegetables and scarcely any meat, it is becoming rather serious, and I will have to do something about it ere long. I would be inclined to give them a round of W. India Islands but I of course cannot do this unless I hear from home as I presume the affairs in the States must soon come to a crisis. 37

Both the 1823 and 1857 reports mentioned that American merchant ship captains knew how to navigate through the reefs. These captains might pilot light draught gunboats which could come in through the reefs, from the north, and shell the dockyard. The 1857 report noted that an American warship had just arrived in the colony from New York; it was looked upon as an ideal vessel for this purpose: an average speed of ten knots, it could be fitted for mortars and had a draught of 3' 3". Yet by 1865, as Col. Jervois wrote in his report of that year, only a single floating battery existed to prevent ships from coming through the reefs.<sup>38</sup>

Among the recommendations of the 1857 report were an increase in the garrison, the construction of additional and stronger fortifications, the sinking of stone laden hulks to close most of the channels in the reefs and the construction of a strong work at Somerset Bridge. This last would bar the

37. Milne to Grey, private, 18 Feb. 1862, MLN/107/3.

38. 'Report on the Defences of Canada', etc., Jervois, op.cit., MLN/P/B/1/K.

progress of any enemy forces which, having landed on the south coast, were marching on the dockyard. They also recommended to be built, over a period of time, some fifteen batteries mounting about fifty-eight guns, on the south coast; the Somerset Bridge work was to serve until the permanent batteries had been completed.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, by December 1861, not even the Somerset fort had been built. There was a good road suitable for horse-drawn 'flying' artillery on the south coast. This would serve in some measure to offset the want of regular batteries on that coast. The signers of the 1857 report believed that the stopping-up of the Chub Cut was the most important of the reef closing operations. With fourteen feet at low water, and easy to find, they feared that mortar boats would enter through it and shell the dockyard. It had not been closed by December 1861, though there were several hulks in the dockyard which could be speedily sunk in the cut if necessary.

Even the ability of the large fortifications at the eastern end of the islands to stop an enemy was questioned in 1857:

'..... it is to be doubted whether even in the event of still greater additions being made to the St. George forts, a fleet of fast screw frigates could not force this channel with comparative impunity... they

39. 'Report upon the Defences of Bermuda', 1857, op.cit., pp.71-87.

would be rapidly passing the batteries at 1,000 yards distance....' 40

Even if a vessel was sunk in the main channel, others would have room to pass, with the exception of one critical point, at Fort Catherine. The removal of the buoys would not be a real hinderance as the rocks were often visible in the clear water. If an enemy did shell the dockyard, how would it fare? The 1857 inspectors remarked that all of the ordinary buildings were shotproof:

...but a single shell penetrating the slight sheet iron roofs of the naval storehouse and workshops might produce a general conflagration destroying everything the dockyard contained and rendering it useless for many years. 41

In his 1857 book, the 'Field Officer' lamented that the dockyard buildings were then rapidly rising on a plan independent of their surrounding fortifications:

The Civil Engineer in charge of these works acts under the Naval Dept., but the new buildings (in the keep) are under the direction of the Royal Engineer Dept. and therefore display some regard to military principles - when finished they will be both protected and concealed from an assaulting enemy. Whereas the buildings of the civil engineer rise far above the 'enceinte' with the addition of needless towers, needless because the hills at both ends of the dockyard command an extensive view on every side. 42

40. Ibid., p. 92.

41. Ibid., p. 10.

42. A Field Officer, Bermuda, A Colony, A Fortress, etc., op.cit., p.179.

This was true, for the eastern navel store house, with its twin towers was a dangerous marker for enemy artillery, as can be seen from the photographs. In December 1861, Bermuda's Governor Ord believed that in the event of an American attack they would have to be taken down for this reason.

The inhabitants numbered then about 11,000, of whom two-thirds were coloured. The Bermudians had many ties with the United States; a great many of their children emigrated to America as there was little scope for enterprise in the islands. Col. Jervois in his 1865 report on the colonies' defences, did not believe that the white residents would 'make any great effort to remain under British rule at all times'. The 1857 report came to the same conclusion. Indeed, on 14 August 1775, the inhabitants had broken open the powder magazine at St. Georges and sold its contents to the American rebels. Jervois thought that the coloured residents however, would be adverse to becoming U.S. citizens and suggested 'whether a portion of them might not be organized to assist in the defence.' The 1857 report noted that the coloured people made excellent pilots and their 'loyalty is unquestionable'. Nevertheless, it added rather sadly, it was true that they had never displayed any military tendencies. The convict population,

then working daily in the dockyard, could hardly be relied upon. They numbered 644 men in December 1861; among them a number of Irish nationalists sentenced for agitation, who would certainly welcome an American attack.<sup>43</sup> The 1857 report suggested that in the event of a war with America, the convicts should be immediately put into some of the dockyard hulks and placed under the guns of the fortress. This seems ill-advised as the hulks would almost certainly be set afire in any action and there would be possibly great loss of life as well as much confusion.<sup>44</sup> There was no provision made in the defence arrangements of Bermuda for the protection of the population. They were, then, hardly as a group standing shoulder to shoulder behind the garrison but were themselves often of questionable loyalty.

Both the 1823 and 1857 reports stated that if the Americans attacked Bermuda it would be a raid, not an occupation; the 'Field Officer' believed Bermuda might be taken by a sudden, surprise attack. All of these opinions reflected official British belief in a continued superiority at sea, only temporarily and perhaps locally lost to any American fleet. But by

43. Gov.Ord to Newcastle, 14 Jan.1862,C.O.37/182;Convicts' petition, March 1862, C.O. 37/181.

44. In the event, by Jan. 2 1862,all the convicts had been removed from the hulks and placed in barracks at Boaz Island, just south of the naval dockyard on Ireland Island and connected to it by a single bridge. They were thus isolated from the scene of any probable action; Milne to LCA, 2 Jan.1862, MLN/103/4/D.

December 1861, two of the major recommendations for blunting the effectiveness of a raid: the fort at Somerset bridge and the closing of Chub Cut - the opening in the reef nearest the dockyard - had still not been taken in hand. In addition, the islands were especially vulnerable to attack during the hot summer months - from May to November - when Milne was at Halifax. There were then few if any ships kept at Bermuda.

Improvisations and Faulty Defences:

Bermuda, December 1861 - January 1862

On 30 December 1861, Col. Wm. Munro, commander of the forces at Bermuda, wrote to Milne in answer to an enquiry from the vice admiral as to the strength of his troops. There were then in the island, Munro said, 29 officers, 51 sergeants, 885 rank and file, including the band of the 39th regiment; 91 guns at St. George and 115 at Ireland Island - in all 206 guns - and about a thousand men. He had a good supply of arms and stores but feared that if any light draught boats got through the reefs and close to the dockyard, they would probably destroy it, even while themselves under British fire. <sup>45</sup> Reinforcements were sent to the garrison at this time; by 1 February it reached the peak of its crisis

45. Col. Wm. Munro to Milne, 30 Dec. 1861, ADM 128/20.

induced strength: 1445 officers and men.<sup>46</sup>

The Governor said to Milne in late December that the forts at St. George were the key to the defence of the island. Enemy ships must not be allowed to pass through them - if they did - the defence of the dockyard would be very 'problematical.'<sup>47</sup> Governor Ord also thought that the U.S. would send mortar and gun boats through the reefs and, circulating to the north and west of the dockyard at 3,000 to 4,000 yards '... they could destroy the establishment almost without risk to themselves.' He feared a raid, not a permanent occupation. Milne too feared a sudden attack. He told Col. Munro that:

I am the more impressed with this from learning ... that the officers of the U.S. Steamer of War 'Keystone State' took advantage of her recent visit to St. George not only to take photographic plans of the place, but had even sounded by night St. Georges and Castle Harbours.<sup>48</sup>

46. 'Reports of the Garrison at Bermuda', W.O. 17/1426.

47. Gov. H. St. G. Ord to Milne, 30 Dec. 1861, ADM 128/20.

48. Milne to Munro, 28 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/11/K. Of course Milne did the same thing. He wrote to the Admiralty on 17 April 1861, that a Lieut. from the Nile had under his orders examined the defences of Portland, Me., when Milne embarked the Prince of Wales from that port in Oct. 1860; MLN/103/2/B. There are many other examples of this, but in Feb. 1865 the Admiralty turned down an offer received at the Foreign Office to furnish them with plans of the harbours of New York and Boston, showing the submarine obstructions. The LCA said, 'my Lords do not think it would be proper to endeavour to obtain it in the clandestine manner proposed'; LCA to Hammond, 18 Feb. 1865, Secret Orders and Letters, ADM 13/7.

If an attack came, the naval commander-in-chief believed it might take several forms: light draught boats coming from the north or west to attack Ireland Island, a landing in force on the southern part of Bermuda and a drive from there on Somerset or Spanish Point, - from either of which the dockyard would be commanded - an attack on St. George or perhaps an occupation of Castle Harbour.<sup>49</sup> On the 31st Milne complained to the Admiralty that at 'two of the principal forts at St. Georges, defending the Narrows, the guns mounted are only 24 prs.... that one Sea Front of Ft. Albert has already fallen down, when exercising the guns'. As for the most important fort, St. Catherine Point - important because at that spot all ships going towards the dockyard had to make a dangerous turn to the west and must come under her guns, while they could largely avoid the other forts at St. George - here the armament comprised only seven 68 prs., plus some 32 prs. and 'prevailing opinion' considered the work 'unstable'.<sup>50</sup> After Milne's representations, Col. Munro agreed to place four 68 pounders close to the sea at the Narrows, while the vice admiral sent Diadem 32, up to St. Catherine's Point to further bolster defences

49. Milne to Munro, 28 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/11/K.

50. Milne to LCA, 31 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.



there. He also armed ship's boats which would lie off the channels in the reefs to prevent an enemy making an entrance at those points. The floating battery Terror,<sup>51</sup> and the two 20 horse power defence gunboats with two guns apiece, were also available for this purpose. In addition, Milne held in readiness the field pieces and marines from the ships who could be landed and used as mobile batteries.

Sir Alexander wrote on the last day in December '... I do not consider Bermuda safe from any attack unless several ships are here to afford protection.'<sup>52</sup> As has been said, he had from five to about sixteen warships at the island in the period December 1861 - January 1862. The naval commander's private correspondence reflected this same fear. On 2 January 1862 he confided to the Duke of Somerset:

51. The Terror became, in 1857, the first ironclad to cross the Atlantic. Built in 1856, she had 4" of iron over 6" of teak, with pronounced inward sloping sides and a 200 HP engine. She had water tight compartments, one of only sixteen ships built up to that time with this innovation. See G.A. Osbon's 'The First of the Ironclads', Mariner's Mirror, L,(1964) and Parl.Paper. XXXIV,(1862), p.829. The Terror remained at Bermuda until 1901, when she was broken up. Not a sea-going vessel, she had originally been towed out.

52. Milne to LCA, 31 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

.... some superior controlling power is needed here. The Col. of the 39th Reg. is the Commandant, then there is a Col. of Eng. and a Col. of Artillery with a Lt. Col. of Engineers as Civil Governor. There is no superior authority on hand to order, the Col. of the Regiment naturally looks to the rifle practice of his Reg. and the real defence of the Island is a secondary consideration. <sup>53</sup>

The 'Field Officer' made the same criticism in his 1857 book. There were three nearly independent authorities at Bermuda, he said: a colonel who is the civil governor, another colonel who commands the troops and an admiral who is in fact governor of Ireland Island. This 'frittering away of responsibility [was] the death blow to all good government.' <sup>54</sup> At the beginning of January 1862 Milne was still angered by the military. At that time he wrote to the First Naval Lord, Vice Admiral Grey complaining of their 'apathy ... too much pen and ink' and said that none of the soldiers were stationed in the Forts until he had urged this measure, as one which would render the defenders better able to cope with a sudden attack. <sup>55</sup> They had previously been kept at their barracks, some distance from the forts. Col. Munro he charged, had no plan for defending the dockyard. <sup>56</sup>

53. Milne to Somerset, private, 2 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

54. A Field Officer, op.cit., p.239-240.

55. Milne to Grey, private, 2 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

56. The colonel did, however, as he told Milne on 30 December, plan to re-inforce Fort Cunningham - near St. Georges - with 4 - 8 inch guns brought from Ireland Island. He was also constructing a new battery of 4 - 8 inch guns which would bear on the channel at the eastern end of the island. Col. Munro deprecated Milne's fears about a landing on the south coast; he believed that it was more essential to hold St. Georges and Ireland Island and anyway, said he could only spare a hundred men to guard the south shore. Munro to Milne, 30 Dec. 1861, ADM 1/5787.

In a note written some years later, Sir Alexander said that the Governor of Bermuda had no military authority unless war was declared, the colonel of the troops in the meantime had charge of the island defence. 'But wrote home that on the appointment of a new governor he should be commander-in-chief of the island and in the meantime recommended the Island to be placed under the General at Halifax...and this was entirely approved and carried out.' 57

The naval commander-in-chief was in a dilemma because he maintained that the forts and garrison, plus the two harbour gunboats and the Terror should alone be looked upon for the defence of Bermuda. He did not like the idea of keeping his ships there solely for the defence of the island. This would of course necessarily limit his offensive operations as it was apparent that some of his warships must remain there to aid the local forces. It is apparent then that neither Halifax nor Bermuda were fortified havens, but were themselves quite vulnerable to enemy attack. Nevertheless, the Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, believed that while the colonies ought to contribute to their own military defences, 'the Imperial Government alone ought to provide naval protection'. 58

57. Milne Home papers donated Sept. 1965, uncatalogued, at National Maritime Museum.

58. Clarke, D.P., The Attitude of the Colonial Office to the Working of Responsible Government, Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1953, p. 63.

At the time the home government tacitly followed this policy, but beginning in 1865 and continuing until the later 1880's, fortifications were built at Bermuda which made it a genuine refuge for British warships.<sup>59</sup> Halifax was also strengthened at this time, though not so extensively as Bermuda.

### Milne's Plans for War with the North

The Trent incident resulted in a world wide alert going to all British stations. Ships were sent from the home and Mediterranean stations to reinforce Milne's forces, while others were held in readiness to sail. The First Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Somerset wrote to Sir Alexander on 15 December:

In the event of war I do not send from here any plan of operations as you have probably better means of judging what it may be advisable to do. But the first object would probably be to open the blockade of the Southern ports and without directly co-operating with the Confederates, enable them to act and to receive supplies.<sup>60</sup>

Commodore Dunlop arrived with his squadron from Havana, at Vera Cruz on 6 January 1862. Thus in early January, Milne's two main forces were at Bermuda and Vera Cruz. In the event of war,

59. Willock, op.cit., p. 123 and passim.

60. Somerset to Milne, private, 15 Dec. 1861, MLN/107.

Dunlop had orders to operate against the U.S. blockaders in the Gulf, while Milne would attack the Federal ships on the east coast. Sir Alexander suffered from a shortage of readily available ships in the last days of December; for a time he had only five at Bermuda.

His course of action, when additional reinforcements had arrived was, after crushing the U.S. fleet, to establish a blockade from Cape Henry, Virginia, to Maine. Some of the places to be blockaded were: the Chesapeake Bay area, the mouth of the Delaware, Sandy Hook and New York harbour, the western end of Long Island Sound, Boston and Portland, Maine. Milne would enter the Chesapeake, try to cut off all supplies to Washington, and 'if possible to get at the capital'. He urged the Admiralty to give him a double set of colliers, used in relays, so that none of his blockaders would have to return to Halifax or Bermuda for coal. As a rendezvous for these colliers and for other uses, Sir Alexander planned to take possession of some harbours in the Martha's Vineyard area of Massachusetts.<sup>61</sup> The commander-in-chief contemplated the creation of five or six separate squadrons for blockading purposes with a minimum of fifty-four ships. Many of these would have to be corvettes or frigates, smaller and handier vessels than the battleships,

61. Milne to Grey, private, n.d.; Milne to Somerset, private 24 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

and useful in the shallow waters of the American coast. There would be at least sixteen colliers to fuel this fleet. Additional cruising warships would be required to protect British trade in the W. Indies from American privateers, not less than twenty-five ships, said the vice admiral. A detached squadron of ironclads should be formed for attacking the North's commercial ports; the defences of which once silenced, a subsidy could be demanded or an embargo enforced.<sup>62</sup>

During the crisis the Admiralty arranged for increased supplies of coal to be sent to the station. It was unnecessary to supply much coal to the northern part of the station because of the ready supplies available at the Nova Scotia and Cape Breton mines ; many of the numerous transports which brought reinforcements from England at this time coaled directly from these mines. This was a real advantage - Vice Admiral Milne was greatly concerned with the problem of coal - it could make the difference between success and failure in any contemplated naval operations. To speed coaling at Bermuda, Milne early in January 1862, towed the old hulk Dromedary into the basin, moored her close to the breakwater, cut holes in her sides and used her as a 'dummy'. Coal was placed on the breakwater from whence it was taken in barrows through the Dromedary to the ship into which it was to be loaded. This

62. 'A Private Paper', MLN/108.

greatly facilitated coaling besides giving a roofed place where-  
 in rope and sailmakers as well as other ship's artificers could  
 work. Using this hulk, Hero was enabled to take in 560 tons  
 of coal in three and a half days while Donegal, moored in  
 Grassy Bay and coaled by lighters, had required a week to take  
 aboard 320 tons.<sup>63</sup> At this time of transition from sail to  
 limited use of steam, a ship's coal capacity was speedily  
 consumed by largely inefficient engines. The Nile could steam  
 at full speed for only about five or six days. Nile's tender,  
Nimble 5, with 50 men, stowed 74 tons, burned at the rate of 9 to  
 10 tons a day at full speed. Thus sailpower was ordered to be used  
 at every opportunity to supplement a ship's limited steam power.<sup>64</sup>

The Hydrographer of the Navy, Capt. J. Washington, sent to  
 Milne in January 1862 a report he had compiled on the defences  
 of the North. Some of this information came from Confederate

63 Milne to Col. Greene, private, 21. Jan. 1862, MLN/107/3;  
 Milne to LCA, 21 Jan. 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

64 Ship Returns, MLN/108; The Queens Regulations, etc.  
 (London, 1862)p. 175.

officers in England. The report revealed that New York had strong fortifications, though it was thought a successful attack might be made by armour-plated frigates which would draw the fire of the batteries, while the wooden ships raced past. Of course, the only sea-going armour plated warship available in December 1861 was HMS Warrior. Palmerston was against sending this vessel, Britain's first ironclad battleship, on the Mexican expedition. She had only been completed in October 1861 and the Prime Minister believed her defects and merits might be more easily discovered in home waters.<sup>65</sup> The North was not to receive its first ironclads until the seven armoured gunboats for use on Southern rivers were delivered, in January 1862. The Monitor, ready in March 1862, was by no means a sea going ship but its class was of great utility in harbour defence. Boston, Capt. Washington said, could not be attacked with any hope of success, while Fortress Monroe - the blockaders haven - though thought to be very strong, was isolated. The whole tenor of the report is that an attack and blockade of the coast could be done if Britain was determined on it; but it would be anything but an effortless task.<sup>66</sup> Somerset himself was against attacking Portland or

65. Palmerston to Russell, private, 6 Oct. 1861, PRO 30/22/21.

66. 'List of the Chief Ports', etc., op.cit., MLN/105/6.



Boston or any such operation. He believed that as soon as the Federal blockade was smashed, the navy should establish itself in one of the Confederate ports where coal was available. He fully shared Milne's ideas on the necessity for coal '... we should require at least 10,000 tons per month.'<sup>67</sup> Curiously, both the Hydrographer and Milne seemed to believe that Maine could be separated from the Union. The vice admiral said in January 1862,

'It was my intention not to act against that State in the same manner as I would have done at Boston... but rather felt my way whether that State was inclined to change Masters.'

Capt. Washington thought that the people of Maine, if strictly blockaded, might 'declare themselves independent and so profit by all the advantages that would be derived from railroad communication with Canada and the Lakes.'<sup>68</sup>

How did the strength of the respective navies compare?

The total might of the N. American and W. Indian Station when most of the ships sent as reinforcements had arrived, was:

Ships: 42, Men: 14,551, guns: 1319 and tonnage: 70,456. One must subtract from this list the battleship Conqueror 99, lost on a Bahama reef on 29 December 1861. The total British

67. Somerset to Russell, private, 29 Dec. 1861, PRO 30/22/24.

68. Milne to Grey, private, 17 Jan. 1862, MLN/107; 'List of the Chief Ports', etc., op.cit., MLN/105/6. The French naval commander of the northern division of his station thought that Canada needed Portland, Me., as it was always ice free. French Archives, MAR BB4,797, Montaignac to Navy Minister, 18 July 1861.

naval force in commission on 1 December 1861 was: 339 ships, 61,342 men, 5,304 guns and a tonnage of 324,063.<sup>69</sup> There were in addition many more ships in the reserve which would have required some time to prepare for sea. The Union navy in December 1861 had about 264 ships, 2,557 guns, 22,000 men and a tonnage of 218,016. While it was true that many of them were purchased or hired commercial steamers, yet some of these were fine vessels: the Vanderbilt - used as Commodore Wilkes' flagship in 1862 - was considered one of the fastest ships in the world. Nevertheless, Britain certainly possessed a much greater number of heavy duty sea going warships.

That December Sir Alexander wrote: 'The ships' companies are in a high state of excitement for war, they are certainly all for the South. I hear the Lower Decks to-day are decorated with the Confederate colours'.<sup>70</sup> The commander-in-chief took a more sober view of the possible conflict:

War has no doubt its horrors and its Evils but to make war felt it must be carried out against the enemy with energy and every place must be made to feel what war really is...<sup>71</sup>

69. Milne Home papers, uncatalogued, op.cit.; Abstract of Naval Force in Commission, 1 Dec. 1861, ADM 8/140; CWNC, 1861, p.38.

70. Milne to Grey, private, n.d., MLN/107.

71. Milne to Somerset, private, 24 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

When he left the station in March 1864, Sir Alexander, speaking of the Trent affair, rather wistfully wrote '... it is not probable this favourable combination of circumstances will again offer...' because of the increase in Federal strength and the introduction of ironclads.<sup>72</sup>

### The Diplomatic Dénouement.

Shortly before he left Halifax for Bermuda, Milne received a telegram sent by Lord Lyons, on 16 November 1861. It notified the vice admiral that two Confederate envoys had been taken from a British mail packet and said that Lyons considered the matter 'very serious'. Milne replied on the 18th that he was leaving the next day for the south but would send Nimble to New York to be at Lyons' disposal.

It was a bizarre fact that this whole episode had been anticipated and the Law Officers had delivered their opinion of its legality on 12 November 1861. This had come about, as Lyons told Milne confidentially on 1 December, because a Federal warship, the James Adger 8, had arrived off the south coast of England in early November. The James Adger had then moved up

72. 'Memo Relative to the Civil War in America', 1864, MLN/105/6.

to Southampton and excited suspicions that she was going to stop the packet and remove the expected Confederate commissioners, James M. Mason and John Slidell. The U.S. Minister, C.F. Adams, gave assurance that the James Adger had orders not to remove the 'rebels' from any ship flying foreign colours.<sup>73</sup> The exact wording of the Law Officers' decision of 12 November was that beyond the territorial limits of Britain:

The U.S. ship of war may put a prize crew on board the W. Indian steamer, and carry her off to a port of the U.S. for adjudication by a Prize Court there; but she would have no right to remove Messrs. Mason and Slidell, and carry them off as prisoners, leaving the ship to pursue her voyage. <sup>74</sup>

HMS Phaeton was then alerted to prevent the packets being stopped within the three mile limit. Lyons closed his note to Milne of 1 December by expressing his uncertainty in the matter:

I am not informed that the Law Officers decided that Messrs. Mason and Slidell might be taken out of the packet, but only that we could not prevent the Packet's being interfered with (which may only mean searched, overhauled or so). Still this intelligence confirms me in my opinion that I ought to maintain the greatest reserve here in the matter of the Trent...

While it would seem that the Law Officers had said that Mason and Slidell could not be removed from the packet, yet the

73. Lyons to Milne, private, 1 Dec. 1861, MLN/107.

74. The Law Officers to Earl Russell, Confidential, 12 Nov. 1861, ADM 116/888.

question was full of legal difficulties, and Lyons decided not to express any opinion as to the rights or wrongs of the case.

By the 19th December, the British Minister had two warships, Racer - commanded by his cousin, A. McL. Lyons - and Rinaldo, awaiting his orders or despatches at New York. He wrote gloomily to Milne on that date that he didn't think the Americans would yield, though they just might if they saw British preparations for war. But if he must leave 'It might be convenient to embark at Annapolis, if there was any fierce excitement at New York, but after all I am not living among savages.' 75 Lyons made his formal demand for the release of the envoys on 23 December. The Americans were given until noon of Monday, 30 December to comply or the British Minister was instructed to leave the country. Although fearing the acts of subordinate Federal naval officers, Lyons did not believe that if he left, the Americans, 'would deliberately do anything to precipitate hostilities, on the contrary they would endeavour to prevent our doing more than break off diplomatic relations.' 76

75. Lyons to Milne, private, 19 Dec. 1861, MLN/107.

76. Same to Same, private, 23 Dec. 1861, MLN/107. An interesting view of Lyons' opinion of colonial statesmen was given on 3 Dec. 1861 in a private letter to Russell. Lyons said that the Canadian finance minister, J.T. Galt, was in Washington and had frightened him with an account of the defencelessness of Canada; but '...I did not let Mr. Galt see that I was alarmed about Canada. I do not think it prudent to speak freely to a man, whose interests are all in one colony, and who is responsible to a Colonial Parliament...'. PRO30/22/35.

On the 26 December, Immortalite, which had returned from observing the Union squadron at Port Royal, S.C., left Bermuda for Annapolis. She was to embark Lord Lyons and his suite if that became necessary. Her captain, George Hancock, was given strict orders by Milne. On reaching Chesapeake Bay, he was to immediately contact the senior Federal officer and acquaint him with his mission. If the Americans seemed hostile, Hancock was to hoist a flag of truce; but he was to be prepared for a sudden surprise.<sup>77</sup> at the same time concealing your preparations for action so effectually as not unnecessarily to wound their susceptibilities by exhibiting any external signs of distrust.<sup>77</sup> Because of severe weather, Immortalite did not arrive at Annapolis until 6 January 1862, some ten days after the crisis had ended. Hancock later wrote to Commodore S.F. DuPont, who he had met at Port Royal, S.C., telling him on 26 April, that while at Annapolis he had gone to Washington. Lyons had introduced him to Lincoln, Seward - with whom, 'I had many long conversations' - Gustavus Fox, Cmdr. Dahlgren, Generals McDowell and Burnside and many other dignitaries. Hancock had visited several army encampments about the city and sent to Milne a detailed report of the Dahlgren gun; shaped like a 'soda water bottle', which he had inspected while on a tour

77. Milne to Hancock, 25 Dec. 1861, Sailing Orders, MLN/110/1/CC.

of the Washington Navy Yard at the time.<sup>78</sup>

As is well known, the Federal cabinet met on 25 and 26 December and finally agreed to release the Confederates.

Lyons was notified of this decision on 27 December, three days before the ultimatum was due to expire. In his despatch giving the reasons for the release Seward stated:

..... what has happened has been simply an inadvertency, consisting in a departure by a naval officer free, from any wrongful motive, from a rule uncertainly established, and probably by the several parties concerned either imperfectly understood or entirely unknown. For this error the British Government has right to expect the same reparation that we, as an independent State, should expect from Great Britain or from any other friendly nation in a similar case.<sup>79</sup>

After a long polemic, Seward finally said that Mason and Slidell would be released because 'Wilkes had erred in not bringing the Trent, with her passengers into port for trial by an American

78 Hancock to DuPont, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Supra, Ch.II, p.62; Hancock to Milne, 4 Feb:1862, MLN/104/3. Hancock made friends among both participants in the American struggle. Lt. Col. J.A.L.Freemantle of the Coldstreams visited the Northern and Southern states in 1863. While at Havana, Freemantle met Hancock who agreed to take him to Matamoros, Mexico. From there, they both crossed the border to Brownsville, Texas and spent some time as guests of the Confederate General Bee; The Freemantle Diary, (London, 1956), pp. 5-16.

79. Seward to Lyons, 27 Dec. 1861, ADM 116/888.

Prize Court'.<sup>80</sup> In view of his previous statement about the uncertainty of the precedents in the case, it is strange that Seward reached exactly the same conclusion as the Law Officers in their decisions of 12 November and 28 November, both given confidentially to Earl Russell, the Foreign Secretary. Is it possible that Seward knew of these rulings? E.D. Adams says that Lyons reported on 3 February 1862 that 'Sumner in a fire-side talk, had revealed that he was in possession of copies of the Law Officers' opinions given on November 12 and 28 respectively. Lyons was astounded'.<sup>81</sup> Adams doesn't say whether Sumner had these opinions at the time of Lincoln's cabinet meetings of 25 and 26 December. We know he had them in early January because in the same report of 3 February, Lyons told Russell - most confidentially - that Sumner admitted receiving the Law Officers' rulings confidentially from England. For this reason the Senator said he had been unable to mention them in his speech in early January which gave the reasons for the release of the Confederates. Lyons believed that Sumner was referring to this part of his speech:

..... but according to the British Law Officers on whose professional opinion the British cabinet has acted, the whole proceeding was vitiated by the failure to take the packet into port for condemnation.<sup>82</sup>

80. Adams, op.cit., 1, p.233.

81. Ibid., p. 234 (footnote).

82. Lyons to Russell, most confidential, 3 Feb. 1862, F.O.5/824.



In another letter to Russell of the same date - 3 February

- Lyons said:

It might have been very awkward for me Mr. Sumner's having the Law Officers' opinions without my being aware of it. I am extremely anxious both on public and private grounds that nothing awkward should occur in consequence of his having told me that he had them - but I thought it a positive duty both with a view of future discussions to let you know it, and to leave a record of it in the Archives here and at the Foreign Office.<sup>83</sup>

Palmerston was unworried by Lyons' anxiety; he told Russell on 19 February 1862 that he didn't believe that any 'breach of confidence' had been committed by anyone in the government 'because the substance of that opinion was pretty generally known in London and if I mistake not, was stated in several newspapers.'<sup>84</sup>

Charles Sumner, as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and a trusted adviser to President Lincoln was at the cabinet meetings of 25 and 26 December. It may well be, then, that Sumner who was from the beginning an advocate of liberating the Confederates, may have given Seward a way out of the dilemma by furnishing him with the Law Officers' opinions. Seward would then have seen that the flaw in Wilkes' action had been, according to the English legal opinion, the fact that the Federal officer hadn't brought the

83. Lyons to Russell, private, 3 Feb. 1862, PRO 30/22/36.

84. Palmerston to Russell, private, 19 Feb. 1862, PRO 30/22/22. Seward may have received the L.O. opinions from W. Dwight of Boston, through Sumner. See footnote 17 in the Appendix.

mail packet as well as the envoys, into a U.S. prize court. He could then, without fear of a later contradiction by the British Law Officers, offer this reason as his own excuse for the release. He could also embroider his opinion with any additional matter to salvage American pride; as indeed he did by insisting, quite rightly, that now Britain was obeying American precedents which condemned the taking of individuals by a belligerent from a neutral ship.<sup>85</sup>

As Immortalite had not yet arrived, Lyons on 30 December, sent Rinaldo from New York to Provincetown, Mass., to pick up the two commissioners and their secretaries. The British Minister cautioned Cmmdr. Hewett not to salute them or treat them in any other way than as private gentlemen. They were given a half hour to pack their things; Slidell <sup>68</sup>, was quite ill, and they were sent on 1 January 1862 the forty miles from Fort Warren to Provincetown in a small tug, guarded by six Marines, to Rinaldo.<sup>86</sup> It had been an extremely tempestuous winter on the coast of North America. Rinaldo, though an excellent sea boat, ran into mounting seas and a terrific gale

85. As far as the writer can determine, this analysis of Sumner's possible actions does not appear in any article or biography on this statesman; the last biography of Sumner - which covers the Civil War - appeared more than fifty years ago. Similarly, the 'coincidences' is not mentioned in any of the well-known biographies of Seward.

86. Lyons to Milne, private, 28 Dec. 1861, MLN/107;  
Milne to Grey, private, 10 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

upon leaving Boston for Halifax, where the envoys were to take the packet for England. At last, on 5 January, when off the Nova Scotian coast not far from his destination, Hewett, knowing that he was now too late to catch the packet for England, decided to turn south to Bermuda. Rinaldo was enveloped in ice, short of coal and twelve of her men had frostbite. Her logbook reveals that the crew were constantly engaged in chipping ice from deck and rigging, hot water was sprayed from fire hoses onto sails and other parts of the ship, and officers and men suffering from the cold were often sent below. The ship lost two boats and was almost unmanageable.<sup>87</sup>

87 Milne to Dunlop, private, 20 Jan. 1862, MLN/107/3; Log of Rinaldo, ADM 53/8149. The ship's captain, W.N.W. Hewett, was accused by the later Admiral George Dewey of Manila Bay fame, of being a Confederate sympathizer. He claimed that while at New Orleans, Hewett invited Southern adherents to his ship, they sang C.S. songs, etc. Dewey said the British officer later became a blockade runner. It is true that Hewett left the station during the war, but his actions and whereabouts are uncertain. Dewey said that when the U.S. heard Hewett was a 'runner', they privately sent word to Britain that any of her officers found serving in such vessels, would be returned to the British government in double irons. Dewey, G., Autobiography of George Dewey (London, 1913), pp. 83-84.

When they arrived at Bermuda, Sir Alexander offered them the choice of going to England directly via Racer or of leaving the next day for St. Thomas, to try and catch the middle of the month packet for England. Mason and Slidell chose to leave for St. Thomas on the morrow. While at Bermuda, on 9 January, they met Milne's family and dined with the vice admiral, as private gentlemen.<sup>88</sup> This decision to take the packet raised a question that both the Foreign Office and Lyons had feared. The British Minister thought they should be taken to England by a British warship because:

I should not like to trust them on board a Packet, lest some American Captain should test the validity of Mr. Seward's Doctrine, by capturing the Packet and bring her before a Prize Court.<sup>89</sup>

88. Dorothy, Lady Redesdale, told the writer this story recounted to her by her mother, Mrs. Cordes, one of Milne's daughters. While Mason and Slidell were at Bermuda, Mrs. Cordes - then a young girl - was introduced to them. She asked innocently why they had rings on over their gloves. 'So that they may be seen', the southerners replied. Mason, writing to C.S. Secretary of State Hunter, noted that 'as we passed the admiral's ship, the Nile, going into the harbour the band on the quarter decks having the officers grouped around, played what they understood to be our national air, 'Dixie'. Milne makes no mention of this incident in any of his letters. Mason added regarding the Royal Navy '... a common sentiment pervaded all, and which was freely expressed, of warm sympathy with the South and entire alienation from the North'. ORN, II, 3, pp. 326-8.

89. Lyons to Milne, private 28 Dec. 1861, MLN/107.

Sir Alexander however, thought that after the capture of the envoys, it was improbable 'that the precedent set by the 'San Jacinto' will be followed by other U.S.Cruizers.'<sup>90</sup> In fact when Rinaldo with Mason and Slidell arrived at St. Thomas on 14 January - only four hours before the packet sailed - the U.S.S. Iroquois was riding at anchor. The Union warship left next day, Rinaldo made no attempt to follow her and two days later the British warship left St. Thomas for Bermuda. The southerners arrived in England, at the end of January, without incident.

In early January, Milne wrote to Grey hoping that the measures taken by Britain had done some good 'if only to bring down the pride and arrogance of the American people but it will have shewn the necessity for keeping our colonies prepared.'<sup>91</sup> Lyons received the G.C.B. for his delicate handling of the affair. On 27 February 1862, he confided to Milne:

'..... my diplomacy would have done little toward settling the Trent question, had not the military preparations come in aid of it.'<sup>92</sup>

90. Milne to Dunlop, 7 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

91. Milne to Grey, private, 4 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

92. Lyons to Milne, private, 27 Feb. 1862, MLN/107.

The Navy and Mexican Intervention

Ever since declaring independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico had alternated between anarchy and despotism. 'Pronunciamento' had followed 'Plan', the nation had sunk into chaos, and by 1860 was deeply in debt to foreign merchants and bankers.

In June 1861, after three years of civil war, Benito Juarez was elected Constitutional President of the Republic. He faced almost insurmountable problems. The previous Miramon government had stolen \$ 660,000 from the British Legation and had saddled Mexico with the disastrous Jecker loan. When Juarez promulgated the decree of 17 July 1861, suspending all payments to foreign creditors for two years, it was the last straw. The English, French and Spanish governments decided to land an armed force in Mexico. <sup>I</sup>

I For specific information on the Intervention see: Grajales, G., (ed.), Mexico y La Gran Bretaña Durante La Intervencion, 1861-1862 (Mexico, 1962); Hoskins, H.L., 'French Views of the Monroe Doctrine and the Mexican Expedition', Hispanic American Historical Review, IV, pp. 677-89; Robertson, W.S., 'The Tripartite Treaty', Hispanic American Historical Review, XX, pp. 167-89. See also the French Archives: Campagnes, MAR BB4, 799, 806-7, 810, 812-14, 819, for naval and much of the political background of their operations.

The Preamble to the Convention of London, the instrument of intervention, avowed that their purpose was to obtain protection for their subjects and the collection of their claims. The important second article disclaimed any intention on the part of the signatories to interfere with the government of Mexico.<sup>2</sup> However, Lord Russell believed that Spain or France might be inclined to change the government of that country.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, he wrote to both of his allies and asked to be informed as to the extent of their respective claims. Spain readily complied, but the French returned an evasive answer. The Foreign Minister, Thouvenel, told Cowley, the British Ambassador, that he 'hadn't enough information to form an opinion'.<sup>4</sup> The French Commissioners, he said, could examine the claims, on the spot, in Mexico.

Russell himself wished to keep free of Mexican politics. If the Mexicans themselves, however, wished to invite the Archduke Maximilian to the throne of that country, Russell believed, 'there is nothing in the Convention to prevent it'.<sup>5</sup> Lord Palmerston,

2 Parl. papers, LXIV (1862), pp. 80-81. The Convention was signed on 31 October 1861.

3 Memo by Russell, 2 Oct. 1861, F.O. 50/358.

4 Parl. papers, LXIV, op. cit., p. 227.

5 Ibid., Russell to Wyke, 27 Jan. 1862, p. 254; Russell to Wyke (draft), 27 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/363.

the Prime Minister, wrote a few days before the Convention was signed,

'..... the Day on which a Monarchy on substantial Foundations and on Constitutional Principles was established in Mexico, would be for the People of that Country the happiest and most fortunate of their existence.' <sup>6</sup>

On the same occasion he expressed the opinion of many of the aristocracy of his time:

'If the example of the Spanish American Republics had not cured every reasoning man of any Partiality for Republican Form of Government, that which is now taking place in the disunited States must have completed the cure.'

The British government did not wish to intervene politically in Mexican affairs, as much from its own reluctances from fear of the United States, but if any other nation wished to establish a stable regime the British would have no objections.

The Gulf of Mexico was the responsibility of the Jamaica Division of the North American and West Indian Station.<sup>7</sup> The Commander-in-Chief of the Station, Rear Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, K.C.B., was at Halifax in the Fall of 1861. There, in a letter dated 5 October, he received the first official intimation that he was to command the British contingent in the Allied expedition. The Duke of Somerset, First Lord of the Admiralty, informed him that a convention with France and Spain, 'to coerce Mexico', would shortly be signed.<sup>8</sup>

6. Palmerston to Hammond, 20 Oct. 1861, F.O. 391/7.

7. Standing Orders for the Squadron Employed on the N. American and West Indian Station, (Halifax 1862), MLN/108.

8. Somerset to Milne, Private, 5 Oct. 1861, MLN/107.



Milne was ordered to move towards Vera Cruz early in November. The rear admiral always spent the winter at the Bermuda naval base, but his exact departure date to the south was determined by the needs of the service.

Milne, nevertheless, postponed his departure from Halifax. He was awaiting HMS Emerald from Plymouth, with the new long-range Armstrong guns for his flagship Nile 86, and another second rate, St. George 86. After thirty-eight days with no sign of Emerald, Milne could wait no longer; he left Halifax on 19 November for Bermuda.<sup>9</sup> Emerald never arrived. Buffeted and damaged by storms, she returned to England.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the delay was fortunate. While the rear admiral was waiting at Halifax, the British Minister to Washington, Lord Lyons, telegraphed to him on 16 November the news of the Trent incident. Sir Alexander therefore knew before he left for Bermuda that there soon might be serious trouble with the U.S. In his absence he appointed Commander R. Vesey Hamilton, who he characterized as, 'decidedly the best Commander on the Station',<sup>11</sup> to be the Senior Officer at Halifax. The action of the Union officer

9 Milne to LCA, 19 Nov. 1861, ADM 1/5759.

10 Eardley-Wilmot, Sir Sydney M., An Admiral's Memories (London, n.d.), pp. 35-36. The author was a 14 year-old naval cadet in Emerald at the time.

11 Milne to Grey, private, 17 Jan. 1862, MLN/107.

Captain Wilkes in the Old Bahama Channel was to have an important effect on British participation in the Mexican intervention. 'I will of course be on the lookout', wrote Milne to Lyons on the day he sailed to the south. The British Minister was 'always happier when Milne was at Halifax';<sup>12</sup> he could be reached there by a direct telegraph line from Washington. The only means of communication with Bermuda was by ship; a journey of several days. Milne arrived in Bermuda on 23 November. It was still his intention to command the forces being sent to Vera Cruz, and to act as a British Commissioner with Sir Charles L. Wyke. On the 14th he had been given the local rank of Vice Admiral, so that he wouldn't be the junior admiral on the Allied expedition.<sup>13</sup> The mail packet of 20 December brought the Admiralty's instructions of 1 December. Because of the American crisis, Milne was to remain at Bermuda until further orders.<sup>14</sup> He wrote the same day to Commodore Hugh Dunlop, Commander of the Jamaica Division, ordering him to assume the command and proceed to the coast of Mexico.<sup>15</sup> Because of the Trent incident,

12 Lyons to Milne, private, 24 April 1862, MLN/107.

13 Milne to Grey, private, 14 Nov. 1861, MLN/107. Milne lamented his junior status on the day of his promotion. He was confirmed in this rank on 13 April 1865.

14 LCA to Milne, 1 Dec. 1861; Milne to LCA, 20 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

15 Milne to Dunlop, 20 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

Dunlop had taken a squadron to Havana to protect British shipping in the area from any further U.S. harassment.<sup>16</sup> He had been there on Milne's orders, earlier in the year, but had since returned to Port Royal. Milne knew this and was thus enabled to reach him more quickly than if the Commodore had been at Port Royal, his division's headquarters. The Commodore had had previous experience in Mexico. In 1859 he signed an agreement with the Juárez forces at Vera Cruz whereby the Mexicans agreed to pay British creditors an additional percentage of the Custom House receipts.

Milne busied himself with plans for colonial defence, as well as for offensive and defensive naval operations. On December 29th HMS Conqueror 99, which had brought some of the Marines for Mexico out to the station and was on the way to Bermuda, was lost on Rum Cay in the Bahamas.<sup>17</sup> This was a sad blow, but other reinforcements for the Station were on the way.<sup>18</sup> Sir Alexander, in the light of American affairs, thought it fortunate that he was at Bermuda, instead of Halifax or Jamaica. His central position there, he said, 'has enabled me to make any necessary arrangements with despatch and to keep up ... communication with Lord Lyons much easier than if I had been North when the weather is so severe and Gales are heavy.'<sup>19</sup> He regretted, however, that most of his

16 Foreign Office to LCA, 18 Dec. 1861, ADM 1/5768; Lyons to Russell, 2 Dec. 1861, F.O. 5/776.

17 Milne to LCA, 6 Jan. 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

18 LCA to Milne, 6 Dec. 1861, Milne Home papers; cf. Lists of ships in ADM 8/140-141.

19 Milne to Grey, private (n.d.) Dec. 1861, MLN/107, undated but written at the end of Dec.

squadron was in the south because of the Allied intervention. At Bermuda, in the last days of December he had only five ships; one of these 'full of defects'. He was 'much vexed. I have no force at hand ready to act.'<sup>20</sup> With a reduced naval force to protect it, Bermuda was vulnerable to an amphibious attack. On 8 November, the Federals had captured Pt. Royal, S.C., by such an attack, and had landed 16,000 troops there. This port of the Confederacy was only about three days sail from Bermuda. But during January, Bermuda was constantly receiving additional warships to bolster the Station's fighting strength.<sup>21</sup>

If conflict with the United States materialized, British efforts in Mexico were to be sharply curtailed. Dunlop was to retain one ship there and to turn his attention to the U.S. Blockading Squadrons.<sup>22</sup> At the end of December Milne requested Somerset to notify Dunlop immediately in the event of either war or reprisals being declared against the U.S. The Commodore could then, 'take in detail the several blockading squadrons off Texas, the mouth of the Mississippi, Mobile [and] Pensacola.'<sup>23</sup>

20 Ibid.

21 Lists of ships, ADM 8/140 and 141.

22 Milne to Dunlop, 20 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

23 Milne to Somerset (Draft) private, (m.d.) Dec. 1861, MLN/107, undated but written at the end of Dec.; Milne to Dunlop, 25 Dec. 1861 in LCA to F.O., 20 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/370. While Dunlop was at Vera Cruz the Federal warship Potomac visited that port. Her captain, L.M. Powell wrote to Secretary of the Navy Welles on 2 March 1862, advising him that he had spoken to Dunlop and that officer had said 'with the utmost frankness, "when I came down here I confidently expected that in ten days I should have had my squadron operating against you on the coast." Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, (Washington, 1894-1927) Series I, Vol. I, p. 354.

Milne believed that Dunlop's force would be sufficient to capture or at least to stop most of the Federal ships from reaching the Atlantic. He wished to prevent the concentration of the Gulf and Atlantic units of the American fleet. The Vice Admiral himself would try to prevent U.S. ships in the Atlantic from reaching the Chesapeake. Fortress Monroe at the mouth of that Bay was the great haven for Federal blockaders on the Atlantic coast.

The Spanish, with a large garrison at Havana, were the first of the Allies to land troops in Mexico. On 17 December they occupied Vera Cruz and the forts in the area with sixty-five hundred men. The Mexican forces retired inland and did not attempt to contest the landing.

Dunlop left Havana in "Challenger"<sup>22</sup>, and reached Cape San Antonio at the western tip of Cuba on 30 December. Here he rendezvoused with his ships coming from Pt. Royal, Jamaica. The squadron dropped anchor at Vera Cruz on 6 January, and by the 12th the British force was complete. It numbered ten ships:

Challenger<sup>22</sup>, St. George 86, Mersey 40, Sans Pareil 70, Phaeton 51, Jason 21, Barracouta 6, Plover 5, Desperate 8, and Ariadne 26.<sup>24</sup>

Milne originally planned to have thirteen ships in the squadron, but the U.S. crisis forced him to reduce the number to ten.<sup>25</sup>

The death of the Prince Consort on 14 December deprived the force of its largest vessel, the St. George 86. Prince Alfred was a Mid-

<sup>24</sup> Dunlop to Milne, 16 Jan. 1862, MLN/104/3.

<sup>25</sup> Milne to LCA, 7 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

shipman aboard this, second rate, and when Dunlop heard of his father's death, he sent the ship directly to Bermuda. From there, Sir Alexander gave his permission for the St. George to proceed to England. Donegal 99, sailed from Bermuda on 8 January for Vera Cruz to replace the Prince's ship.<sup>26</sup> By 9 January all of the Allied leaders had reached Vera Cruz. On that day the French squadron under Vice Admiral de la Gravière sailed into the port as did also the Spanish Commander, General Juan Prim.

The British contribution to the allied military forces was a battalion of Royal Marines under Lt. Col. S. Netterville Lowder. They numbered 720, including Lowder's staff of ten.<sup>27</sup> This force was divided into eight infantry companies and one artillery company, without however, any artillery. The battalion was intended to help in the capture of Vera Cruz, if that was necessary, and to garrison the forts during the allied occupation.<sup>28</sup> The Marines were never intended to march into the interior with the French and Spanish troops.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, without horses, waggons, tents, or artillery, they were hardly equipped for a campaign.<sup>30</sup> They were

26 Sailing Orders, 8 Jan. 1862, MLN/110/1/CC.

27 LCA to Milne, 9 Nov. 1861, MLN/105/2; Lowder to Dunlop, 6 Jan. 1862 MLN/104/3.

28 Russell to Crampton, 19 April 1862, 40414/23; Russell to LCA, 1 Nov. 1861, ADM 1/5768.

29 Russell to LCA, 15 Nov. 1861, ADM 1/5768.

30 Dunlop to Milne, 26 Feb. 1862, MLN/104/3; Lowder to Dunlop, 6 Jan. 1862, MLN/104/3; Dunlop believed he could move the RM inland if Vera Cruz became sickly, also to rescue British subjects or to suppress Mexican inland Custom Houses, Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791.

meant to be dependent on the ships and to remain close to them. At the onset of the unhealthy season at Vera Cruz, about April or May, they were to re-embark in the ships and leave Mexico. <sup>31</sup>

Shortly after his arrival, Dunlop called on the Spanish General and received the ominous news that 400 of his men were already in hospital. The Spanish allocated the church and convent of San Domingo as a barracks for the battalion. A Marine working party landed to clean up these quarters but found it impossible to remove 'large deposits of filth in a semi-liquid state, that had been found in a portion of the quadrangle'. <sup>32</sup> The stench pervaded the whole building. Dunlop and Lt. Col. Lowder also inspected the Fortress of San Juan d'Ulloa with a view of lodging their force within its walls. They found it damp, dark, gloomy and unwholesome. Sickness would soon decimate any troops stationed there. To prevent sickness, it was decided that San Juan would be garrisoned on an alternating basis, each of the Allies to hold it for a fortnight. The Commodore decided not to use either of these places and determined to keep the Marines on board the ships until suitable accommodation could be found.

To relieve the unhealthy overcrowding in the town, General Prim resolved to conduct an armed reconnaissance in search of a suitable campsite. Because of guerrillas, Prim couldn't send a small force,

31 Somerset to Milne, private, 16 Nov. 1861, MLN/107; LCA Minute, 7 Sept. 1861, ADM 1/5768; Crampton to Russell, 4 April 1862, FO. 414/23.

32 Dunlop to LCA, 15 Jan. 1862, MLN/104/3.

and so the allies decided to make a unified movement on the Orizaba road. As the British contribution, Dunlop on 10 January landed one company of a hundred Marines. Shortly thereafter, the Allied force, three thousand strong, marched to Tejēria. Prim, Gravière and Dunlop rode out with their men. At this place, about ten miles from Vera Cruz, they found an excellent campsite. The French and Spanish troops remained, but the Marines, having no tents, returned to Vera Cruz on the next day. On 13 January, the Allies, with the same Marine company, marched to Medellín, about nine miles from Vera Cruz. The British returned the next day. The Allies met no opposition from the Mexicans on either of these excursions. In defending his action, Dunlop maintained that both Prim and Gravière were anxious to show a united front to the Mexicans; he fully concurred in their views.

Dunlop did attempt to follow his orders which told him to keep the battalion at Vera Cruz. He suggested to the allies that the Marines should take the weight of garrisoning the Sea Ports off their shoulders. But the French and Spanish demurred, claiming that since their depôts and flags were at Vera Cruz, they would always have to keep a force in that town.<sup>33</sup> Somerset had earlier suggested that an acclimatized black West Indian regiment might be substituted for the Marines who had come directly from England and were thus very prone to tropical diseases.<sup>34</sup>

33 Ibid.

34 Somerset to Milne, private, 19 Oct. 1861, MLN/107.



Dunlop believed that this would 'greatly disappoint' the Allies. The Foreign Office finally turned this proposal down because the War Office didn't have such a regiment to spare.<sup>35</sup>

As early as 15 January, the Commodore asked the Admiralty to consider sending a larger force as well as discretionary orders which would allow him to march with the French and Spanish, if they went inland. He sought 'unity of action' with his Allies. Sir Charles Wyke agreed fully with his fellow Commissioners' views. Wyke believed that since British claims were greater than those of the other powers, as he believed at the time, their forces could hardly refuse to go where the French and Spanish went. There might be fighting in the mountain passes, not far distant, and the British forces should be with their allies.<sup>36</sup>

The Marines were finally landed on 16 January; the entire Battalion was housed in a former hospital building in Vera Cruz. At this time many of the men had diarrhoea, but the deadlier diseases had not yet appeared among them. Once quartered, the Marines made short marches into the country on every other day.<sup>37</sup> They avoided marching in the heat of the day and were never more than two hours

35 LCA to Milne, 11 March 1862, MLN/105/3.

36 Wyke to Russell, 16 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/364.

37 Milne said Dunlop should not have permitted these 'exercise' marches, Milne to Grey, private, 9 April 1862, MLN/107.

from Vera Cruz. A detachment was sent, however, to Medellin, which place they occupied from 13 February until 6 March. Their victuals included fresh beef and vegetables on an average of four days in the week, as well as a liberal supply of soft bread. Their commander thought them 'temperate' but 'young and unacclimatized'.<sup>38</sup>

Seven days before the Marines landed, the Allies held their first conference. The other British Commissioner, Sir Charles Lennox Wyke, had spent fifteen years in the tropics in various diplomatic and consular positions. Dunlop and Wyke, throughout their Mexican experience, spoke as one voice; they seemed never to have quarrelled. Sir Charles favoured Juarez' Constitutional or Liberal party.<sup>39</sup> When, as British Minister, Wyke had first arrived in the country, he had scant respect for any Mexican government.<sup>40</sup> But while negotiating a convention, he had become impressed with the ability of Manuel de Zamacona, the then Foreign Minister, as well as several other Mexicans. Wyke came to see what enormous problems the Mexican statesmen faced.<sup>41</sup>

38 Lowder to Milne, 11 April 1862, in Milne to LCA, 24 April 1862, ADM 1/5787.

39 Wyke to Russell, 29 Dec. 1861, F.O. 50/354; Roeder, R. Juarez and His Mexico (New York, 1947) 114, 411.

40 Wyke to Russell, 17 July 1861, F.O. 50/353; same to same, 24 Aug. 1861, F.O. 50/354; Wyke presented his credentials as British Minister on 25 May 1861, in Mexico City, Wyke to Russell, 26 May 1861, F.O. 50/352.

41 Wyke to Russell, 28 Nov. 1861; same to same, 25 Nov. 1861, F.O. 50/354.

General Juan Prim, Conde de Reus, hero of the Spanish Moroccan expedition of 1859, was the sole Spanish Commissioner. He was straightforward and supported the British Commissioners in most of the conflicts within the conferences. His instructions affirmed that Spain had no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Mexico.<sup>42</sup> The Count de Saligny, one of the French Commissioners, favoured a monarchy in Mexico and schemed continuously to bring about this end.<sup>43</sup> Vice Admiral Jurien de la Gravière was the naval commander and the other French Commissioner. He was scholarly and able but tended to defer to Saligny, who soon emerged as the chief director of French policy.<sup>44</sup>

The first political move was a joint proclamation on 10 January 1862, to the Mexican people. In it the Allies disclaimed any intention to interfere with the government of the nation. They wished only to settle their claims and to provide for the protection of their subjects.

42 Robertson, W.S., op.cit., p. 184.

43 Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791; Corti, E.C., Maximilian and Charlotte of Mexico (New York, 1928), I, pp 98-9; Wyke to Russell, 27 March 1862, F.O. 50/364.

44 Wyke to Hammond, 14 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/364; Bancroft, H.H., The History of Mexico (San Francisco, 1888), VI, p 40.

Next, a letter was drawn up to the Mexican President, giving their reasons for being in the country. This was a paraphrase of the proclamation. The claims of the Allied powers were to be appended to this letter. For the first time then, at the conference of 13 January, the three powers discussed, at length, their individual claims. M. de Saligny included in his demands the notorious Jecker bonds.<sup>45</sup> Jecker, then a newly naturalized French citizen, had given the tottering Miramon government \$750,000 in exchange for bonds worth fifteen millions.<sup>46</sup> The Mexican silver dollar was then valued at 4s. 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d.<sup>47</sup> Neither the British nor Spanish Commissioners would sanction this nor other equally exorbitant French claims. Wyke believed that Juárez would pay the \$750,000, but never the paper value of fifteen millions.<sup>48</sup>

45 Dawson, D., The Mexican Adventure (London, 1935), p.161; Bancroft, op.cit., VI, 37.

46 Bancroft, F. 'The French in Mexico and the Monroe Doctrine', Political Science Quarterly, II (1896), p.34.

47 Chapman, R.B., British Relations with Mexico 1859-62, Ox.B.Litt., 1936, p.147. This thesis covers much of the political proceedings, but devotes less than a page to the navy's role in the Intervention.

48 Wyke to Hammond, 14 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/364.

Because of this disagreement, the letter was sent to Juárez without the list of Allied claims. Capt. Edward Tatham, commander of HMS Phaeton, was selected as the British representative in the allied group that rode to Mexico City to present the letter. They left Vera Cruz on 14 January 1862.

As the senior British Commissioner, Wyke felt very shaky about his position. Because of confusion in the mails, he had been unaware of the terms of the London Convention until the British and French arrived at Vera Cruz.<sup>49</sup> For this same reason he was without Russell's subsequent instructions for a considerable time. Neither Wyke nor Dunlop were certain that their orders bound them to sustain the claims of the other powers as well as their own.<sup>50</sup> Wyke complained of this uncertainty as late as 13 April, when the joint intervention was at an end.<sup>51</sup>

The British Commissioners had been told to confer with the allies at Vera Cruz regarding their respective claims. If, when the Convention was signed, the British promised to support all the allied claims, Russell said in defence of his orders, they might have been committed to uphold some which were 'exorbitant or unreasonable'.<sup>52</sup> This cautious policy was shortly to be vindicated.

49 Wyke to Russell, 16 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/364; Wyke to Russell, 29 Dec. 1861, F.O. 50/354.

50 Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791; Wyke to Russell 19 Jan. 1862, F.O. 50/364.

51 Wyke to Russell, 13 April 1862, F.O. 50/365.

52 Russell to Wyke, (draft), 30 April 1862, F.O. 50/363.

On the other hand, if each power was to confront the Mexicans with a separate list, the Mexicans would doubtless have seen this as evidence of allied division. Russell believed they then would have tried to widen this breach among the intervening powers.<sup>53</sup> Russell's seeming indecisiveness was partly caused by the communications problem. The mail usually took about five weeks to go from Vera Cruz to England.<sup>54</sup> By the time Russell had Wyke and Dunlop's despatches, the situation in Mexico had often changed considerably. Because of this, neither he nor Milne wished to 'fetter' the Commissioners with too detailed instructions.<sup>55</sup> Another reason for Foreign Office 'indecisiveness' was the rapidity with which the Marines were sent out, due to the short healthy season at Vera Cruz as well as to the fear that the French or Spanish would move first on Mexico. In the event, Wyke and Dunlop decided to write home for further instructions and to temporize with the Mexicans.<sup>56</sup>

Gen. Manuel Doblado, the Mexican Foreign Minister, answered the Allies' letter to the President. It was received in Vera Cruz

53 Ibid.

54 Chapman, R.B., op.cit., p.29.

55 Foreign Office to LCA, 15 Nov. 1861, ADM 128/51; Milne to Dunlop 8 April 1862, private, MLN/107/3.

56 Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791; Dunlop to LCA, 17 April 1862, MLN/104/3.

on 28 January. Doblado proposed that a conference should be held at Orizaba to discuss the allied claims. A further note from the Foreign Minister on 6 February was interpreted by the Spanish and French as an attempt to delay their movement away from the sickly coast. They stated on 9 February that because of this, they would cease all communications with the Mexicans and advance simultaneously on Orizaba and Jalapa.<sup>57</sup>

As early as 15 January, Dunlop had determined to accompany the Allies on any proposed march inland. Now when the Spanish and French decided to move, the Commodore believed that war seemed 'inevitable'.<sup>58</sup> At this point he began full preparations for putting the battalion into the field. The British Commissioners succeeded, however in calming their colleagues and Prim met with Doblado in the preliminary negotiations at Soledad on 19 February. The French and Spanish now fully understood that in any future move the RM battalion would go with them. Dunlop believed that this understanding helped to conciliate the allies and thus enabled the preliminaries to be held.<sup>59</sup> The Spanish and French also found it necessary to provide transport for their troops. They had arrived in Mexico with virtually no waggons, horses, or mules. This need delayed and

57 Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791; Wyke to Russell, 12 Feb. 1862, F.O. 50/364.

58 Dunlop to Milne, 2 March 1862, MLN/104/3.

59 Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791. That March, Milne told Grey that he had received a letter from Dunlop who believed that a Mexican war 'appears inevitable and he evidently requires reinforcements... Much as I regret this Mexican affair... we could not withdraw as probably a blow may by this time have been struck which will prevent our forsaking the French and Spanish.' Milne to Grey, private, 24 March 1862, MLN/107.

forced them to exercise a certain restraint until they had become properly equipped for the march.

A new complication arose when rumours circulated that ex-president Miramon was on the way to Vera Cruz. Wyke and Dunlop believed, their own interests aside, it would 'appear to the Mexicans a bitter and unworthy sarcasm,' if such a person were allowed to land under Allied protection.<sup>60</sup> Contrary to earlier declarations of non-interference, the French now said that if Miramon landed, he would be under their protection.<sup>61</sup> When the British packet arrived on 27 January, Dunlop ordered Capt. Kennedy of Challenger to take Miramon out of the vessel before he could get ashore. This was done, and the ex-president was sent back to Havana. He subsequently returned to Europe. There seems to have been little resentment among the other powers over these forthright proceedings.

Meanwhile, by the end of January the majority of Allied troops had left Vera Cruz. Most of the French were at Tejería and the larger force of Spaniards was at Medellin. The only soldiers still in Vera Cruz, besides the RM battalion, were detachments of Spanish and French garrison troops. Some of

60 Dunlop to Milne, 30 Jan. 1862, MLN/104/3.

61 Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791.



Commodore Dunlop's despatches at this time contained sentiments curiously at variance with the wishes of his superiors. On 15 January he wrote:

The step we have taken with a view to the regeneration of Mexico is one from which we cannot withdraw until our object is attained, and under the most favourable circumstances we must look forward to retain a force in this country for some months after the sickly season has commenced, and in all probability for a much longer period. <sup>62</sup>

These were not new sentiments with Dunlop. Six months before the Intervention he wrote to an English friend at Vera Cruz:

Intervention to be successful must be supported by a considerable military force - in fact a small army of occupation for an indefinite period. <sup>63</sup>

He did not think at that time that either Britain or France had the appetite for such a task. He believed then that peace would only come to Mexico when some 'energetic scoundrel' such as Santa Anna became dictator.

62 Dunlop to LCA, 15 Jan. 1862, MLN/104/3.

63 Dunlop at Havana, to Lewis Price, 20 July 1861, Marrington Collection, The Papers of Lewis R. Price, Shrewsbury Record Office, 631/3/1942. Price was an English merchant in Vera Cruz and a good friend of the Commodore.

The French, at least, did not expect to become an 'army of occupation'. In an unsigned report prepared in the French naval ministry, in December 1863, the writer said that the reason the French arrived in Mexico without sufficient supplies, was that they expected to be warmly welcomed by the people, but since the Spaniards - Mexico's old enemy - landed several weeks before the French and British, all the allies were treated as invaders and shunned by the people. French Archives, MAR BR4,819, 'Mouvements et Opérations Militaires, 1861-1863'.

The work of preparing the battalion for the field was now rapidly going forward. Duck was procured from the ships; it 'makes the best and cheapest tents'.<sup>64</sup> A four gun battery was completed. The guns came from the squadron: two Armstrong 6 pounders, and two Howitzers which threw a 12 pound shell. Dunlop made Lt. Col. Lowder a Colonel on the Staff so that he would be the equal of the French and Spanish Staff officers. The Commodore divided the Marines into a brigade of two battalions, with Lt. Col. Lambrick as commander of the first battalion. The second battalion would be composed of shipboard Marines, who would be landed to garrison Vera Cruz if the original Marine battalion should move inland. Dunlop on his own responsibility planned to increase his force by siphoning off Marines from the normal complement of the ships in the squadron.<sup>65</sup>

The Commodore sent Major Digby, RMA, to Havana in Barracouta to purchase waggons, mules, and other means of transport.

64 Dunlop to Milne, 30 Jan. 1862, MLN/104/3.

65 On 19 Feb. Dunlop 'borrowed' 170 Marines from his ships, to replace those in the battalion who had fallen ill. Parl. Papers, 'Medical Statistics of the N. American and W. Indian Station for 1862', XXXIV, Part 2, (1865), p. 26.

The Captain General of Cuba, the Duke de la Torre, placed all government stores at his disposal. The British Consul at Havana, Joseph Crawford was also a great help. Commander Malcolm of Barracouta and Major Digby worked together on this project. Their probable enthusiasm may be illustrated by their industriousness. Barracouta left Vera Cruz on 11 February, arrived at Havana on the 16th and sailed for Vera Cruz again on the 21st loaded with animals, waggons and supplies for the battalion. Naval and Marine artisans made all their own harness for the mules as well as several pack saddles and carts.<sup>66</sup> The commodore complained that no work people were to be gotten in Vera Cruz. This is hardly surprising when one considers that on 25 January Juárez had issued a proclamation promising death to any Mexican who aided the invaders.<sup>67</sup> By the end of February, the battalion had grown to 860 men. It was completed for field service and had rations for fourteen days. Dunlop said proudly that the Marines, 'are now ready and able, if required, to march from one end of Mexico to the other'.<sup>68</sup>

The 'Preliminaries of Soledad' on the 19th of February permitted the Allies to advance to healthier locations at Orizaba, Cordova and Tehuacan. The Mexican army would offer no opposition to this movement. The 15th April was later set as the date for the first conference between the Allies and the Mexicans for the

66 Dunlop to Milne, 26 Feb. 1862, MLN/104/3.

67 Dawson, D., op.cit., p. 167.

68 Dunlop to Milne, 2 March 1862, MLN/104/3.

settlement of grievances. It appeared that the danger of hostilities had passed.

On 1 March, Dunlop received orders from home. They informed him of French re-inforcements on the way; they told him that a group of Mexicans were to offer the throne of Mexico to the Archduke Maximilian; and they reiterated his previous instructions not to march the battalion beyond Vera Cruz. He was still to withdraw his force completely when the unhealthy season began.<sup>69</sup> With the prospect of war now apparently at an end, and because of the increasing sickness, Dunlop decided to send the Marines home.<sup>70</sup> Specific orders to do this came from England six weeks later. Donegal sailed on the 9th and Sans Pareil on the 13th of March with the greater part of the battalion. The Commodore retained two companies, 131 men, for garrison duty at Vera Cruz. The allies, he reasoned, would 'feel aggrieved if we took these last troops away from a dangerous service'.<sup>71</sup> He felt that while Britain still remained one of the allied powers, she must at least have a token force in the country. The battalion's accumulated matériel: 200 mules, 54 horses, waggons, harnesses, etc., were all sold to the French for \$48,133.<sup>72</sup>

69 Dunlop to Milne, 2 March 1862, MLN/104/3.

70 Ibid., Dunlop believed that the signing of the 'Preliminaries of Soledad' by the Allies had removed the danger of war. Dunlop to LCA, 24 June 1862, ADM 1/5791.

71 Dunlop to Milne, 31 March 1862, MLN/104/3.

72 Dunlop to Milne, 11 March 1862, MLN/104/3.

The health of the Marine batallion had suffered from the day of its arrival at Vera Cruz. On 19 January there were 87 on the sick list. By 19 February, 117 sick had been sent out to 'Sans Pareil', anchored at Sacrificios. On 1 March, there were 103 sick Marines in Vera Cruz. Diarrhoea, Dysentery and fever were the principal complaints. It was an unusually sickly season on the coast of Mexico. Capt. John Elliott, the Marine surgeon, said on 3 March that unless the troops were moved to a healthier location 'a very large mortality' would result. He blamed the open sewers of the town, which exuded a very detrimental, 'gaseous exhalation'.<sup>73</sup> The Marines used rain water and well water from a cistern in the country for drinking; town water was used for washing. This last was brackish and full of vegetable matter. In these days before the study of bacteriology had established the main causes of disease, many medical men believed most illnesses were caused by 'fogs, vapours, humidity and poisonous exhalations'.<sup>74</sup> At one time there were 220 on the sick list,<sup>75</sup> and from first to last there were fifty-four deaths.<sup>76</sup>

73 Dunlop to Milne, 2 March 1862, MLN/104/3.

74 Lloyd, C. (ed.) The Health of Seamen (London, 1965), p.4.

75 Fraser, E. and Carr-Laughton, L.G. The Royal Marine Artillery 1804-1923 (London, 1930), ii, p.530.

76 Parl. Papers, op.cit., XXXV, Pt. 2, p. 309.

When Russell finally received the Commissioners' despatches which told of their determination to march with the Allies, he was aghast. The last thing he desired was a British military involvement in Mexico. Milne wrote to Dunlop on 8 April noting that the Admiralty Lords are in a :

great alarm at your joining any land expedition and about your views respecting the regeneration of Mexico. They have ordered me to procede at once to Vera Cruz or if unable to do so to send Admiral Dacres..... but [since] Mexican affairs [have] so entirely changed since their Despatch ... I leave you to go on ... the only thing remaining to be done is the embarkation of the 2 Cos. ... if it can be done without a breech of faith.<sup>77</sup>

In backing the Commodore, Milne explained to their Lordships that if Dacres went to Vera Cruz he might arrive in the middle of the negotiations to start at Orizaba on 15 April. 'Much inconvenience might result,' he wrote to Dunlop, 'from your being withdrawn by the arrival of a Senior Officer while they [the negotiations] are actually in progress.'<sup>78</sup>

By late March the political situation had grown steadily more ominous. At the frequent Allied conferences it became increasingly apparent that Saligny favoured a monarchy for Mexico, and wished to have as little as possible to do with the Juárez government.

On 27 February, the Mexican general Juan Almonte arrived at Vera Cruz in the British packet. He was a member of the Clerical

<sup>77</sup> Milne to Dunlop, 8 April 1862, private, MLN/107/3.

<sup>78</sup> Milne to Dunlop, 8 April 1862, MLN/103/16/P.

party, which favoured the establishment of a monarchy. Dunlop was unaware of his arrival and therefore could not intercept him as he had Miramon. The Mexican government objected strenuously to Almonte's presence as well as that of other clerical party emigrés who were under the protection of the French.<sup>79</sup> When the French General Laurencez marched up to Cordoba on 19 March, Almonte and his party marched with him. When Dunlop remonstrated with Saligny, the French Commissioner, said that Laurencez was acting 'under direct order of the Emperor' in permitting the Mexican general to accompany him.<sup>80</sup> When Laurencez arrived at Orizaba, Prim and Wyke told him that his action violated the Convention of London.

The last Allied conference was held at Orizaba on 9 April 1862. There the joint intervention was ended because the French would not send Almonte and the other Mexican exiles out of the country.<sup>81</sup> Saligny also refused to continue negotiations with the Juárez government. He gave as a reason the repeated recent outrages on Frenchmen resident in Mexico, by the Mexicans. He offered, however, no proof of these outrages to the other

79 Bancroft, H.H., op.cit., VI, p41.

80 Wyke to Russell, 27 March 1862, F.O. 50/364.

81 Dunlop to LCA, 21 April 1862, MLN/104/3. This despatch contains the Minutes (Procès-Verbal) of the conference. The Minutes are also in Parl. Papers, Mexico, LXIX, (1862). Writing to his superior, the French admiral said he didn't want to meet the Mexicans for negotiations on 15 April because the French had no confidence in the Juárez regime. Further, if the negotiations proved lengthy, the troops would be decimated by the coming sickly season. French Archives, MAR BB4,799, Adm.to Minister, II April 1862.

Commissioners. The British and Spanish wished to treat with the de facto government. Wyke believed however, that the French wanted to avoid the first joint conference with the Mexicans on 15 April. The French Commissioners, he maintained, wished to pick a quarrel and upset the present government. Believing the Emperor wished Maximilian on the throne, Saligny and Gravière, Wyke thought, were determined to forward his wishes. Saligny, Napoleon's Chief representative, made no secret of his contempt for Juárez and his wish to replace the present government with a monarchy.

Dunlop was taken unawares by the sudden breakup of the Intervention. He was in the process of renting a house in Orizaba to be used as his quarters during the negotiations. On April 5th, he wrote to his friend Price at Vera Cruz asking him to send up his clothing, some furniture, 36 bottles of sherry, 72 of claret, 36 of brandy and 48 of champagne.<sup>82</sup> The commodore apparently believed that hospitality was a sine qua non for the success of negotiations.

Now however, the British and Spanish Commissioners prepared to return to Vera Cruz. Dunlop ordered the two Marine companies to embark for Bermuda. They left Vera Cruz in 'Challenger' on 17 April. General Prim wished to evacuate his troops as soon as

<sup>82</sup> Dunlop to Price, 5 April 1862, Marrington Coll., op.cit., 631/3/1951.



possible for Yellow Fever had now made its appearance on the coast.<sup>83</sup> Because of a shortage of Spanish ships, Dunlop sent 1600 Spanish soldiers to Havana in his men-of-war. Prim left Mexico on 2 May. The official end of Intervention came on 24 April, when the Spanish and English flags were taken down at Vera Cruz. While Dunlop and Wyke were preparing to leave Orizaba, General Doblado offered to negotiate a claims convention with them and the Spaniards. They agreed and the Convention was signed at Puebla on 28 April.<sup>84</sup> General Prim sent his secretary who returned to Havana with the draft treaty. Dunlop decided to accompany Wyke to Mexico City to be present at the ratification of the document by Juarez. The Commodore then planned to return to Vera Cruz and send the treaty off by the packet.

Because of the danger of bandits, a troop of 'Naval Cavalry' was formed under Marine Lt. C.P. Heaslop to escort the Commissioners to the capital. The men, volunteers from the squadron, were 'rigged in Sombreros, red Marine jackets, riding breeches and top boots'. They were armed with naval cutlasses, revolvers and 'boarding pikes in lieu of lances'. This motley group

83 Dunlop to LCA, 18 April 1862, ADM 1/5791; Dunlop to Milne, 11 April 1862, MLN/104/3.

84 Dunlop to LCA, 28 April 1862, MLN/104/3.

rode for 500 miles and returned to the ships in 'efficient condition'.<sup>85</sup>

Dunlop re-entered Vera Cruz on 28 May and sent the ratified treaty to England. Alas, it was never approved by HM government. As the money to pay British creditors was to be derived from a possible U.S. loan to Mexico, Russell feared international complications.<sup>86</sup> In the event, the American loan never did materialize.

The Commodore soon resumed his command at Jamaica. Sir Charles Wyke remained in Mexico City 'as a private individual' - to protect British interests - until January 1863 when he returned to England. The French, freed from the restrictions of the London Convention, went on to establish their short-lived and tragic empire of Maximilian.

The Commander-in-Chief, Pacific, Rear Admiral Sir Thomas Maitland, had played a passive rôle during the entire Intervention. He was to have occupied several Mexican ports in the Pacific if Wyke thought this expedient.<sup>87</sup> Difficulties of communication blunted his effectiveness. Distressed by his scanty knowledge of

85 Fraser, E. and Carr-Laughton, L.G., op.cit., ii, p.530.

86 Russell to Wyke, 27 June 1862, F.O. 50/363; Russell to Cowley, 17 June 1862, F.O. 414/24.

87 Foreign Office to LCA, 18 March 1862, F.O. 50/370.

what was occurring in the Gulf, he wrote on 8 April, that he had 8 ships, about 2700 men and 250 guns, 'whose movements entirely depend on information from the other side.'<sup>88</sup> Wyke finally told him that the Intervention was at an end and Maitland retired to Vancouver Island, his base in the north.

When Russell had received further despatches from his Commissioners, he praised them both. On 3 April he wrote:

Although Commodore Dunlop neglected his Instructions, yet in the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed his readiness to march with the Marines aided the negotiations of Sir C. Wyke and tended to maintain the reputation of the British Arms.<sup>89</sup>

Later he approved of the 'straightforwardness' and 'honesty' of Commodore Dunlop's conduct.<sup>90</sup> Milne, Russell decided, had exercised 'a very wise discretion' when he disobeyed the Foreign Secretary's orders and refused to replace Dunlop with Dacres.<sup>91</sup>

It will be seen then, that the initial lack of transportation and British insistence on negotiations held the Allies together until the French decision to overthrow Juárez became apparent to all. Without Dunlop's promise to accompany the allies in any future

88 Maitland to LCA, 8 April 1862 in LCA to Foreign Office, 15 May 1862, F.O. 50/371.

89 Memo. by Russell, 3 April 1862, F.O. 50/370, LCA to Milne, 10 April 1862, MLN/105/3.

90 LCA to Milne, 9 June 1862, MLN/105/3.

91 LCA to Milne, 2 May 1862, MLN/105/3.

movements it is doubtful whether the British would have been able to exert any substantial influence on their colleagues. If the Spanish and French had advanced without British support - as they avowed they would on February 9th - the Mexicans would almost certainly have tried to stop them. After hostilities had taken place, the Spanish and French might have been irrevocably linked, placing the British in a compromising and dishonourable position.

By their diplomacy, Wyke and Dunlop delayed the moment of final Mexican - French military confrontation and thus enabled the Spaniards to see the real purposes of the French. Since fighting had not begun, both the Spanish and British could then honourably decline to continue their participation in the London Convention.

The Commissioners had shown surprising energy, considering their physical condition. Wyke suffered from a liver complaint and was more or less ill during the whole of his time in Mexico.<sup>92</sup> Dunlop had suffered the previous spring from a crippling attack of gout. Yet the Commodore said proudly that he had travelled 700 miles in Mexico, 400 of which were on horseback.<sup>93</sup>

On leaving the Station in March 1864, Milne advised his successor that British withdrawal from Mexico seemed to have had

92 Chapman, op.cit., p. 33; Wyke to Russell, 12 April 1862, F.O. 50/365.

93 Dunlop to LCA, 29 May 1862, MLN/104/3.

no effect on 'the good feeling which happily exists between the French and English officers in the Gulf of Mexico'<sup>94</sup>

By May 1862 then, Britain was safely out of a situation that was to prove a costly blunder for the French. The 'Trent' crisis had been resolved; Milne felt that the U.S. would not stop a British ship in such a manner again.<sup>95</sup> Lyons believed that U.S. - British relations were very satisfactory, as proof of which he left Washington in June for four months leave in England.

94 'Memo. Relative to the North American and West Indian Station,' MLN/105/6.

95 Milne to Dunlop, 7 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

CHAPTER VThe Station and the Belligerents,1862 - 1863

After the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South, Milne had given some thought to those British possessions close to the American coast. In order to keep a closer watch on the area, the vice admiral, in August 1862, transferred the Bahamas from the Jamaica Division's control directly to his own. On 19 January 1862 he had urged the Admiralty to forbid the erection, by either belligerent, of coal depôts in any British colony. Commodore Dunlop, then at Nassau, reported on 19 December 1861, that two coal laden U.S. vessels had arrived at that port. The coals were consigned to the U.S. consul. Shortly thereafter, the attorney general of the Bahamas ruled that the coal should not be used by either U.S. or C.S. warships.<sup>1</sup> Milne noted on 14 January 1862 that the C.S. raider Sumter had received coal from the French authorities at Martinique and that a U.S. warship which had come into the harbour, was required to stay there for twenty-four hours after the Confederate had left. Sir Alexander said at the time that he knew from his experience

<sup>1</sup> Milne to LCA, 19 Jan. 1862, MLN/103/4/D; Dunlop to LCA, 19 Dec. 1861, ADM 1/5791.

of no British rules of this nature, although it had 'been advocated by Professor Martin in his Summary of the law of Nations.' <sup>2</sup> The previous November, Milne, on his own initiative, had instructed Capt. Hutton, Commander of Bermuda dockyard, to refuse supplies to any private or foreign public ship unless given the vice admiral's special permission. That same month the commander-in-chief asked the Admiralty for some definite instructions to deal with the problem of furnishing supplies to belligerent warships visiting British possessions. <sup>3</sup> Seward had complained to the British minister in November 1861 that the Sumter had stayed for several days at Trinidad; the U.S. secretary of state chided Lyons and said he believed that all other European nations permitted privateers to remain in their ports for only twenty-four hours. Lyons replied that England was the first power to place any restrictions on the entrance into her ports of the armed ships of either of the combatants, by forbidding - on 1 June 1861 - belligerent warships permission to carry their prizes into British ports. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Milne to LCA, 14 Jan. 1862, ADM 1/5787.

<sup>3</sup> Same to Same, 12 Nov. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

<sup>4</sup> Lyons to Russell, confidential, 4 and 9 Nov. 1861, F.O. 414/17.

Because of these rumblings as well as on account of his own misgivings about loopholes in British rules concerning a neutral's duties, Russell, on 31 January 1862, issued an order to the senior authorities in all Britain's possessions. By the terms of this instruction the Bahama islands were closed to belligerent warships, except by permission of the local authorities or in cases of need during severe weather. Both sides were also prohibited from using British possessions 'as a station or place of resort for any warlike purpose,' nor could U.S. or C.S. warships leave a British port within twenty-four hours of the departure of a ship of the other side, whether merchant or war vessel. All belligerent warships were permitted to remain for only twenty-four hours in any British port, unless for absolutely necessary supplies or repairs. The supplies available to U.S. or C.S. warships were limited to provisions or like articles needed by the crew and:

...so much coal only as may be sufficient to carry such vessel to the nearest port of her own country, or to some nearer destination; and no coal shall be again supplied to any such ship of war or privateer... without special permission, until after the expiration of three months from the time when such coal may have been last supplied to her ... 5

5 Russell to LCA, 31 Jan. 1862, ADM 128/56.



These rules were to be evaded on many occasions, principally by the Federals who had by far the largest naval force. They would usually station themselves off Abaco - frequently violating the three mile limit - in order to intercept the blockade running vessels heading north out of Nassau for the Confederacy. Belligerent warships would also purchase coal from, for example, Bermuda and then a month or less having passed, they would go to another British colony and fill up again. Later in the war, the governors of the colonies would notify each other when a belligerent warship had received supplies at their island, thus effectively excluding that particular ship from further supplies for three months.

Sir Alexander believed - despite the governor's protests - that it was impossible to stop Union warships from anchoring among the more than a hundred small islands comprising the Bahamas. He did however object to blatant infractions of the rules, by Rear Admiral Wilkes, for instance, in late 1862.<sup>6</sup> The commander-in-chief disliked selling government coal to the belligerents, but he favoured their being allowed to buy it on the open market. He realized that if his warships were to remain on the American coast - at Fortress Monroe, New York and elsewhere - coal supplies must be readily available, otherwise the vice admiral said '... it would greatly impede my

<sup>6</sup> Milne to Grey, private, 19 Dec. 1862, MLN/107.

communication with Lord Lyons'.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, if any Federal expedition was being prepared to launch a surprise attack on Halifax or Bermuda, it could hardly be done in secret, with British warships almost constantly riding at anchor in the major northern ports. Milne's 'lenient' policy was wise, as the writer has seen no instance where coal was refused to English warships in any Union or Confederate port during the Civil War. While neither the U.S. nor C.S. retaliated on British men-of-war with its own twenty-four hour rule, the U.S. did, in the summer of 1862, stop the export of cattle to Bermuda; hoping to cut off food from the blockade running crews. This was a serious inconvenience to the commander-in-chief and the governor as they depended on the U.S. for fresh meat to supplement the bland salted beef and pork fed to their men. This prohibition remained in force as long as Milne was on the station and even when his successor took the command. As a result cattle for the military and naval personnel had to be imported from Nova Scotia, at a considerable extra expense.<sup>8</sup>

7 Milne to LCI, 13 Jan. 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

8 'Memo. relative to the Civil War in America', MLN/105/6. Another reason for the ban on cattle exports was that the Union armies needed all the animals they could get. Secretary of War Stanton told Milne, when the vice admiral visited Washington, that on Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania in July 1863, the Northern army lost 35,000 horses and Stanton thought the Southerners could not have lost less.

In May, 1862 the U.S. restricted trade with the Bahamas, requiring bonds for the shipment of some goods and banning for a time the export of others, e.g., coal, dry goods, etc., for fear that such supplies would be used by the runners or would be transhipped into the South.

With the surrender of Mason and Slidell, Britain was mollified but the people of the US became very bitter. Seward was now the great peacemaker; 'he does not like the look of the Spirit he has called up', said Lyons of the secretary of state at the time of the crisis.<sup>9</sup> Early in 1862, Seward saw a means for bettering relations with Britain and at the same time give greater expression to the growing anti-slavery feeling within the country itself. An example of this changing attitude - much applauded in England - was the hanging on 7 February 1862 of Nathaniel Gordon, convicted master of the slaver Erie. He was the first captain of a slave trading ship to be executed in the U.S. For many years the slave trade had been an abrasive subject between English and American statesmen. Though by the terms of the Webster - Ashburton Treaty of 1842 the U.S. had agreed to participate in the patrol of the west coast of Africa in order to intercept slavers, the Americans were still

9 Lyons to Russell, private, 23 Dec. 1861, PRO 30/22/35.

very sensitive to British interference with any vessel flying the Stars and Stripes. Given the arrogant British attitude to their flag which had brought on the War of 1812, this American reaction was certainly understandable. But old memories die hard and as late as the first months of 1862, a slaver could escape a British search simply by hoisting the U.S. flag. On the North American Station, none of HM warships had specifically sought out slavers since 1858, principally for this reason.<sup>10</sup>

Vice Admiral Milne was acutely aware of the anomaly of the situation. In February 1861, he wrote to the Admiralty:

.... if officers are to attempt to suppress the Slave Trade, they must of necessity give chase to strange vessels then in sight, or approach those passing near to them - and if a vessel makes sail away, and is in consequence chased, the Master of the vessel, if American, will immediately report the fact of his having been chased by a British Ship of War, and the United States papers will again teem with articles on the subject and renew the cry of British outrage by HM Naval officers on American Merchant Ships.<sup>11</sup>

With the outbreak of Civil War, some two months after Milne wrote the letter quoted, the U.S. withdrew its West African squadron, now needed in home waters. This left the British as the only power with ships on the African coast directly charged

10 Memo. of Stewart to Milne, March 1860, ADM 128/114.

11 Milne to LC<sup>1</sup>, 8 Feb. 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

with the suppression of the slave trade. It was an enervating and monotonous duty. Palmerston said in 1862 that no Board of Admiralty had ever shown any interest in halting the slave trade and only grudgingly kept their ships there. The Prime Minister charged that:

If there was a particularly old slow going tub in the Navy it was sure to be sent to the coast of Africa to try to catch the fast sailing American clippers - and if there was an officer notoriously addicted to drinking he was sent to a station where Rum is a deadly poison. Things go on better now, but still there is at the Admiralty .... aversion to the measures necessary for putting down the Slave Trade. 12

Even granting the truth of Palmerston's remarks, it was a thankless task on a fever ridden coast. Whatever the reasons, there can be no doubt that the slavers were getting through, given U.S. indifference and Spanish complacency. From 30 September 1859 to 30 September 1860, 30,473 slaves were landed in Cuba. But after that year's impressive figure, the number of slaves landed went into a steady decline.<sup>13</sup> Milne believed that there were three reasons for this: the stoppage of slaving enterprises at New York and Boston, whence they were

12 Palmerston to Russell, private, 13 Aug. 1862, PRO30/22/22. The 'Abstract of the Naval Force in Commission' ADM 8/141, shows in April 1862, a force of 18 ships and nearly 2000 men stationed on the West Coast of Africa.

13 Milne, A.T., 'The Lyons - Seward Treaty of 1862,' The American Historical Review, XXXVIII, (1933), p.156.

chiefly organized; the civil war giving other employment to the men formerly in the trade, and the signing of the Lyons - Seward Anti-Slave Treaty of 1862.<sup>14</sup>

This treaty was really a diplomatic coup for Lord Lyons but he submerged his share of the credit and it seemed to the U.S. public that Seward had conducted a successful negotiation with the somewhat reluctant British minister. Lyons had initially submitted a draft treaty to Seward, who rejected it on 21 March 1862, on the grounds that the first move in any such agreement must come from the U.S. The secretary of state was not essentially seeking personal credit for starting the negotiations - although that may have been part of his scheme - but, as a shrewd statesman, he realized that the Senate would look with dissatisfaction on any British initiative on a subject that rankled in American memories. For the chief clause in any treaty of this nature must be the unqualified right of British warships to search American merchantmen. Lyons agreed with Seward's views, and after some small changes and a manufactured conflict over several clauses, the treaty was unanimously passed by the Senate.<sup>15</sup>

14 'Memo. relative to the N. American and W. Indian Station,' MLN/105/6.

15 Milne, A.T., op.cit., p. 513. The author of this article is no relation to Admiral Milne, but is the present secretary and librarian of the Institute of Historical Research, London.

The British minister wrote to Russell on 8 April 1862,  
 'Yesterday was the anniversary of my arrival three years  
 ago at Washington. I celebrated it by signing the Treaty  
 for the suppression of the Slave Trade.' 16

Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles was the only one in  
 the administration who was initially against the treaty. He  
 believed that Lyons had manoeuvred Seward into agreeing to  
limit U.S. belligerent rights of search. Welles held that  
 since the treaty confined permission to search ships to certain  
 areas, it therefore robbed U.S. warships equipped with warrants  
 under the treaty, of the right of searching for enemy ships  
 in any sea. He believed that by the terms of the treaty, U.S.  
 warships could only stop suspected slavers and not any  
 merchant vessel as they had been doing. Lyons maintained  
 that the powers conferred by the treaty were in addition to  
 the regular belligerent rights. After receiving this informat-  
 ion, Welles made no further objections but he continued to  
 suspect Lyons' motives. The secretary of the navy was certain  
 that Seward was much too anxious to avoid conflict with  
 England. 'Lord Lyons,' he wrote in his diary, 'is cool and  
 sagacious, and is well aware of our (Seward's) infirmities,  
 who in his fears yields everything almost before it is asked.' 17

16 Lyons to Russell, private, 8 April 1862, PRO 30/22/36.

17 Beale, H.K. (ed.), The Diary of Gideon Welles (New York, 1960),  
 i, pp. 398-9.

Seward, for his part, complained that Welles could only with difficulty be brought to see anything beyond the immediate interest of the navy department.<sup>18</sup> Lyons' relations with the navy department were never very cordial. Welles and his assistant, G.V. Fox, were bitter at the building of C.S. warships in England, at the English government's countenancing of blockade runners and at many other grievances that they - with much of the U.S. public - considered unneutral and unfriendly.

But the completion of the treaty did not immediately stop the slavers. The month after its' signing, Cmmdr. W.C.F. Wilson in Spiteful 6, arrived at Truxillo, Honduras. There was a screw steamer under Spanish colours in the harbour. From information he had received Wilson believed it to be a slaver. The governor of the area, who Wilson thought was in league with the slave traders, refused the English captain's request that a prize crew be put aboard and the ship sent for adjudication to a court of law. The vessel was searched and it was noted that a quantity of human excrement was reported to have been taken out of her holds. The captain and crew 'profess total ignorance of the name of the owner,' the plate showing the maker's name had been removed from the engines;

<sup>18</sup> Stuart to Russell, private, 6 Oct. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.



it was certainly a suspicious ship. Wilson took a statement from one Alfred Lee who had been employed in the brig which had lately provisioned the suspected vessel. He had been, as he coyly termed it, in the 'African trade' and was convinced that the ship was a slaver. Lee saw in the after holds a large quantity of pans, several barrels of tin pots and 'a very large galley for the size of the vessel'. He had been offered \$ 150 advance to ship as a crew member, although the captain refused to tell him where the ship was bound. Without the governor's permission Wilson was powerless to take the ship and had to sail away. His immediate superior on the Jamaica Station, Commodore Dunlop, promised Milne that he would send a warship 'as often as possible' to the Honduran coast 'to watch these proceedings'.<sup>19</sup> Such were some of the frustrations encountered by a naval officer in the pursuit of his duty. That summer the British Consul General in Cuba, Joseph Crawford, reported that about 2370 slaves had lately been landed in the island, with the collusion of the Spanish authorities. Some of these slaves were sold at an average price of \$306 apiece.<sup>20</sup>

Because of the war, the Federals maintained that they could not detach special warships to hunt for slavers. Those in the vicinity of Cuba, however, would be told to keep a sharp look-out

19 Dunlop to Milne, 22 June 1862, ADM 1/5791.

20 LCA to Milne, 4 Sept. 1862, MLN/105/3.

and the British were now welcome to search any suspected American vessel. Milne noted on 1 October that he had just received the warrants empowering his men to search suspicious U.S. ships; they would, he promised, be immediately issued and a system of cruising organized to watch the Cuban coast. While it is true that Sir Alexander's ships were always watching for slavers, Landrail, in May 1862, was given the first instructions since Milne arrived on the station to cruise specifically for the suppression of the slave trade.<sup>21</sup> From October 1862 the commander-in-chief had four to five ships constantly cruising for this purpose, and now no slaver could hide behind the American flag; their last protection had been stripped from them.

Nevertheless, in the four years that Sir Alexander was on the station, none of his officers ever captured a slaver, though the vice admiral thought that they were very zealous in trying to find these elusive vessels. Milne said that when he was serving in the West Indies in 1837 and 1838, deliberately looking for slavers, he never saw one. However, when he was otherwise employed on a passage from one place to another, he:

21 Stuart to Russell, private, 9 and 16 Oct. 1862, PRO 30/36/2; Milne to LCA, 1 Oct. 1862, MLN/103/5/E; Milne to Landrail, 6 May 1862, MLN/110/2/DD.

...succeeded in detaining four vessels with upwards of 900 slaves, and it is by no means a solitary instance of ships making passages being more successful in the suppression of the slave trade than the ships specifically employed in this service.<sup>22</sup>

During the civil war the trade went into a steady downward spiral from which it never recovered. In the period 1864 - 65 only 143 slaves were landed in Cuba, and all of these were subsequently rescued; by 1870 'the transatlantic' Slave Trade had virtually disappeared.'<sup>23</sup>

### The Blockade Runners

In the years 1862 and 1863, blockade running, to and from the Confederacy reached its zenith. The main ports from which these swift vessels emerged were Nassau, Bermuda and Havana. For a time, Nassau was the chief centre of the trade. Only about 500 miles from Charleston and 570 from Wilmington, it was the closest neutral port to the Confederate States. Secretary of the Navy Welles gave vent to his feelings about this place in August 1862. Telling Seward that he had just received a report from the U.S. consul at Nassau - who said there were

22 'Memo. relative to the N.American, etc., op.cit., MLN/105/6; Milne to LCA, 26 March 1864, MLN/103/8/H.

23 Milne, A.T., op.cit., p. 516.

twelve ships there preparing to run the blockade - Welles charged that the port was a 'perfect magazine' for the Confederacy:

..... a perfect system of violating the blockade is there in execution ... our officers and people are openly insulted in the streets ... while the rebels are encouraged and favored by the officials and the inhabitants... Shall this go on without remonstrance. <sup>24</sup>

The runners, as has been amply shown elsewhere, carried at the beginning of the war, luxuries as well as necessary supplies required by the South. Later, however, they were forced by the Confederates to take in mostly articles that were in short supply: medicines, boots, clothing, artillery harness, arms, munitions, and the like. As the South had only two iron works and little experience in the rolling of large iron plates - needed for their ironclads - the runners took in British made iron. Commodore DuPont, commander of the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron wrote to Assistant Secretary of the Navy Fox in November 1862, 'they have driven the 'Economist' off twice [from Charleston] with the iron plates... I feel indignant at the conduct of England'. <sup>25</sup> One of Milne's officers reported in February 1863, only two days after C.S.

24 Welles to Seward, 7 Aug. 1862, ADM 128/58.

25 Thompson, R.M. and Wainwright, R.(ed.), The Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox (New York, 1918), 1, p.167.

ironclads had attacked Union blockaders at Charleston,  
 'Iron plates for the new steam rams are brought in ...  
 about 200 for every vessel that comes in from Nassau'.<sup>26</sup>

Though the British often objected to U.S. men-of-war using their belligerent right of search in an offensive manner, yet they were not insensible to the very real menace that their colonies presented to the success of the Union cause. Lyons became increasingly anxious over the problem. He believed that the Bahamas' people were unreasonable to expect U.S. cruisers to be always in 'good humour with them.' He seconded some of Milne's officers' views of the Bahamians unreliability when he said that the case of a suspected blockade runner would have been put to Seward more forcefully 'had I not so often seen Bahama cases break down.'<sup>27</sup> Lyons also, as

26 Watson to Milne, 2 Feb. 1863, MLN/104/4. A good description of blockade running and the kind of supplies sent to the C.S. is to be found in Vandiver, F., Confederate Blockade Running Through Bermuda 1861-65 (Austin, 1947); Taylor, T.E. Running the Blockade (London, 1896) gives a lively personal account. Also see the series of articles by Marcus Price in the American Neptune. There are many journalistic accounts of varying worth, e.g., Carse, R., Blockade, The Civil War at Sea (New York, 1958).

27 Lyons to Russell, private, 30 Dec. 1862, PRO 30/22/36.

the war progressed, complained of U.S. transgressions. In the summer of 1863, he felt that although the senior Union officials wished to stop violations of neutral rights, there was a want of firmness in dealing with individual Federal officers who committed offensive acts. Lyons thought that only the prompt exhibition of their superior's displeasure would stop some of the more careless officers. In most of the blockade cases, the British minister confided to Milne, 'there appear to be a great deal of hard swearing on both sides - though I am afraid I must confess that the blockade-runners lie most and swear hardest.' <sup>28</sup> The Governor of the Bahamas, C.J. Bayley, was constantly calling for warships to prevent the Federals from lurking about, waiting for blockade runners to leave British territorial limits. In December 1862, after Wilkes' troublesome visit, Milne agreed to station a warship there permanently; before this he had only sent one to the islands when they could be spared from other duties. <sup>29</sup>

Comdr. G.J. Malcolm of Barracouta - then at Nassau - reported to Milne in May 1863. The commander said that he had scant faith in the people of the place '... any story or report is believed, as long as it is against the Federal Cruizers.' Malcolm mentioned the 'capture' of the merchantman

28 Lyons to Milne, private, 31 July 1863, MLN/P/B/1(M).

29 Milne to LCA, 24 Dec. 1862, MLN/103/6/F. Milne disliked keeping a ship at Nassau because of the prevalence of Yellow fever in the Bahamas.

Blink Bonny as a good example. She was from England for Nassau with 'wine for the Governor ... dresses for the Colonial Secretary ... a horse for Mr. Adderley's son-in-law', the family were C.S. agents at Nassau, and many other articles for the colony. A report of her capture had been received, then a schooner captain arrived and said that a ship answering the description of the Blink Bonny, with a horse on board, had been fired into off Abaco and two of her crew killed. A protest was hurriedly sent to England, the outcry was great, people said there was no safety in the English flag, etc. 'Well lo and behold, a few days afterwards the Blink Bonny arrived, having simply made rather a long voyage and had not been interfered with at all!!' Malcolm added that when he had arrived, the Harbour Master told him that the Stonewall Jackson had only a few days before been fired at as she was crossing the bar into Nassau harbour, and had been chased off. This was obviously a violation of territorial waters and Malcolm promptly made enquiries. It was true, he found, that the Stonewall Jackson had been some time ago chased and fired at when off Abaco - some fifty miles from Nassau - but no U.S. Cruiser had been within six miles of Nassau while Malcolm was absent from the port.<sup>30</sup>

30 Malcolm to Milne, private, 11 May 1863, MLN/P/A/1(b).

The commander-in-chief saw many of the blockade runners when he spent the winter at Bermuda. Milne believed that the Southerners who, 'have a regular agent here, a Col. Walker', were making the island a warehouse for their suppliers. He castigated the Bermuda custom officers for their acquiescence in giving false clearances to the runners '... for instance the Cornubia clears for Nassau but goes to Wilmington or Charleston, then comes here.' <sup>31</sup> Again and again he complained of the failure of the home authorities to adopt strong measures against blockade breaking. Speaking of the Federal rear admiral, Charles Wilkes, who had run afoul of the Bermuda officials in his attempts to evade Russell's orders of 31 January 1862, Milne said that November:

If we change positions with Adm. Wilkes, I dare say we would feel annoyed to see several steamers full of contraband of war in a harbour of a neutral power ready to break our blockade. I cannot comprehend the value of our Queen's Proclamation when vessels openly visit and sail here with cargoes of arms and powder and when there is now stored here in St. Georges, 80,000 Stand of Arms

31 Milne to Grey, private, 23 April 1863, MLN/107. In October 1862, Sir Alexander wrote that ships arriving at Bermuda from the South, with cargoes, 'are liable to capture until they complete their voyage, that is their destination, which is England'. Milne to Grey, private, 15 Oct. 1862, MLN/107/3.



with over 100 tons of gunpowder landed by order of the authorities, ready for reshipment, and a law has just been passed here to prevent the exportation of Arms "however it is not my business". 32

The law which Milne referred to was passed on 2 August 1862 by the General Assembly of Bermuda and confirmed by the Queen on 17 December 1862. It empowered the Governor in Council to prohibit the export of 'arms, ammunition, and gunpowder, military and naval stores'. It provided for penalties of £50, the forfeiture of the ships, boats, carriages, etc., implicated in the violation of the law, as well as a £200. fine for any person hindering the arrest of anyone employed in exporting the forbidden articles. It is strange that this stringent legislation was enacted and then not acted upon. As it also had a clause prohibiting the export of 'provisions or any sort of victual which may be used as food by man', perhaps it was an attempt to persuade the Federals to lift their recent ban on supplies of cattle to Bermuda.<sup>33</sup> If so, it failed.

Milne believed that the Queen's Proclamation of Neutrality of 13 May 1861, if enforced, would itself stop

32 Milne to Grey, private, 29 Nov. 1862, MLN/107.

33 Gray, R., Acts of Legislation of the Islands of Bermuda 1690 to 1883 (London, 1884) pp. 473-5. The U.S. purchasing agent in Bermuda, J.T. Bourne wrote to Maj. Huse and to Fraser, Trenholm and Co., C.S. suppliers in England, on 7 Jan. 1863 and said that the colony's Attorney General had assured him that the law came into operation only if Britain was at war; meantime it wouldn't effect Bourne's operations. Vandiver, F. (ed), Confederate Blockade Running Through Bermuda 1861-65 (Austin, 1947), p. 36.

the blockade running traffic. The proclamation stated in simple language:

And We do hereby further warn all Our loving subjects ... that if any of them shall presume, in contempt of this Our Royal Proclamation... to do any acts in derogation of their duty, as subjects of a Neutral Sovereign in the said contest, or in violation or contravention of the Law of Nations... as for example, by breaking or endeavouring to break any blockade lawfully and actually established by or on behalf of either of the said contending parties; or by carrying... arms military stores, or materials or ... contraband of war, for the use or service of either of the said contending parties, all persons so offending will incur and be liable to the several penalties and penal consequences by the said Statute or by the Law of Nations... 34

The law certainly seems clear enough. Lord Palmerston however, summed up his attitude to the contraband trade in the phrase he used to U.S. minister Adams, '... catch 'em if you can.' <sup>35</sup> On 27 November 1863, Russell replied to Adams after the U.S. minister had furnished him with new proofs that there was a Confederate depot<sup>A</sup> of naval stores at Bermuda. The foreign secretary declined to interfere in the matter as he held that international law entitled British subjects to trade with either belligerent, and the only penalty they could legally suffer was the capture of their vessels.<sup>36</sup>

34 'HM Proclamation of Neutrality', 13 May 1861, F.O.414/17.

35 Palmerston to Russell, private, 25 Aug. 1862, PRO 30/22/22. The Prime Minister told the foreign secretary to inform Adams that he was quite unauthorised to report to Seward this phrase. Palmerston's flippant remark greatly angered the Federals.

36 Moore, J.B., History and Digest of the International Arbitration to which the U.S. has been a Party (Washington, 1898), i, p.588.

One of the central points of the British case at the Geneva arbitration of 1872 was that:

The government neither did nor could prohibit subjects... from engaging in trade ... By international law the right of blockade and the enforcement of it belonged to the belligerents and not to neutral powers, and it followed that to the blockading power must be left the task of making the blockade effective.<sup>37</sup>

This had been the British rule throughout the civil war. It was not until 1870 that Britain changed her Foreign Enlistment Act of 1819, upon which the Queen's Proclamation was based. Even this new act was directed almost exclusively to preventing the building of belligerent warships, i.e., Alabamas in British ports; it contained no provisions barring British ports to blockade runners.

The position that the U.S. adopted towards foreign seamen serving in blockade runners - after the 1861 Savannah incident - was outlined in a letter from Welles to Rear Admiral Farragut in May 1864. The secretary of the navy pointed out that all bona fide foreign citizens - including pilots and seamen - captured in neutral ships were entitled to immediate release. If the foreigners however, had no papers, if the vessel bore the Confederate or no flag or if they were in the C.S. service, then they were to be treated as prisoners of war. All U.S. citizens captured in neutral or C.S. ships were to be detained. If passengers on such intercepted vessels would take the oath of allegiance, then

they might be released.<sup>38</sup> These rules were generally followed throughout the war and resulted in many British blockade running seamen being captured, liberated and captured again. They would often, for the high wages and adventure, return to one of the neutral ports and sign on again to run the blockade. Of course, if a runner's crew fired on or attempted to defend themselves from a pursuing Union warship, then - British subjects or not - if captured, they became prisoners of war. The blockade breakers had the advantage of surprise, speed and a low silhouette; but they were compelled to play the role of the fox rather than the lion in this game. The presence of British warships at Northern ports sometimes led to embarrassing situations involving Her Majesty's subjects. One night in May 1862, eight British seamen from the captured runners Camilla and Fingal, - later C.S.S. Atlanta - rowed out past the Union ships to HMS Rinaldo, then anchored at Fortress Monroe. They complained to Cmmdr. Hewett that they had been detained by the Federals. Hewett - who had received Mason and Slidell that January - informed Flag Officer Goldsborough, who was the senior Union naval officer in the area at the time. Goldsborough suggested that Hewett keep

38 Bernard, M., A Historical Account of the Neutrality of Great Britain during the American Civil War (London, 1870) p. 324.

the men, which he did and said he hoped to get them all passage to Britain. Milne, always alert for information, offered a free passage to England to the Fingal's engineer as he had been aboard the Merrimac. The condition was that the engineer would 'attend at the Admiralty office' to inform their Lordships of the contest between the Monitor and Merrimac and the details of the latter's construction.<sup>39</sup>

There were very few instances of Sir Alexander complaining to the Federals about treatment of British subjects caught aboard runners. As has been seen the commander-in-chief believed that these men were violating the Queen's Proclamation - in spite of the sophistry of the home government - and he may have felt that they should be left to their fate. Milne did however, complain to Lyons on 28 October 1861 of the unnecessary cruelty of putting British subjects captured in a runner, into irons. The U.S. subsequently ordered its officers to refrain from using irons except in cases of imperative necessity.<sup>40</sup>

The principle of a belligerent's right to search merchant vessels of all nations in the blockaded area was accepted by

<sup>39</sup> Milne to LCA, 24 May 1862, ADM 1/5787; same to same, 24 May 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

<sup>40</sup> Milne to LCA, 28 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

Britain from the date of the issuance of HM Proclamation of Neutrality on 13 May 1861. One of the most significant additions to maritime law during the war was the extension of the doctrine of continuous voyage. This had been invented by Lord Stowell earlier in the century, at the time of the French wars. At that time, U.S. neutral merchants took sugar from the French colonies to France. When Britain began seizing these vessels, the U.S. traders then stopped at an intermediate port, such as New York. As their journey was now from a neutral port to France, they felt they could be seized only by the British blockaders off the French ports, but not on the high seas. Lord Stowell however, held that the intermediate destination was fraudulent and the ships could be taken, but only on the last part of the trip, from New York to France. But after the Civil War, the doctrine that emerged as a result of such cases as the Springbok, the Bermuda and several others, was considerably more comprehensive than Lord Stowell's original dictum.<sup>41</sup> The United States now maintained that a ship carrying contraband to an enemy could be seized at any stage of her voyage.

41 Pitt, M.R., Great Britain and Belligerent Maritime Rights from the Declaration of Paris, 1856 to the Declaration of London, 1909, Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1964, p.46. See also Bernard, M., op.cit., pp.309-311; Elliott, C.B., 'The Doctrine of Continuous Voyages', American Journal of International Law, I, (1907), pp.61-104; Scott, J.B., Prize Cases Decided in the U.S. Supreme Court, 1789-1918 (Oxford, 1923).

This enlarged rule focused on the intention of the shippers and the character of the cargo. If the shippers intended to send contraband cargo forward to a blockaded port, or even overland to the enemy - as in the Matamoras cases - then as far as the law was concerned, the fact that the goods were to be transhipped was of no consequence and the cargo was liable to condemnation. The ship, on this voyage from a neutral port to a neutral port, was equally culpable, unless the owners could prove they were ignorant of the final destination of the cargo. For example, the Bermuda was captured in April 1862, on a voyage from Bermuda to Nassau, and subsequently condemned.

After this case:

neither Nassau or any other neutral port could be used any longer as a cast iron alibi to avoid condemnation when travelling on the first stage of a journey between neutral ports, when the original intention of the voyage was to reach an enemy destination by means of a subsequent journey. 42

Welles claimed in March 1864 that the U.S. had the right to search 'ubique', and to capture enemy property in merchant vessels anywhere except in neutral waters. Further the secretary of the navy said that his ships would seize any merchant ship returning from a blockaded port '... such right to exist at any time during the return voyage'. 43

42 Pitt, op.cit., p. 68.

43 ORN, I, 21, p. 174.

Matamoros was a Mexican port situated on the Rio Grande river opposite the Confederate town of Brownsville, Texas. The blockade runners felt that by going from Havana to Matamoros they could escape capture as they came from and unloaded at a neutral port. At one time forty and more ships were anchored off this harbour - sometimes for months - waiting for return cargoes of cotton to come from the interior of Texas. The first one captured by the Federals was the Labuan in February 1862. She was the subject of a great deal of correspondence between Britain and the U.S. and the initial reason for Sir Alexander sending a warship to the area. Lyons told Milne on 24 April that he had privately informed Seward that Britain was sending warships to the Mexican port to protect her merchantmen from unlawful seizure.<sup>44</sup> After the British withdrawal from the allied expedition to Mexico, in April 1862, one of Milne's ships was usually stationed at Vera Cruz. From that port the ship would come up to Matamoros for a few days and then return to the south. The Admiralty, in November 1862, ordered Milne to send a ship frequently to the Mexican port; this was done for most of the period 1862 - 1863.<sup>45</sup>

44 Lyons to Milne, private, 24 April 1862, MLN/107.

45 Dunlop to LCA, 24 Nov. 1862, MLN/104/3; Hancock to Dunlop, 2 March 1863, MLN/104/4.



The U.S. later released the Labuan because she had been taken in neutral waters and issued orders to its cruisers to refrain from capturing vessels in similar circumstances. Milne's opinion - in 1864 - was that the U.S. often captured merchantmen at Matamoros just for trading with the 'rebels' whether their cargoes were contraband or not, and in violation of the three mile limit. He believed that the prize court at New Orleans, which handled most of these cases, was 'dilatory' in detaining the seized ships for an unnecessarily long time. 46

There is little to add to the voluminous printed material available on the various civil war prize cases. Milne's view of the navy's rôle in these proceedings may be seen in his instructions to Commodore Dunlop in December 1861:

... questions as to how far our National honour may be compromised by any undue exercise of Belligerent rights by either party in respect to our Merchant Vessels ... tho' of, I admit, very grave importance, are rather of a class to be determined on by HM Government than to be resulted on the spot by HM officers... 47

46 'Memo. relative to the Civil War in America' MLN/105/6.

47 Milne to Dunlop, 7 Dec. 1861, MLN/103/16/P.

Following his policy of having as little to do with the runners as possible, Milne - at Halifax - wrote to Captain Glasse at the Bermuda dockyard in August 1863, telling him not to give any coal or assistance to 'these doubtful vessels'.<sup>48</sup> The commander-in-chief was surprised then, to learn in a casual conversation with the governor of Bermuda that December, that the naval yard had repaired several blockade runners during the previous summer. Calling for a report of the vessels assisted, Milne found that some eight or nine wellknown runners, e.g., Venus, Juno and Cornubia had been repaired.<sup>49</sup> Sir Alexander was much annoyed at Capt. Glasse and forbade any repairs or coal being furnished to vessels suspected of breaking the blockade, unless they were in actual distress. As long as the civil war lasts he said, bonds would be required henceforth from any sea-going ship repaired at the naval yard. These bonds were to be furnished by substantial persons in the colony who would swear that the vessel assisted would not, within the three months following the repairs, attempt to run the Federal blockade.<sup>50</sup> Milne was overruled in this matter by

48 Milne to Glasse, private, 20 Aug. 1863, MLN/107/3.

49 same to same, 2 Dec. 1863, MLN/103/21/U.

50 Milne to Lyons, 2 Dec. 1863, MLN/103/12/L.

the Queen's Advocate who held that a British merchant ship 'should not be allowed to remain helpless at the island, merely because she has been or may again be engaged in attempting to run the blockade of the Southern ports'.<sup>51</sup> In a private letter to Grey, Milne said 'it may be law but it is not Common Sense'.<sup>52</sup> The vice admiral persisted in complaining to the Admiralty and at this point Russell agreed with the commander-in-chief of the station. The foreign secretary instructed the Admiralty to issue instructions that if a blockade runner sought assistance at a naval yard the captain of the vessel should be told 'that the means at the disposal of the Dockyard are limited and must be reserved for the use of HM Ships of War.' This was done in March 1864.<sup>53</sup>

Milne was anxious while he held the command, that neither side would be able to assert that British naval, military or colonial authorities were unneutral. Given the generally lax foreign office rules, the possibility of making fortunes in the blockade breaking business, and some colonial officials who were often only too happy - for trade's sake -

51 Baxter, J., 'The British Government and Neutral Rights', op.cit., p. 23.

52 Milne to Grey, private, 13 Feb. 1864, MLN/107.

53 LCA to Hope, 11 March 1864, MLN/105/6.

to give the widest interpretation to Palmerston's 'catch 'em if you can' philosophy, and the task of Sir Alexander and Lord Lyons was a formidable one.

### The Oreto and Cmdr. Hickley

The first English built Confederate raider was the Oreto or Florida. She was constructed in the fall and winter of 1861 - 62 under contract to James D. Bullock, the C.S. agent who was soon to be responsible for the launching of that most successful of commerce destroyers, the Alabama. The Florida was built in the Liverpool yards of W.C. Miller 'from the plan of a contemporary British wooden gun-vessel.' 54 The vessel, powered by 200 horse power engines and capable of more than nine knots; certainly resembled the Royal Navy's smaller ships, many of whom were on the North American Station in the war years. Compare the photographs of HMS Nimble and the Florida - except for the latter's twin funnels - they are remarkably alike. Union naval officers were shortly to be deceived into a disastrous hesitancy because of this similarity.

54 Wardle, A.C., 'Mersey Built Blockade-Runners of the American Civil War', Mariner's Mirror, XXVIII, (1942), 179; See also: Merli, F.J., Great Britain and the Confederate Navy 1861-1865, Ph.D. thesis, Indiana University, 1963; Written in 1883 and still the best account of the C.S. raiders is: Bullock, J.D., The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe (New York, 1959). Although he was provided with several million dollars to purchase warships in Britain, when he died at Liverpool in 1901, the scrupulous Bullock left a total estate of £200. 2. 3. Several sketches of the Florida are in CWNC, 1862; photos of HMS Nimble are at the National Maritime Museum.

On 22 March 1862, despite Adams' protests, the Oreto left Liverpool, without even a signal gun for armament. British builders could, by the terms of the Foreign Enlistment Act, build ships for anyone, provided they were not armed or equipped in England. Bulloch therefore built his vessels largely in that country and equipped them with British guns outside of Britain's territorial waters. The Oreto reached Nassau on 28 April consigned to Henry Adderley and Co., agents of the great house of Fraser, Trenholm and Co., of Liverpool, the English financial agents for the Confederacy. On the 29th, the ship removed to Cochran's Anchorage, about nine miles to the east of Nassau. On 9 May the U.S. consul at the port demanded that an enquiry be held on the suspicious ship. The governor received the first report regarding the vessel from a Royal Navy officer on 28 May. This was from Cmmdr. H. F. McKillop of Bulldog 6. McKillop believed that the Oreto was preparing to become a warship, but he did nothing as he had to leave soon after for Halifax. His place as senior officer in the Bahamas was taken by Cmmdr. H. D. Hickley of Greyhound 17. 55

- 55 Cmmdr. Hickley while commanding Gladiator, was attacked in the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans in the fall of 1860. He had just landed some seventy of William Walker's filibusters. They had been captured that September by Cmmdr. Salmon of Icarus at Truxillo, Honduras. The Honduran authorities had executed Walker, but in an agreement with Salmon, had permitted the British to return the remaining filibusters to the United States. Hickley had gone into the hotel to obtain change to pay a cabman, when he was set upon by some of Walker's sympathizers. He barely escaped serious injury. 'New York World', 10 Oct. 1860; Hickley to Milne, 1 Oct. 1860, ADM 1/5734P.

Hickley's initial visit to the Oreto on 10 June aroused his suspicions; nearby lay the notorious C.S.S. Nashville which was giving her supplies. On the 13th, during a second visit, Hickley was told by members of the Oreto's crew that they refused to raise the anchor until they knew the ship's destination. The commander seized the vessel on the 16th but released her the next day because both the governor and the attorney general of the colony believed that it would be very difficult to prove that she was a warship; there was no armament aboard her at the time. However, on the 16th, Hickley pointed out to the governor that the Oreto:

... was equipped as a vessel of war ... she could be made ready for battle ... in 24 hours, that other vessels then lying in the harbour could steam out with her and help to arm her within a few miles off this Port... her real destination was openly talked of ... I [said the governor] thought that a strong prima facie case was made out for a judicial investigation... 56

The governor was still apparently loath to interfere against the advice of his attorney general. He put the responsibility squarely on the naval officer when he said

56 Bayley to Russell, 21 June 1862, FO 5/1313. Most of the correspondence regarding the Oreto is in this document.

to Hickley 'your proper course undoubtedly is, on seizing the Oreto to submit the question of her condemnation to the Vice Admiralty Court of this colony'.<sup>57</sup> After having released the ship because of the colonial authorities doubts, Hickley again took charge of the vessel on the 17 June. This time he acted on his own initiative. When Milne heard of his subordinate's action at Nassau, he praised Hickley's 'great zeal ... in giving proof that our neutrality between the Belligerents was a reality...' The commander-in-chief said that if the Oreto was an actual belligerent warship, the governor would have to take the initiative in seizing her, but the Foreign Enlistment Act 'specifically arms naval officers with the authority to act under it without reference to the Civil Power'. Though he thought Hickley acted in a 'right and proper' manner, Milne agreed with the governor in admitting that there might be great difficulty in proving exactly which 'Prince, State, Potentate, etc.' in whose service the Oreto was to have been employed.<sup>58</sup>

The case was heard in the Vice Admiralty Court at Nassau in July 1862. Cmmdr. Hickley stated at the investigation

57 Bayley to Hickley, 16 June 1862, FO 5/1313.

58 Milne to LCA, 24 July 1862, MLN/103/5/E.

that he found the ship:

..... in every respect fitted as a war vessel, precisely the same as vessels of a similar class in HM Navy. She has a magazine and light rooms forward, handling room and handling scuttle for powder as in our vessels, shell rooms all fitted as in men of war. 59

Further the commander avowed that the Oreto had no room whatever for stowage of cargo. The judge said he would hold Hickley's evidence to be conclusive except that all these fittings had been made in England and this would not subject the vessel to forfeiture at Nassau. If the home authorities had seen fit to permit the Oreto to sail, he could hardly stop the vessel - still unarmed - at a colonial port. The Oreto's steward gave a description of what was undoubtedly a Confederate flag which he claimed was in the captain's cabin. He had overheard Mr. Lowe, a passenger, tell the captain 'that he treated the slaves on his plantation better than he (the captain) treated his men'.<sup>60</sup> Lowe was actually one of Bullock's men and was entrusted with handing the ship over to the Confederates. But the judge swept all of the evidence

59 'Decision of the Court on the Oreto' Nassau Guardian, 9 Aug. 1862, MLN/108.

60 Ibid.



aside. Although it was true he said, that the Oreto may not be able to carry the regular bulky cargo of a merchantman yet she might carry, for example, hundreds of shells, muskets, pistols and other warlike stores. She might, he insisted, be used as a blockade runner '... an employment which, however improper in itself, would not subject the vessel to forfeiture here'.<sup>61</sup>

On 2 August 1862 the judge freed the ship on the grounds that the attorney general had not proven the three points needed for condemnation:

1. 'equipping' within the court's jurisdiction.
2. intent to employ the ship in the service of the Confederacy.
3. intent to commit hostilities against citizens of the U.S. <sup>62</sup>

The governor of the Bahamas said on 11 August that he did not believe that 'we shall ever obtain stronger proof against any vessel than was produced against the Oreto...' and he now feared that the Federals would virtually blockade Nassau to stop any more C.S. raiders from arriving at the port. <sup>63</sup> On the day the verdict was

61 Ibid.

62 Merli, op.cit., p. 38.

63 Bayley to Newcastle, 11 August 1862, FO 5/1313.

delivered at Nassau, Russell wrote to William Stuart, who was chargé d'affaires at Washington in the absence of Lyons, then home on leave. The foreign secretary, speaking of the seizure of the Oreto, said that he hoped the U.S. would see that Britain had the strongest desire to fulfill her international obligations, and would therefore hesitate to issue letters of marque. Adams had just told Russell that the U.S. might well do this, in order to provide a larger force to hunt down the Confederate warships.<sup>64</sup> That July a bill authorizing the President to issue letters of marque was introduced into the Congress. Seward, wrote Stuart, was 'much gratified at the seizure of the Oreto, which he called the first friendly act of the British Government'. Because of this 'friendly act' and:

.....in the expectation that HM Government would pursue the same course with regard to other vessels which were fitting out in British ports for a similar purpose a recourse to the Letters of Marque would not for the present be resorted to, although he [Seward] could not assure me that such a measure might not hereafter be found necessary. 65

This statement seems to sum up the canny secretary of state's attitude to the letters of marque, whose use Britain greatly feared. The threat of their issuance was used by Seward

64 Russell to Stuart, 2 Aug. 1862, F.O. 414/19.

65 Stuart to Russell, 16 Aug. 1862, FO 414/19.

throughout the war, in an attempt to halt the building of Confederate warships in British yards. Despite the opposition of Adams and Welles to this mode of warfare, the letters of marque bill, introduced in 1862, was passed in March 1863. This was in direct response to the building of the Laird rams in England. However, the bill only empowered the President, at his discretion, to put the law into force, and Lincoln never acted upon it.

The later career of the Oreto, now the Florida, is well known. She left Nassau, received her armament that August at Green Cay in the Bahamas - about 75 miles south of Nassau - and left the area. Milne told the Admiralty that she had government stores, hoses, pumps, etc., 'marked with the broad arrow', as part of her equipment. The naval storekeeper replied that there was no evidence of this in his records.<sup>66</sup> Nassau was sickly with Yellow fever at this time and many of the Florida's crew fell ill. Having lost several of his men to the fever, with many others sick, '... without rammers, spungers, sights ... elevating screws and other indispensable articles - his guns were therefore

66 Milne to LCA, 17 Sept. 1862, AD 1/5788.

useless - the Confederate captain, J.N. Maffitt, elected to run for Mobile.<sup>67</sup> On 4 September he appeared off that port and steered directly for the bar. His ship flew the Royal Navy red ensign and pennant and made no attempt to evade the Union blockading vessels. Although by this time Milne's warships had stopped investigating the efficiency of the blockade, they would occasionally visit Southern ports to deliver and pick up consular despatches as well as to protect British subjects in the area. Their practise was to hove to and communicate, in the first instance, with the Union ships off the port. With Federal assent, which Milne explained in a circular to his ships in February 1863, was 'permissive only', they would send in a boat or the consul would come out in a truce boat.

The Union officer in charge off Mobile was Cmdr. George Preble in Oneida. The commander hesitated for just a few fatal minutes upon seeing the not unfamiliar lines of the warship together with her British flags. The Winona, Rachel Seamen and Oneida then fired on Maffitt. But, although heavily damaged, the Florida gained the sanctuary of Mobile. Preble was summarily dismissed from the navy

67 Soley, op. cit., p. 184-5.

for his error in judgement; many Union naval officers became embittered on having to decide quickly whether an approaching vessel was genuinely British or really a disguised Confederate.

Capt. Turner of the U.S.S. New Ironsides lamented to Capt.

Ross of HMS Cadmus in February 1863:

Our cause and arms have suffered so many disasters especially of late, from advantage taken of the policy of our Government to permit Foreign Vessels of War, to pass the Blockade. 68

Sir Alexander may have had the unfortunate Preble's fate in mind when he gave orders, which Union naval officers were informed of in June 1863, that HM warships when approaching blockading squadrons, were '... to take every care in steaming, regulating speeds, etc., so as to give no grounds for the Federal cruisers to suspect that a deception is being practised on them'. 69 When she had

68 Turner to Ross, private, 4 Feb. 1863, Milne Home papers.

69 Lee to Boggs and Case, 6 June 1863, ORN, I, 9, p. 65. Cmmdr. Hewett of Rinaldo wrote in Nov. 1862, to a Union naval officer in order 'to alleviate the censure' on Preble. Hewett said he had seen Oreto at Nassau, his signal man reported her as being an English warship, she was painted as such and if he had seen her at sea, he would have taken her as one of HM men-of-war. 'Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs 1861 - 1862' (Washington, 1862).

refitted, the Florida escaped from Mobile and ultimately destroyed thirty-two ships and bonded four others.

This Confederate raider was one of four - the others were the Alabama, Georgia, and Shenandoah - which the Geneva arbitration of 1872 ruled had been carelessly allowed to leave British jurisdiction. They said:

.... it likewise results from all the facts relative to the stay of the Oreto at Nassau, to her issue from that port, to her enlistment of men, of her supplies, and to her armament, with the cooperation of the British vessel 'Prince Alfred' at Green Cay, that there was negligence on the part of the British Colonial Authorities. 70

Because of these cases the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870 specifically placed the responsibility of proving that any suspected vessel might be used against a friendly power directly on the ship's builders. The Florida then, was the first of the British built Confederate raiders and it was stopped by an alert naval officer, Cmmdr. Hickley

70 Moore, op.cit., pp. 451, 656. Roundell Palmer, one of HM Law Officers at the time of the Oreto affair, said he could never understand how the Geneva arbitrators could have blamed Britain for negligence in this case. Palmer notes that the Oreto did not receive her armament until she reached Mobile. Palmer, R., Memorials (London, 1896), ii, pp. 418, 420. As we have seen, the raider did, in fact, receive her guns at Green Cay in the Bahamas, thus violating the Foreign Enlistment Act.

who saw clearly through the legal obstructions to the essentials of the case. He was backed up by his commander-in-chief and as seems probable by the sympathy, if not the active encouragement of the Governor of the Bahamas, C.J. Bayley. All of these good intentions were defeated by the intricacies of an obsolete piece of legislation, as well as by the disinclination of Parliament to change it. If British legislators had amended what was obviously an inadequate law, they could have saved the country fifteen million dollars, the sum awarded to the U.S. by the Geneva arbitrators, and also have avoided the immense animosity of the Federal government. But the Palmerston government failed to act after this first test case, and other raiders were soon to follow the Florida down the ways of British shipyards. One of the most important results of Cmmdr. Hickley's seizure of the Oreto was that it persuaded Seward to delay the passage of the letters of marque bill; when the Alabama escaped from Liverpool in July 1862, Federal fury was perhaps mitigated to some extent over yet another British built raider appearing on the high seas.

Wilkes, Milne and the Governors

The long career of the Alabama began in the summer of 1862. With great courage and decision, Capt. Semmes went about the business of commerce destroying with singular success. On 5 September - the day after the Florida ran into Mobile - he seized and burned his first prize. For almost two years this raider terrorized U.S. merchantmen before she was sunk by the U.S.S. Kearsage, in June 1864. Many U.S. commercial craft registered under the Union Jack to escape Semmes' guns, thereby enriching Britain by the payment of insurance, registration and other fees. On 8 September 1862, Secretary of the Navy Welles commissioned a 'flying squadron' whose duty it was to search out and destroy the Alabama, the Florida and any other Confederate raiders it might encounter. The force was commanded by Acting Rear Admiral Charles Wilkes of Trent fame; composed initially of seven warships, at its greatest strength it numbered sixteen men-of-war. The story of Wilkes' unsuccessful search for the raiders has largely been told elsewhere. But Milne's reaction to the Union officer's conflicts with colonial officials and with British naval officers, has never been recounted. Its importance



lies in illustrating the commander-in-chief's views of his officers' duties vis-a-vis colonial authorities and the belligerents, as well as showing how the governors differed with Milne in their understanding of the functions of British naval officers.<sup>71</sup>

Acting Rear Admiral Wilkes arrived at Bermuda in his flagship Wachusett 9, on 27 September 1862, four days from Fortress Monroe. With him were the Tioga 8 and Sonoma 7; the latter cruised off the island looking for blockade runners, while Wilkes went into St. Georges with the other two ships. Thereupon followed a series of 'incidents': there was no British flag hoisted at the fort for Wilkes to salute; the fort did not immediately salute his ship; the Lieut. governor later said the guard sergeant had been punished for failing to do this. Then a person in ordinary dress, an officer from the convict establishment, brought the governor's message to Wilkes; Governor Ord said there was no one else available at the time, etc., etc. Milne said that he had heard that Wilkes wrote four pages of complaint;

71 Some sources on Wilkes: Hill, J.D., Sea Dogs of the Sixties (Minn., 1935); Jeffries, W.W., 'The Civil War Career of Charles Wilkes', Journal of Southern History, XI, (1945) pp. 324-348; ORN, passim.

there was much ill-feeling on both sides.

The governor agreed to permit the Wachusett and Tioga to coal and make repairs. On the morning of the fourth day of his visit, Wilkes requested a further twelve hour extension as he had just broken a boiler tube in Wachusett while he was preparing to leave. Governor Ord acquiesced. Tioga meanwhile, left the harbour and proceeded to cruise back and forth off the entrance. Sonoma now came in for coal and supplies. On the evening before the Sonoma entered the harbour, Cmmdr. A.T. Thrupp of Desperate 8, at the governor's request, sent an officer aboard the Union warship. The governor was irritated at Sonoma's anchoring each night at the Fairway Buoy and - though Wilkes denied it - virtually blocked the harbour entrance. Desperate's officer told Sonoma's captain either to go into St. Georges or to go to sea but not to anchor in the Fairway; if the Federal ship didn't go in at once, said the British officer, he would not be allowed to later. Cmmdr. Thrupp reported ' I cleared for action and loaded our guns in case it should be necessary to use force....' 72

72 Milne to Glasse, 16 Oct. 1862, MLN/103/18/R.

Cmmdr. Stevens, captain of the Union gunboat, refused 'in light of so irregular a method of transmitting orders' to accede to this demand and went in his gig into the harbour to consult with Wilkes. By then it was dark and the Sonoma anchored in the Fairway, in defiance of the governor. Milne cautioned Thrupp on 16 Oct; he saw no reason why the commander should use force against the warship of a friendly nation.<sup>73</sup> But he apparently changed his mind, for writing to Lyons about a month later, Sir Alexander said:

I feel that I would have been perfectly justified after due warning in using force to prevent his vessels from taking up this anchorage, however great would have been the risk of bringing on hostilities between the two countries. <sup>74</sup>

Now the governor told Wilkes, 'I have to instruct you that this vessel [the Tioga which had just coaled and was now cruising back and forth off the island] cannot be permitted to return within these waters.' Governor Ord was following Russell's instructions of 31 January 1862 which prohibited a belligerent warship from coaling more than once in three

73 Ibid.

74 Milne to Lyons, private, 11 Nov. 1862, MLN/107.

months. Wilkes countered with, 'This I cannot permit, my government has, alone the power of instructing me.' Russell later termed this a defiance of the colonial authorities.<sup>75</sup>

Milne was then at Halifax, his summer station, and did not arrive in Bermuda until 20 November 1862. By that time all of Wilkes' ships had departed. Sir Alexander wrote to Grey saying he understood the Union admiral had complained while at Bermuda that no attention or courtesy was shown to him by the colonial officials and Wilkes had said '... the English officers [at] Hatteras and Fort Monroe were receiving every attention that could possibly be shewn to them'. Milne added 'This is quite true and by none more than Admiral and Mrs. Wilkes.'<sup>76</sup> The Wachusett left Bermuda on 2 October but Wilkes had ordered the other two Union warships to cruise off Bermuda as long as they could, while saving enough coal to reach Havana. In his report to Welles, the acting rear admiral called the Bermudians 'a pack of secessionists'.<sup>77</sup>

75 Hill, op.cit., p. 113; LCA, to Milne, Confidential, 15 Nov. 1862, MLN/105/3.

76 Milne to Grey, private, 29 Nov. 1862, MLN/107.

77 Wilkes to Welles, 12 Oct. 1862, ORN, I, 1, p. 502-4.

The blockade runners were afraid to leave while the Federal steamers were there, both the Minho and Harriet Pinckney - whom Milne rightly believed to be runners - were chased back into the harbour. Governor Ord sent one more 'instruction' to the U.S. ships, via Plover 5. He informed Cmmdr. Rodgers of Tioga that neither ship could communicate with the shore except by Ord's previously obtained permission. Sonoma and Tioga steamed away from the islands on 18 October.

Acting Rear Admiral Wilkes was also at Nassau in the fall of 1862, where he became embroiled with Governor Bayley. Milne sailed from Bermuda and arrived at Nassau on 13 December. He had heard Wilkes was there and hoped to see him. 'I do not expect any trouble with him,' Sir Alexander confided to Grey.<sup>78</sup> But the U.S. officer had already left the area. The commander-in-chief never met Wilkes, but before the Federal officer's recall, they exchanged a guardedly cordial correspondence concerning belligerent rights.<sup>79</sup> While in the Bahamas, Wilkes was told by a Nassau pilot that he wouldn't be allowed to anchor, and thus annoyed, he refused to allow a boat from Barracouta 6 -

78 Milne to Grey, private, 19 Dec. 1862, MLN/107.

79 Milne to LCA, 30 July 1863, ADM 1/5820.

which was quite close to his ship -- to communicate with him. This greatly angered Cmmdr. G. J. Malcolm of Barracouta and he told the local U.S. consul, on 20 November, that if the Union ships anchored without the governor's permission, he '... should fire upon them at once'.<sup>80</sup> Milne censured Malcolm telling him that if U.S. vessels anchored without permission, it was for the governor to decide what should be done 'and not the Naval Officer'.<sup>81</sup>

Several days later near Stirrup Cay -- some miles north of Nassau -- Barracouta met Wilkes' ship and they warily watched each other with their crews at quarters, for twenty-five minutes. Then Malcolm steamed away, neither commander having attempted to communicate with the other. Though the Barracouta is a 'much heavier armed vessel than the Wachusett' said Wilkes to Welles, 'that is of little consequence. You may depend upon it, we shall fight with a good will'.<sup>82</sup> In both the Bermuda and Bahama incidents the secretary of the navy upheld Wilkes' actions; Welles throughout the war urged a firm line with Britain. But Welles was not blind to his subordinate's faults. He characterized Wilkes as one who 'has abilities

80 ORN, I, i, p. 555.

81 Milne to Malcolm, 16 Dec. 1862, MLN/103/18/R.

82 ORN, I, i, p. 571.

but not good judgement in all respects.' 83

In all of these disputes or discussions, Milne feared that his officers would become involved as 'middlemen' between the belligerents and the colonial authorities. Governor Bayley thought that HM Ships were the 'most appropriate vehicle' for communicating with belligerent men-of-war. Though he would if necessary, furnish a boat, Sir Alexander said that the colonial officials themselves should actually speak to the Union or Confederate officers. Even if it became necessary, in the governor's opinion, to resort to force against a foreign warship, Milne believed it to be the 'Universal Custom of all Nations that the firing upon any foreign vessel should come from HM Forts -- and not from any of HM Ships'. The commander-in-chief wished to keep the navy in the background until the civil element had been exhausted, which he held would remove 'a great cause of irritation and contention'. 84

Sir Alexander also endeavoured to convince the civil officials -- and he even included Lyons in this -- to make

83 Jeffries, op.cit., p. 327.

84 Milne to LCA, 22 Dec. 1862, ADM 1/5788; Same to same, 28 Nov. 1862, MLN/103/6/F; 'Memo relative to the Civil War in America', MLN/105/6.

requisitions of his men, and not to give them direct orders.

Speaking of Governor Ord he wrote:

.... he is the third governor I have had to write to expressing my opinion and telling them that their requisitions would always have attention but they have no power to give orders. 85

This may seem a niggling point but it reappears again and again in Milne's correspondence. If once colonial officials became used to giving orders to naval officers, the commander-in-chief as well as his men would be placed in an awkward situation; divided responsibility would be highly undesirable in such critical times. The home authorities agreed with most of Milne's conclusions and on 13 April 1863, the Colonial Office issued the following circular to their governors:

Any notice or direction conveyed by the authority of a Governor to the Commander of any Foreign Vessel, should be conveyed through the officers of the Colonial Government and not through the Officers of HM Navy, whose intervention should not be applied for, unless the directions conveyed through the ordinary channel should fail to produce any effect. 86

These events raise the question of Sir Alexander's attitude to the colonial governors. Of Harry St. George Ord, Governor of Bermuda, Milne said in a confidential note to Captain Glasse, in October 1862, that the governor hadn't sent

85 Milne to Grey, private, 1 Jan. 1863, MLN/107. We have seen how Admiral Wilkes objected to receiving 'instructions' which he construed to be 'orders' from British colonial authorities.

86 Circular No. 41M, 13 April 1863, ADM 1/5848.



him the correspondence between Wilkes and Ord '... he tells me nothing'. <sup>87</sup> To Grey that same month he confided, '... he is rather a fussy personage'. <sup>88</sup> Some two months later Governor Ord wrote to his superior, the Duke of Newcastle:

the Vice Admiral has been in the habit of communicating to me in the most unreserved manner his official and other correspondence on public affairs. <sup>89</sup>

The governor noted that Milne had a document defining the limits of British possessions, which he himself did not possess and he asked to be kept more fully informed on all such matters. The Colonial Office thought that Ord had no real grounds for complaints of this nature. Of the Governor of the Bahamas, C.J. Bayley, Milne had little better opinion. In the fall of 1862, Yellow fever was very prevalent among the shipping at Nassau, but Bayley said there was no fever among the inhabitants. 'This is all nonsense', said Sir Alexander, 'the place is very sickly, but His Excellency is afraid of driving away trade'. <sup>90</sup>

87 Milne to Glasse, confidential, 15 Oct. 1862, MLN/107/3.

88 Milne to Grey, private, 15 Oct. 1862, MLN/107/3.

89 Ord to Newcastle, 22 Dec. 1862, C.O. 37/183.

90 Milne to Grey, private, 21 Sept. 1862, MLN/107.

The same month Milne told Capt. C.J.F. Ewart of Melpomene that Bayley appeared to believe that U.S. warships hadn't a right to search British vessels outside the three mile limit; he 'writes to me about Insult to the Flag, this is all nonsense'. <sup>91</sup> Milne criticised Bayley on several other occasions; the vice admiral seemed to have little regard for this particular official. One is reminded of a letter that Milne wrote when he had been on the station for only about two months. In May 1860 he told David Milne Home, his brother:

It made me laugh when the Governor [Col. Freeman Murray of Bermuda] asked me to stand on the right of the Throne. His speech was received with a salute of 21 guns from the fort. It is rather absurd but forms and etiquette must be kept up. <sup>92</sup>

Although Milne's relations with most of the colonial officials were good, including, for example, Viscount Monck of Canada, Governor Darling of Jamaica, Governor Hincks of the Windward Islands, etc., his antipathy to some of them may possibly be traced to his dislike of the slow and easy ways and the red tape of colonial life. In April 1860, the month after his arrival, Milne wrote from Barbados to friends in the Admiralty, 'There are some slow coaches here

<sup>91</sup> Milne to Ewart, private, 8 Sept. 1862, MLN/107/3.

<sup>92</sup> Milne to D. Milne Home, private, 30 May 1860, Milne Home papers.

my fingers tingle sometimes at the apathy of some people'.<sup>93</sup>  
 We have seen how annoyed he was at the authorities at Bermuda and the Bahamas, when they - with Foreign Office approval - allowed blockade runners to use their islands as depôts and bases.

But Wilkes was certainly provoking, and Lyons told Russell in May 1863 that the two things he was most anxious to obtain were the removal of Wilkes from the West Indies and the withdrawal of the U.S. squadron from St. Thomas, where it had created animosity among the Danish authorities by hovering about the place. That morning Seward promised that Wilkes would be sent to the Pacific. 'I am particularly anxious that it should not appear that I had anything to do with this,' wrote Lyons.<sup>94</sup> Recalled in June 1863, Wilkes hadn't found any raiders but he had checked blockade running, captured a slaver and antagonized the British, Danish and Spanish authorities. He was court martialed in March 1864 for publishing a letter defending his conduct; reprimanded and reduced in seniority, the courageous but erratic officer's naval career was ended.

93 Milne to Romaine, private, 4 April 1860, MLN/107/3.

94 Lyons to Russell, private, 11 May 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

Commander Watson and the Palmetto State

British warships carried despatches to and from their consuls in the Confederacy all through the year 1862 and indeed until Benjamin expelled all the British consuls in October 1863. It was on this duty that Commander George W. Watson of Peterel 11, found himself in December 1862. Lord Lyons sent his despatches to the British officer who was anchored at Fortress Monroe waiting on the minister's requisitions. On 3 December Peterel steamed out of the Union base for Charleston. Approaching the 'seat of the rebellion' as the Federals termed it, Watson was confronted by the U.S.S. Quaker City, which left the blockading line and with her men at quarters, swiftly approached his vessel. The British officer was surprised at the Union warship's menacing attitude as he had been in the area since the previous day and had anchored for the night less than two miles from a Union steamer, which had shown no interest in his presence. Nor was he prepared for action: Peterel's fires were out, her screw was up and she was consequently not quite in fighting trim. Watson hove to in order to communicate, nothing untoward happened; but the foregoing is a rather common example of the hazards which HM warships were accustomed to in the blockaded area.

That evening he delivered his despatches to Consul Bunch who was on board Cadmus 21, a British frigate. Both ships were then anchored outside the harbour. Cadmus sailed the next morning and Watson agreed to stay off Charleston until Bunch had replied to Lyons' despatches. Peterel lay alongside the Federal warship Powhatan. Capt. Godon of this vessel said that his officer of the watch had, one evening, complained that Peterel was showing a bright light on her mainmast. But Godon deprecated his officer's anxiety, it being, he said, nothing more than the light from the officers' mess. Nevertheless, Watson promised to cover his sky lights and told Milne that he was reporting this fact 'just to show how very suspicious they are of every little thing we do'.<sup>95</sup> Watson said that he could even see lights on some of the blockaders, which was prohibited for security reasons. Visits were exchanged with the Federal officers and except for this one incident, cordiality reigned. Some four days after Peterel's arrival Bunch came out in the truce boat, gave his despatches to Watson and the British sloop left for Fortress Monroe. Thereafter Watson personally conveyed the official correspondence directly to Lord Lyons in Washington. This trip illustrates the typical duty of one of Milne's officers during the Civil War.

<sup>95</sup> Watson to Milne, 11 Dec. 1862, MLN/104/3.

On 22 December, Lyons asked Watson to return to Charleston as Bunch feared a possible rising of the slaves and the possibility of a Federal attack on the town. The British officer was to furnish protection to HM subjects in the area. Watson left that day, having filled his coal bunkers to capacity from the Federal depôt at Fortress Monroe. 'I am at liberty to coal whenever I want it,' he reported to Milne, 'from either the Military or Naval Stores'.<sup>96</sup>

Arriving off Charleston on 30 December, Bunch asked him to enter the harbour, something which British warships were forbidden to do by the commander-in-chief's specific orders. They were supposed to send in despatches by one of their own boats or the consul would come out in a truce boat. But Bunch said that since the Emancipation Proclamation would come into effect the next day - 1 January 1863 - he felt that a slave rising might occur and that a British ship must be at the town to give refuge to British subjects if this dreadful event should take place. The possibility of a slave rebellion was strong in the minds of the British consuls in the South, although this never did happen. Milne often sent ships to New Orleans after it fell to the Federals, because the consul there greatly feared this possibility.

Consul Bunch also thought a Union attack would be made by land from the direction of Beaufort and said it could take place in forty-eight hours. If Watson was outside the harbour it might be days before he could be reached. The Confederates, anticipating an attack, would put their harbour torpedoes and obstructions in place and then it would be impossible for Peterel to enter the harbour. After all, said Bunch convincingly, the French corvette Milan had been for some time, inside the harbour of Charleston.<sup>97</sup>

The next day, 1 January 1863, Watson having agreed to comply with Bunch's request; Peterel steamed slowly inside and anchored off the city of Charleston. The British officer had been there for almost a month, when on 23 January, he told Bunch that he now felt there was little probability of either a Federal attack or a slave rising. As Milne would not, he added, wish him to prolong his visit to a Confederate port, Watson said he would leave in five days. Though he still feared a Federal assault on the town, Bunch said he would not positively object to the Peterel's leaving.<sup>98</sup>

97 Bunch to Watson, 31 Dec. 1862, MLN/104/3.

98 Bunch to Watson, 23 Jan. 1863, MLN/104/4. As early as December, 1861, M. de St. André, the French consul at Charleston had asked for the presence of a French warship, as he feared either a Federal attack or a slave rising. The captain of the Milan thought these fears exaggerated, and said HMS Racer's captain, who had just been to Charleston, said there was no foundation for the consul's assertions. French Archives, MAR BB4, 798, Capt. of Milan to C-in-C., 27 Dec. 1861.

However, on the 27th, the day of Watson's departure, the consul became more excited. He pleaded with the naval officer to remain '... upon my responsibility', as he had news of the gathering of a formidable Federal ironclad force at Beaufort - less than sixty miles from Charleston - and the papers said that a fleet of 92 ships and 52,000 men were in the Beaufort area. Actually there were some Union ironclads not too far away. On 27 January they were about a hundred miles south of Charleston, engaging Confederate batteries at Fort McAllister, Georgia. Commodore DuPont was there, preparing an ironclad squadron to attack Charleston. This was done on 7 April - against DuPont's advice - and was beaten off by the strong Confederate defences. On the 28 January, Watson agreed to remain in the port for a further indefinite time.<sup>99</sup>

Cmmdr. Watson's actions while he was at Charleston, even up to this time were questionable. One day the Confederate General Ripley came aboard Peterel. As the C.S.A. were not recognized by Britain, Milne had forbidden his

99 Watson to Bunch, 27 Jan. 1863, MLN/104/4; CWNC, 1863, pp. 17, 59; Watson to Bunch, 28 Jan. 1863, MLN/104/4. The Illustrated London News for 28 Feb. 1863, has a picture of Peterel and the French corvette Milan at Charleston.



ships to salute its flag or representatives; yet when Ripley left the ship, Watson rather ludicrously burnt three signal flares in his honour. On five occasions the British commander sent his men on liberty into the town. Surely this was a dangerous proceeding if Bunch was correct and Charleston might be attacked at almost any time.<sup>100</sup>

On the evening of 30 January 1863, General Ripley offered to take Bunch and Watson out to Fort Sumter so as to enable them to see the attack planned for that night on the blockading fleet. Watson, who was on shore, agreed and made his first error by not going directly to his ship, knowing that an attack was about to be launched. Vizatelley, the famous artist of the Illustrated London News was aboard one of the two Confederate ironclads, Palmetto State and Chicora, that crept out in the early hours of 31 January, towards the Union ships. The actual damage to the blockaders was considerable: Mercedita was rammed and nearly sent to the bottom, Keystone State and Quaker City were heavily damaged while Augusta was less seriously damaged. Yet not a single Federal ship had been sunk; both the Confederate rams returned safely to port. Cmmdr. Watson, accompanied by General Ripley, went in a tug immediately after the action and boarded the

<sup>100</sup> Log of Peterel, 21 Nov. 1862 to 12 August 1863, ADM 53/8312.

returning Palmetto State. That day the British officer reported to Milne that Mercedita was 'totally destroyed' and two other steamers, though much damaged, had escaped. The whole Union squadron he claimed had been 'driven to sea' and the 'Blockade raised by a superior force'. Later that day he went with Bunch in the Confederate tug Chesterfield out to where the Federal warships had been, 'from which position, with good glasses, no sign of a war vessel was to be seen'. He closed his despatch to Milne on the 31st by saying that at about sunset two vessels, probably Federals, could be seen; Peterel's log for that date reads, '5:30 (Sunset) five of the late Blockading vessels in sight outside the harbour'. 101

Bunch seems to have been trying to ensnare a not unwilling Watson in a strange scheme, for on that day - the 31st - he urged the officer to send one of his men to

101 Watson to Milne, 31 Jan. 1863, MLN/104/4; CWNC, 1863, pp. 18 - 20. In the Charleston paper which celebrated the victory of the rams, there is an entry which may cast a melancholy light on the glory of the C.S. arms: 'Notice and Reward - One Hundred Dollars - Macon and Western Rail Road Co., Macon, Ga., December 10, 1862 - Runaway from this Company, on the 9th of August last, a negro man named Hardy, and on the 23rd of November a negro man named Mathews. These negroes were brought from North Carolina ... I will pay One Hundred Dollars reward for each of them lodged in jail in either North or South Carolina. Isaac Scott, President'. Newspaper in Milne to LCA, 18 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/6/F.

Washington via<sup>1</sup> Richmond with intelligence of the 'partial destruction and total dispersion of the squadron of the U.S.' <sup>102</sup> Watson agreed and on 2 February sent Sub.Lieut. Samuel Pulley overland to the Federal capital with his and the consul's despatches. Enclosed in Bunch's report was a notification from the C.S. secretary of state announcing the raising of the blockade. Benjamin wasted no time; his declaration was written on the very day of the action. Watson reported to Milne on 2 February that the Confederate ironclads 'will run out and disperse the U.S. Ships at anchor there, whenever they find them obnoxious'. <sup>103</sup> The British officer was oversanguine; the two rams saw no further action and were destroyed when the Confederates evacuated Charleston in February 1865. Peterel's log for 1 February showed 13 ships - supposed to be Union vessels - off the bar. It must be said that Bunch reported to his superior Lord Russell that same day, that 11 U.S. ships were to be seen from Peterel's masthead. <sup>104</sup> But both Watson and Bunch apparently believed that the blockade had been legally raised and a new proclamation from the

102 Bunch to Watson, 31 Jan. 1863, MLN/104/4. Bunch held strong pro-Southern sentiments. See Adams, op.cit., i, p.195.

103 Watson to Milne, 2 Feb. 1863, MLN/104/4.

104 Bunch to Russell, 1 Feb. 1863, F.O. 414/21.

U.S. was necessary before it could be reimposed. On 2 February Watson said, 'No notification of a renewal of the blockade has up to the present time been made and I conclude that the several ships now in port will proceed unmolested to their destinations'.<sup>105</sup> The consul and the naval officer's actions and opinions were certainly premature and seemed to indicate an animus towards the Federals.

On receiving the messages from both British representatives, Lyons, on 13 February asked Watson to quit Charleston; if it was absolutely necessary for Peterel to remain, then she should anchor outside the harbour. As Bunch still professed fear of a Federal attack, Lyons ordered the Consul to come away from the town.<sup>106</sup> Since Bunch's exequatur had been withdrawn by Seward in October 1861 - the consul had been detected 'negotiating' on Russell's orders, with the Southerners whom he urged to sign the Declaration of Paris - Lyons feared that the U.S. would treat Bunch harshly if Charleston fell. Accordingly, when Capt. Ross in Cadmus arrived off the port in early February, the consul and his family went aboard and left for Bermuda and England. Capt. Turner of the U.S.S. New Ironsides told Ross that he feared when Bunch came out that some Confederates might come with

105 Watson to Milne, 2 Feb. 1863, MLN/104/4.

106 Lyons to Watson, 13 Feb. 1863, MLN/104/4.

him 'to obtain flying information of all they can collect... I shall absent myself on that occasion ... I do not choose to be inspected by my enemies even at a distance'. In this letter Capt. Turner said he would have been glad to see Watson again and complimented Ross's 'marked neutrality in action and speech ... a course of conduct which has won for you the confidence and respect of us all'. Turner then invited Ross to dinner and promised him the same menu as he had had on previous occasions.<sup>107</sup> The senior U.S. officer off Charleston, Capt. Godon, said in December 1862 that his relations with all the neutral officers were 'most friendly' and singled out Ross for bearing a truly neutral attitude.<sup>108</sup> On 10 February however, all of the Union commanders off Charleston signed a statement condemning Bunch and Watson's 'deliberately and knowingly false' report of the rams' action.<sup>109</sup>

Neither Lyons nor Milne approved of Cmmdr. Watson's conduct. Lyons regretted that Peterel's Sub.Lieut. had made such a long and uncomfortable journey only to confirm what the newspapers had said about the blockading squadron being

107 Turner to Ross, private, 4 Feb. 1863, Milne Home papers.

108 Godon to DuPont, 12 Dec., 1862, Milne Home papers.

109 'Statement of U.S. Officers', 10 Feb. 1863, F.O. 414/21.

'out of sight for some hours'.<sup>110</sup> The U.S. papers roundly castigated Watson and Bunch. Seward, on 14 February, asked the British minister to remove Peterel from Charleston:

He was going on, I thought to read some tittle tattle information as to the sentiments of the officers ... but I stopped him and said that considering the circumstances under which Her Majesty's Ships visited the Blockaded Ports it would only be in a very peculiar case that I could hesitate to do what depended upon me to withdraw one, on the slightest expression of a wish from the Government of the U.S. ... but that it was quite useless to tell me stories about the conversation of the officers and matters of that kind...<sup>111</sup>

Lyons sometimes became entangled in his own diplomatic language, but he obviously was upset by Watson's acts, '... I am not a little scandalized by some of the goings on at Charleston while the Peterel was there,' he wrote privately to Milne.<sup>112</sup> As for the commander-in-chief, he sharply reprimanded Watson. Sir Alexander chastised Peterel's commander for 'indiscretion in mixing himself up so conspicuously and unnecessarily with the Confederate authorities...' instead of staying aboard his own ship,

110 Lyons to Milne, private, 15 Feb. 1863, MLN/P/B/1(M).

111 Ibid.

112 Lyons to Milne, private, 27 March 1863, MLN/P/B/1(M).

where he should have been, while an action was in progress.<sup>113</sup>

'Commander Watson is not a wise man', Milne wrote to Grey,  
'and I am now sending him to Barbados to cruize as I cannot  
trust him either at Nassau or on the American coast.'<sup>114</sup>

Cmmdr. Watson excused his conduct - which he  
characterized as 'strictly neutral' - on the ground that  
he wished to inspect the Palmetto State solely in order to  
tell Milne the details of her construction and to observe  
the damage she had sustained. As to his opinion that the  
blockade had been raised, he had only written this to  
Milne and Ross. Several English ship captains at  
Charleston had asked his views on that score, and he had  
declined to give advice or to express any opinion on the  
subject. The commander did furnish Milne with a plan of  
the harbour, details of the C.S. navy given to him by Flag  
Officer Ingraham and other information of naval and  
military importance.<sup>115</sup>

On 16 February 1863, Vice Admiral Milne ordered  
Cmmdr. Thrupp of Desperate to take Watson's place at

113 Milne to LCA, 20 March 1863, MLN/103/6/F.

114 Milne to Grey, private, 20 March 1863, MLN/107.

115 Watson to Milne, 12 March 1863, MLN/104/4.

Charleston. Sir Alexander told him to 'cultivate the most friendly relations with all American authorities, whether Federal or Confederate ... taking care to maintain at the same time the most strict neutrality ...' Milne ended his instructions to Thrupp with the warning that if Charleston was attacked, 'it is my desire that you limit your observation to what can be seen from your own ship, which would clearly be your station while an action is going on...', 116

Once before Watson had been censured by the commander-in-chief. The previous summer a merchantman, the Adela, was captured by the Federals and taken to Key West for adjudication. Cmmdr. Watson, while at that Federal base, received in a clandestine manner, a mail bag which belonged to the ship. As all the Adela's papers were impounded, this seemed like an attempt to remove vital evidence. Milne told Watson he should have given the bag up to the Union flag officer and to have claimed it only 'openly and officially'.<sup>117</sup> Watson was to be the cause of yet another unpleasant incident while he was on the station. In September 1863, he was angered because a cabman at Trinidad would not take him,

116 Milne to Thrupp, confidential, 16 Feb. 1863, MLN/110/2/DD.

117 Milne to Watson, 8 Aug. 1862, MLN/103/17/Q.



as the man was waiting for a previous fare. The commander is reported to have promised his boat's crew a sovereign apiece if they would 'thrash the fellow'. The sailors later sought out the man and taking ropes out of their pockets, gave him a severe beating. Before Watson could be charged by the incensed colonial authorities he had sailed away.<sup>118</sup> This hot headed naval officer would have seemed to be the British equivalent of Rear Admiral Wilkes. These incidents do not appear to have affected Watson's career. In 1888 - 92 he was himself a vice admiral and commanded the station.

The Palmetto State affair was the only occasion in which Seward made a specific derogatory reference to an individual British naval officer and the only time that the U.S. secretary of state asked Lyons to remove a particular British warship from the American coast. An important aspect of the episode lies in the effect it might have had, not only on British - U.S. relations, but also on Milne's accessibility to American ports. We know that the secretary of the navy and his assistant were anti-British, or at least they believed that Britain was careless in

118 LCA to Milne, 2 Nov. 1863, MLN/105/4; LCA to Milne, 15 Jan., 1864, MLN/105/5.

fulfilling her neutral obligations. U.S. public opinion was rabidly anti-British in early 1863 because of the Alabama's successes as well as the news of the building of the Laird rams in Liverpool. Lyons said that April, 'the state of things here so far as peace with us is concerned, more alarming than it has been since the 'Trent' affair.' 119 If Watson's actions were not promptly repudiated by Lyons and Milne, Lincoln might have been persuaded to close American ports to British warships. This action would have left Milne 'blind', not only to U.S. operations against the Confederacy, but more importantly, to any contemplated movement against British possessions. For example, the commander-in-chief would have little means of knowing if a Federal expedition was fitting out at Fortress Monroe or Port Royal, for a lightning attack on Bermuda. But prompt disavowal of Watson's actions ended the matter.

#### The British Admiral Visits the North

The eight article of the Standing Instructions for

119 Lyons to Russell, private, 13 April 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

the North American and West Indian Station stated:

'You are strictly to abstain from entering any Port of the U.S., unless absolutely compelled to do so by the necessity of the service'. We know that during the Civil War, for reasons of national interest Vice Admiral Milne kept some of his ships at Federal ports and these vessels, on occasion, visited the ports of the Confederacy. But official policy was to hold contacts with the Americans to a minimum.

The French squadron in North America - with bases in Martinique and Guadaloupe - ranged in size from five to about fifteen warships. These vessels were frequently to be seen in both Federal and Confederate harbours and their admiral was a welcome guest in both North and South. President Lincoln once paid a courtesy call on HIMS Gassendi while that ship was at Washington. The French could do no wrong; their help during the Revolution had endeared them to both sections of the United States. The spirit of the times was heavily influenced by France. The popular Zouave regiments were modelled after French units; the Imperial, a favourite style of beard - North and South - was copied from Napoleon III, while the first Napoleon's campaigns

were closely studied at West Point. Some of France's nobility served actively for a time on McClellan's staff; no British officer fought for the Union, though there were several British observers in the Federal armies at one time or another. Many of the Southerners were of French descent, e.g., General P.G.T. Beauregard. Even the Empress Eugenie's taste was followed. She was responsible for the popularity of that pervasive aberration in woman's dress : the crinoline. The French minister at Washington, Henri Mercier, was a proponent of mediation and recognition of the South, while Lord Lyons held strong views on the necessity for neutrality on Britain's part. Yet outside of Northern governmental circles, Lyons got little praise for his opinions. National sentiment is often stronger than political reality. Although Napoleon III's personal popularity suffered for a time in the fall of 1862 when it became known that he had tried to induce the other European powers to join France in offering an armistice to the combatants, the French remained welcome visitors on both sides throughout the war.

By 1863, Sir Alexander believed it was time to modify the eight article of the Standing Instructions, and he apprized the Duke of Somerset of his intention to

call at New York; his superior did not forbid the visit.<sup>120</sup>  
 Milne's trip was made at a time when U.S. anger against Britain had temporarily subsided. Federal confidence had been regained that summer by the twin victories of Vicksburg in the west and Gettysburg in the east. Though still vexed by the depredations of the Alabama and Florida, they had been calmed by the announcement in early September 1863 that the dreaded Laird steam rams were to be detained by Lord Russell. These warships - equipped with the new Coles' revolving turrets - were considered in the North as 'floating fortresses', capable of breaking the blockade and laying Northern cities under contribution. Eventually sold to the Royal Navy, Somerset thought them overrated and not very seaworthy.<sup>121</sup>

Milne sailed from Halifax on 24 September in his flagship Nile, accompanied by Immortalite and Nimble. Lady Milne and his brother's daughter, Miss Milne Home came with the vice admiral's party. On the 29th he arrived at New York City and met Lyons who was on the way back to D.C. from a Canadian vacation, and who had

120 private memo by Milne, n.d., MLN/P/C/1(C).

121 Somerset to Russell, private, 8 Feb. 1864, PRO 30/22/26.

arranged to meet Milne at New York. Admiral Reynaud, the commander-in-chief of the French squadron in North America had arrived the day before in HMS Guerrière, with three other French warships. Milne wrote of the French officer '... we came up the River in company. We are most excellent friends in every sense and also with the officers of his ships.'<sup>122</sup> The two admirals always co-operated closely. During the Draft riots that summer in New York, Negroes were attacked and killed in the streets. Milne profoundly thanked Reynaud for giving refuge to some seventy coloured British subjects on his flagship, which was then in New York harbour. HMS Challenger was speedily despatched and arrived off New York on 19 July 1863, after the riots had ended.<sup>123</sup>

Both Milne and Lyons were surprised to see a Russian admiral's flagship and five other Russian warships in the harbour. The British had received no information nor intimation of their coming. 'I know nothing about them

122 Milne to Grey, private, 30 Sept. 1863, MLN/107. I have to thank Dorothy, Lady Redesdale for kindly giving the writer access to the 1863 diary of Sir Alexander Milne, which furnished some information used in this section.

123 Milne to LCA, 31 July 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

or even where they are from or where going' wrote Milne privately to Grey.<sup>124</sup> The British chargé in Lyons' absence, William Stuart, reported that Seward had told Mercier that the U.S. had nothing to do with the Russian visit and didn't even know they were to come until they arrived.<sup>125</sup> The Russian minister, Lyons said, always believed that a U.S. - British war was inevitable, but that dignitary, M. de Stoeckl, denied to Lyons that a Russian - U.S. alliance was to be made. The British minister thought it improbable that the Federals would entangle themselves in such an alliance; '... though if England were engaged in the serious war in Europe,' he added gloomily, 'there can be little hope but that this country would help her enemies.'<sup>126</sup>

The Russian squadron, commanded by Rear Admiral Lisovskii was specifically sent from Russia so as not to be bottled up in its bases if war with her late adversaries materialized. In the event of a conflict with Britain and France, the Russian warships were to attack the commerce

124 Milne to Grey, private, 30 Sept. 1863, MLN/107.

125 Stuart to Russell, private, 6 Oct. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

126 Lyons to Russell, private, 20 Oct. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

and colonies of their enemies.<sup>127</sup> The excesses of Russian soldiery in repressing the Polish rising early in 1863 had inflamed Britain and France; the Russians well remembered how, a scant eight years before, the allies had kept the Russian fleet locked in its fortified Baltic harbour at Cronstadt. Palmerston reacted with typical aplomb to news of the Russian squadron's presence at New York. If war broke out, he told Russell, they might try to intercept British gold laden ships from Australia or attempt to destroy British merchantmen, '... but their ships would be sure to be overtaken ... at last.'<sup>128</sup> The New Yorkers were just as surprised as Milne when the first Russian steam frigate Oslyabia arrived in their harbour on 11 September 1863, to be followed in the next few weeks by five other warships of the Czar. To the Federals, ignorant of the real reasons

127 For information on the Russian visit see: Golder, F.A., 'The Russian Fleet and the Civil War' American Historical Review, XX, (1915), pp. 801-12; Tarsaidze, A., Czars and Presidents (New York, 1958). This book contains in an appendix the complete sealed orders of the Russian admiral sent to New York.

128 Palmerston to Russell, private, 19 Oct. 1863, PRO 30/22/22.



for the visit, and bereft of European allies, this looked like a thinly disguised Russian offer of assistance, to the Union, and they were heartily welcomed. The Russian admiral in the Far East, Popov, fearing entrapment by the superior numbers of French and English warships in the area - if war did break out - decided on his own initiative to sail to the U.S. He arrived with six ships at San Francisco on 12 October 1863. Strangely enough, the British commander-in-chief, Pacific, was also in San Francisco in October 1863. There was however, on the British side, no foreknowledge or even a hint of the Russians arrival on either coast.

Milne's flagship, the Nile, anchored downstream, away from the city itself. Sir Alexander wryly noted that the local vessels wouldn't come near his ships; but he didn't think the British would be molested on shore, though he did feel there might be a demonstration against them.<sup>129</sup>

Lyons wrote that the New Yorkers were showing great hospitality to the Russians. 'There is,' he said a bit regretfully, 'no danger of our Admiral being troubled with anything in this way, I should think'.<sup>130</sup> It did take

<sup>129</sup> Milne to Grey, private, 30 Sept., 1863, MLN/107.

<sup>130</sup> Lyons to Russell, private, 29 Sept. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

a considerable degree of moral courage to come uninvited to the Northern States. The vice admiral was impressed with the activity of wartime New York,

I never was in such a town or place in all my life. The go ahead system is astonishing. The most surprizing to me is their Steam Boats, for size, management, etc., you see 50 to 70 steamers all at the same moment towing, Ferrys, etc., etc., in all variety and size. 131

Milne had originally intended only to visit New York, but once arrived he decided to accompany Lord Lyons on to Washington. While at New York, Sir Alexander, Lady Milne and his niece stayed at the Brevoort Hotel, which a guide to the city at the time called 'one of the most expensive in the city ... ministers from abroad, consuls and diplomats are generally found on its register, and persons of title are very common among its patrons.' The visitors attended the opera, dined with Consul Archibald and also with Cyrus Field at his fashionable home in Gramercy Park; still today a quietly wealthy section of New York. Field was famous as the guiding spirit behind the abortive Atlantic cable of 1857 as well as the later successful one of 1866. Sir Alexander toured

131 Milne to Grey, private, 4 Oct. 1863, MLN/107.

the Brooklyn Navy Yard, met Rear Admiral Farragut, Major General McDowell and other dignitaries. While at the Yard he visited the 5090 ton seagoing ram Dunderburg, then being constructed. She had a planned speed of 15 knots and was covered with  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inch iron plates. The Nile had no armour, displaced 2622 tons and had a top speed of about 12 knots. Though every courtesy was extended to him, the vice admiral felt constrained not to ask for the exact measurements of the vessel. The commander-in-chief observed with admiration the magnitude of New York's harbour defences and also those on the Potomac protecting Washington. He told the Admiralty:

I was forcibly impressed with the state of their Government Establishment and with the activity displayed in the numerous workshops as well as with the very strong and efficient manner in which the work was turned out of hand. 132

Before he left New York Milne exchanged visits with the Russian admiral and said their ships seemed to have a great many officers. He noted that there were rumours in the city to the effect that the additional officers were to man any ships purchased there, in the event of war. The Russian Ships left both coasts of North America in the

132 Milne to LCA, 18 Oct. 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

spring of 1864, their government having concluded that the crisis had ended.

Travelling to Washington by train, Milne met President Lincoln, Welles, Seward, the other members of the cabinet and many government officials. Seward said of this meeting:

The just, liberal and courteous conduct of the Admiral in the performance of his duties while commanding HMS's Naval Forces in the vicinity of the United States, was known to this Government before his arrival, and it therefore afforded the President a special satisfaction to have an opportunity to extend to him an hospitable welcome. 133

The vice admiral visited Washington's tomb, a camp for freed Negroes and toured the Washington Navy Yard where many officers of the Potomac squadron were on hand to pay their respects. While in the capitol, Lyons held a dinner at which Welles was seated next to Milne. The secretary of the navy's diary quotes Sir Alexander as saying that he is 'the first British Admiral who has visited New York since the government was established, certainly the first in 40 years'. Milne said it was Admiralty policy to stay out of U.S. ports for fear of desertion by their men. The British admiral added that 'he had tried to preserve harmony and good feeling and to prevent, as far as possible

irritation and vexatious questions between us'. Sir Alexander complimented the energy and forbearance of the U.S. and expressed admiration of the Federal's administration of naval matters. Welles thought him 'exceedingly attentive and pleasant'. The secretary of the navy hoped that Milne's visit was 'the harbinger of a better state of things, or rather of a change of policy by the English government'. <sup>134</sup> This was certainly correct as the stopping of the Laird rams that September had shown that Russell was beginning to separate the needs of national policy from questions of legal precedence. Lyons, who was enthusiastic about Milne's reception by the U.S. authorities, said 'even Mr. Welles thanked him for the way in which he had treated the questions concerning the two Nations'. <sup>135</sup> The British minister pronounced the visit most successful and stated to Russell that the members of the U.S. government:

seemed anxious to shew that they were not unaware that to nothing more than to the excellent judgement, and to the firm but temperate and conciliatory conduct of the Admiral is owing the maintenance of harmonious relations between the two countries. <sup>136</sup>

134 Welles, op.cit., i, p. 467.

135 Lyons to Russell, private, 16 Oct. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

136 LCA to Milne, 4 Nov. 1863, MLN/P/C/1(C).

Sir Alexander's party left Washington on 12 October, arrived in New York on the 13th and sailed the next day for Halifax. The vice admiral himself was quite pleased with his visit and said that all of the officials were polite 'beyond expectation', while:

Mr. Seward has himself devoted two days to shewing Lord Lyons and myself all the sights of Washington ... in a steamer to visit the home and tomb of Washington some 14 miles down the river in Rebel Land and ordered 2 gunboats to be there to defend us from any of the Confederate Guerrillas who might be about. 137

It is difficult to assess the practical value of any visit of this nature. It may be argued that a truly neutral commander-in-chief of the station would have also visited Richmond and met Confederate officials. But, as Lyons said at the beginning of the war, there must be a distinction made between the Confederates who Britain recognized de facto and the U.S. whom Britain recognized as de facto and de jure.<sup>138</sup> Britain might confer belligerent rights on the South, but official visits, ministers in residence, etc., were the prerogatives of recognized states. Milne's tour did, at least, give U.S. officials

137 Milne to Grey, private, 11 Oct. 1863, MLN/107.

138 Lyons to Milne, private, 10 June 1861, MLN/107.

their first look at the man responsible for the power behind Lyons' diplomacy; they were evidently impressed. Four months after Lincoln's assassination, which nearly ended in the death of Seward as well, the secretary of state wrote to Sir Alexander, then at his home in Inveresk, Scotland:

I accept your felicitations upon the end of our civil war with great satisfaction, for I know that through all its ... progress you were sincerely friendly to the cause of peace... Let us hope that we can both meet again. 139

Naval Administration: Maintaining a Taut Ship

The actual procedure used by a colonial governor to request assistance from the navy may be illustrated by an incident which occurred in the latter part of 1860. Governor Darling of Jamaica feared, in October 1860, that American adventurers might attempt to seize the Bay Islands. Located in the Bay of Honduras, the islands had been ceded to the Honduran Republic in that year; British troops were stationed on them in order to forestall an expected attack by the notorious American filibuster, William Walker. That September Cmmdr. N. Salmon of Icarus 11, captured Walker, who was then handed over to the Hondurans and promptly executed by them. But Salmon and his crew contracted Yellow fever and had to leave the Central American coast. The only other British warship in the area, HMS Gladiator 6, sailed to New Orleans to land the remnants of Walker's group.

On 22 October 1860, Governor Darling wrote to Commodore Hugh Dunlop, commander of the Jamaica Division of the station. Darling asked that a warship be sent to the Honduran coast as soon as possible; the governor feared that other filibusters were not far away. On 25 October Dunlop replied that when a vessel was available it would be sent. Darling then wrote to



his superior, the Duke of Newcastle, secretary of state for the colonies, on the 31st. Yellow fever was prevalent at Port Royal, he noted, and this would seriously limit the commodore's ability to furnish any naval assistance.

J. F. Elliott, assistant secretary of the Colonial Office next wrote to Edmund Hammond, permanent under secretary of the Foreign Office on 27 December 1860 and enclosed Darling's correspondence. The Colonial Office believed that 'naval protection should be afforded to the Central American coast'. Hammond contacted the Admiralty on 2 January 1861. Lord Russell, he said, had desired him to show the correspondence to the Admiralty and asked their Lordships to make arrangements for keeping a vessel of war on the Honduran coast. Lord Clarence Paget, parliamentary secretary of the Admiralty, told Hammond shortly thereafter that there would have been a warship on the Central American coast except for the outbreak of Yellow fever which had crippled three of the commodore's ships. Nevertheless, Lord Paget said that Milne's attention would be called to Darling's request. A despatch to this effect and enclosing all the correspondence was sent to Milne on 4 January 1861 and received on 5 February.<sup>1</sup> The entire sequence had taken more than three months. Colonial officials often received much faster service from the navy when the

<sup>1</sup> LCA to Milne, 4 Jan. 1861, MLN/105/2.

facilities were available. But scarcely two months after Milne received this instruction, the American Civil War broke out and his force, about eighteen warships - plus five others sent out that summer-was to be fully employed inspecting the blockade, etc. There were fortunately no further filibuster attempts on the Bay Islands. The colonial governors would often ask the naval commander-in-chief for protection and if it was not speedily given, they would write to their superior, the Duke of Newcastle, seeking his assistance. Lord Russell of course, could order Milne to send a ship immediately to any place he wished. The First Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Somerset, said in 1859:

I find that the Admiralty do not send instructions except in connexion with a letter from a Secretary of State. The Admiralty forward a copy of a letter from the Secretary of State to them and direct the Admiral to take such measures as may be requisite to accomplish the object pointed out, etc. 2

The relations between the Foreign Office and the Admiralty were usually very cordial; Palmerston and Russell appreciated the problems faced by the navy in attempting to serve Britain's world-wide interests.

The one ultimately responsible for giving orders in the chain of command was the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston.

2 Somerset to Russell, private, 1 Dec. 1859, PRO 30/22/24.

Russell, the foreign secretary followed, then Somerset, the first lord of the Admiralty. Beneath the first lord were the commanders-in-chief of the individual stations, which in 1860, numbered eight. If the station was divided into several divisions, as was the case on the N.American and W. Indian Station, those who commanded these divisions were the last authority before one reached the commanders of the individual warships. When a ship captain on one of the divisions had important information on any subject, such as the existence of slavers in a particular area, he would notify the division commander, the commander-in-chief of the station and often the Admiralty simultaneously. While this practice involved some paperwork, it had the merit of short circuiting the chain of command in the interests of prompt action. Whenever more than one ship was cruising on a part of the station, e.g., Nassau, the highest ranking officer became the Senior Officer for the length of his stay. If there was only one ship in the area, usually the case in the Bahamas, her commander became the Senior Officer. The local governor usually made his requests - Milne adamantly refused to allow governors to give orders to his men - to the Senior Officer at the time. The naval officer was free to refuse, but if possible, he usually tried to aid the civil power.

Some eight months after he arrived on the station, Milne complained to the Admiralty about the confused state of the regulations, circulars and other paperwork which abounded on his command. Sir Alexander's officers were sometimes uncertain which orders were actually in force, and which had been cancelled. There were three manuscript volumes of Standing Orders which had to be copied by each ship on arrival from England. The St. George had to copy out no less than sixty written orders, which Milne said might have been conveniently printed.<sup>3</sup> The navy, Milne wrote in November 1860, was governed by:

1. Queens Regulations
2. Paymasters Instructions
3. Acts of Parliament
4. Admiralty Statutes
5. Gunnery Books
6. Entry of Seamen Act
7. Hertlets Treaties
8. Various periodical or other Returns
9. Confidential papers
10. Private Signals and General and Vocabulary  
Signal Books in 3 vols.<sup>4</sup>

Sir Alexander urged that all circulars be brought together; at that time each branch of the Admiralty, e.g., Store Dept., Dockyard, etc., sent out to the stations their own circulars.

3. Milne to LCA, 14 March 1861, ADM 1/5759.

4. Milne to LCA, 14 Nov. 1860, ADM 1/5759.

He proposed a yearly index and directives of a standard size as some were in foolscap and others in octavo and thus they could not be conveniently bound together. As it was, papers got lost or misplaced. Milne told of an 'intelligent officer' who said that he was 'unaware of the existence of a State Paper, very materially modifying the Slave Trade treaty of a country, where he had been very prominently employed.' <sup>5</sup> What is needed he said was to 'simplify everything'. <sup>6</sup> The Admiralty did reduce its paperwork on 1 August 1861. As of that date, all general orders and regulations were to be divided into two classes:

1. Those of a permanent character, to be termed 'circulars'.
2. Those of a non-permanent character, to be designated 'General Memoranda'. <sup>7</sup>

In addition, all circulars, general memoranda, Acts of Parliament, Orders in Council, and confidential letters were to be printed in a uniform size, and an index was to be regularly issued. No documents were to be treated as confidential orders unless there was an actual need for so treating them. Milne believed that there were too many instructions that need never have been

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Milne to Grey, private, 11 July 1861, MLN/107.

<sup>7</sup> 'Official Rules,' etc., 1 Aug. 1861, ADM 1/5795.

on the secret list. He cited the case of one of his gunnery officers who was ignorant of an important confidential order regarding fuzes, because the ship's captain considered it 'most scrupulously as a Secret Document'.<sup>8</sup>

The Station Orders were printed at Halifax in July 1862, thus obviating the necessity of each ship having to copy them when she arrived from the home ports.

Even with this simplification the commander-in-chief had a great deal of paperwork to deal with. Not only did he keep up an extensive personal correspondence, but as the Halifax 'Evening Express' noted on 13 May 1862:

Indeed we believe the amount of correspondence which the commander-in-chief of the Navy has to maintain not only with the flag officers under his command, but with the Ministers, Governors, and Consuls of the station - with all the public departments at home, to say nothing of the Admiralty itself - is something fabulous and would make a stranger believe that our admirals were merely sent out as diplomatists, instead of to fight battles.<sup>9</sup>

Sir Alexander would often work aboard his flagship, HMS Nile.

In his quarters aft he had ample room, a long gallery where he could take the air and sufficient overhead for his six foot stature.<sup>10</sup> The fact that he was frequently aboard may

<sup>8</sup> Milne to LCA, 14 Nov. 1860, ADM 1/5759.

<sup>9</sup> Milne Home papers.

<sup>10</sup> Capt. E. Hewitt, superintendent of the Merchant Navy Training School, occupied Milne's quarters for many years when the Nile was the schoolship HMS Conway. He has shown the writer two full rooms of furniture that he claimed were all fitted comfortably aboard his quarters on the ship. The Nile was a schoolship from 1875 to 1953.

explain why, except for a short period when he had an attack of an unspecified fever, Milne was never ill during his four years on the station. At Havana, a notorious pest hole, he wrote to his stepmother:

Easil Hall[his Flag. Lt.] and Secretary have gone on shore to the Opera but I have enough to do on board and attend to a most voluminous correspondence relative to Mexican affairs - 4 letters - 4 enclosures and 33 enclosures, etc. However, I will go to my bed and get up early so good night. 11

As has been seen in the first chapter, Sir Alexander was able in 1860 to make an extensive tour of the station. But when, in November 1861, he arrived at Bermuda from Halifax, the Trent crisis compelled him to remain at that centrally located base. In May 1862 he left Bermuda for the north and that summer visited Prince Edward Island, Sydney, C.B. - where he inspected the coal mines - St. John's, Newfoundland and then returned to Halifax for the remainder of the season. The commander-in-chief in Nile, he was usually accompanied by two or three of his warships on these journeys, left Halifax for the south on 15 November 1862.<sup>12</sup> The distance between his northern and southern headquarters was usually covered in five or six days. While he was at Bermuda that fall, Milne made only one swift trip to the Bahamas. He had hoped to see

11 Milne to the Dowager Lady Milne, private, 8 May 1860, Milne Home papers.

12 The Admiral's Journals, ADM 50/303-5, tell where the C-in-C. was at any particular moment.

Acting Rear Admiral Wilkes who was giving annoyance to the governor; but the U.S. officer had already left when Sir Alexander arrived at Nassau. Because of the problems raised by the Civil War in America, Milne decided to stay at Bermuda during the fall, winter and spring of 1862 - 63.<sup>13</sup> His ships however, continued to cruise widely over the Station. When agitation against Britain was strong in the U.S. during the spring of 1863, as a result of the Alabama's depredations and the building of the Laird steam rams for the Confederates, Milne confided to Grey that '... if any show of force was necessary I could not collect the W. Indies ships in less than six weeks'.<sup>14</sup> The station was so large and communication so poor that it was a difficult task to have a ship where trouble might occur, e.g., Matamoros, New Orleans, etc., and still be able to gather them together in an emergency. The Admiralty ordered Milne in April 1863, to remain at Bermuda because of the threatening aspect of American affairs. He was to stay there for five or six weeks after 10 May when Sir Alexander usually went to the north.<sup>15</sup> But the commander-in-chief told Dunlop '... I have taken on myself to go to Halifax' as he

13 Milne to LCA, 22 March 1863, MLN/103/6/F.

14 Milne to Grey, Private, 19 April 1863, MLN/107.

15 LCA to Milne, 16 April 1863, MLN/105/4.



believed himself 'so isolated and so backward in everything in regard to American affairs'.<sup>16</sup> He left on 22 May and received the Admiralty's assent to his move on 29 May, the day he arrived at Halifax.

Although he was due to be relieved in March 1863, having served the normal three year tour, the home authorities extended Milne's command for another year '... in consideration of the very able and zealous manner which you have conducted the arduous and delicate duties... on the North America and West Indian Station'.<sup>17</sup> Sir Alexander was pleased with this extension; Lord Lyons was equally gratified. In February 1863, Lyons told Russell, 'I have myself implicit confidence in all he [Milne] does and this is and has been an immense comfort to me in any trouble here'.<sup>18</sup> Some six months before Milne was to depart in 1864, Lyons wrote to the foreign secretary, 'I am very much grieved at his leaving the command. No change of admirals could be for the better'.<sup>19</sup> In late September and early October 1863, Sir Alexander came down from Halifax with three of his warships to visit New York and Washington.

16 Milne to Dunlop, private, 21 May 1863, MLN/107/3.

17 LCA to Milne, 2 Feb. 1863, MLN/P/C/1(c).

18 Lyons to Russell, private, 16 Feb. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

19 Lyons to Russell, private, 16 Oct. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

After returning to Halifax on 14 October, he left that naval base for the last time in November and arrived at Bermuda on 21 November. A Halifax newspaper recorded Milne's departure:

The wharves... were lined with interested spectators ... the ships bands ... playing 'The Girl I Left Behind Me', 'Auld Lang Syne', 'Home Sweet Home' etc... the Citadel saluted with 15 guns ... The jolly old 'Nile' ... led the starboard division and almost shaved the wharves in passing. The Admiral and his officers were on the poop, the marines under arms were drawn up in ... the quarter deck, the blue jackets manned the Yards ... a jolly sailor stood upright upon either truck of the fore, main and mizzen royal masthead, each waving a miniature flag ... The responsive cheers from these fine fellows were timed by the boatswain's whistle ... And thus the worthy Admiral and the happy 'Nile' spoke a thrilling farewell to the citizens of Halifax, as the noble ship passed out to breast the billows of the broad Atlantic. 20

Leaving Bermuda in early December 1863, Milne made his last tour of the West Indies. He called at St. Thomas, Antigua, Barbados, Martinique, Jamaica, Havana, and finally returned to Bermuda in February 1864, to await the arrival of his successor.

But while Milne was usually stationary at either Halifax or Bermuda, his ships were constantly on the move from place to place, according to the needs of the service. One of Capt. Hancock's cruises will give an indication of the nature of the service performed by the navy at this time. His ship,

the frigate Immortalite 51, left Vera Cruz for the Rio Grande in early 1863 to watch for infractions of Britain's neutral rights by the Federal warships at Matamoras '... where as usual nothing whatever had occurred calling for my interference'. He then moved along the American coast to Galveston, Texas, and communicated with the British consul. The port had been recaptured by the Confederates on 1 January 1863. They had forced a Union army detachment to surrender, captured the U.S.S. Harriet Lane and compelled the Federals to destroy another one of their warships.<sup>21</sup> Though the port was again blockaded by the U.S.S. Brooklyn and two gun boats, Hancock sent in a boat, through the 'labyrinth of Torpedoes and other obstructions...'. He then returned to Matamoras until 25 February, when having received mails and specie for Vera Cruz, he sailed for that port, arriving on 1 March 1863. There was, he said, no reliable news regarding the French armies, then marching on Mexico City. As he had only one week's bread left, Hancock was about to proceed to Havana. The ship also badly needed caulking, it was 'leaking in every part'. His vessel was one of the new long and narrow frigates which though powerful, had a tendency to roll and work in heavy seas. The health of the crew was generally good, with only a few cases of dysentery, one of which was fatal. The sickly season in the Gulf was

21 CWNC, 1863, p. 3.

not due to begin for about another month. The Medea 6, having taken Sir C. L. Wyke, former British minister in Mexico, to Havana, on his way to England, had just arrived at Vera Cruz. Capt. Hancock ordered her captain, Cmdr. D. 'A. S. Preston to visit Matamoros between the 15th and 22nd March and to return to Vera Cruz by the 28th. There were many similar reports by Milne's warships; it was a great advantage to the British government, having their own men at or near the scene of any important event in locations all over the globe.<sup>22</sup>

The two most endemic problems of the North American and West Indian Station were desertion and Yellow fever. This station had always been a place where desertion was rife; the lure of high wages and broad opportunities in Canada and the U.S. were the principal reasons. A Parliamentary Return for 1863 noted that desertion was greater here than on any other foreign station.<sup>23</sup> Before the Civil War, HM ships had specific orders to stay out of U.S. ports chiefly for fear of desertion. With the coming of the war, desertion was made more attractive than ever, as enlistment bounties tempted British sailors to join the Union forces. When Sir Alexander was at New York in 1863, each of his boats' crew was offered

22 Hancock to Milne, 2 March 1863, MLN/104/4.

23 'An Abstract of the Crimes and Punishments', etc., MLN/P/B/2(K).

\$/ 600 to desert. None of them took advantage of this, and hearing of their loyalty, some English merchants of the city sent Milne £90 to be divided among these men.<sup>24</sup> But the visits of HM warships to the U.S. were usually marred by the loss of many of their complement. After Medea and Landrail had lost a total of 16 men at New York in the early months of 1862, '... the very sentries quitting their posts at night' lamented Milne, the vice admiral said he would abstain as far as possible from sending ships to that port.<sup>25</sup> On several occasions Royal Navy deserters were returned by the New York police as well as by U.S. warships, wherein they had sought to enlist. Sir Alexander was gratified by this co-operation and in January 1863 asked the Admiralty if it was not time that the U.S. and Britain entered into an agreement for the mutual return of each others deserters. The home government did not approve of this suggestion and the matter was dropped. Men did not desert only from the Royal Navy. In June 1863, Capt. Kennedy of HMS Challenger reported that when he was at Fortress Monroe he had received many appeals from U.S. navy deserters seeking to escape; he took no notice of them.<sup>26</sup>

24 Milne to LCA, 11 Nov. 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

25 Milne to LCA, 29 April 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

26 'Memo relative to the N.American and W.Indian Station, MLN/105/6; Milne to LCA, 3 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/6/F; LCA to Milne, confidential, 17 Feb. 1863, MLN/105/4; Kennedy to Milne, 17 June 1863, MLN/104/4.

The navy also lost men to the blockade runners at Nassau and Bermuda. In 1862, the Ordinary Seaman's pay was about £24 a year; he could make more than that in just three or four trips in a runner. One of the largest merchants in the trade at Nassau, J.B. Lafitte, told Cmmdr. Malcolm of Barracouta that he had given orders that no British sailors were to be shipped in his employ and if any of his captains did so he would be dismissed.<sup>27</sup> But many others were less scrupulous and were only too glad to welcome experienced naval seamen. During the Trent crisis the Admiralty drew up a notice which promised, in the event of a U.S. war, a full pardon to those deserters who would return to the service within six months. Milne thought it a 'curious document' and in the event, he never received it until February 1862, when the trouble had ended.<sup>28</sup>

There were several ways by which a man was adjudged a deserter. If he was absent more than twenty-one days after his leave had expired, he was deemed to have deserted. Absence for seventy two hours after expiration of leave resulted in the forfeiture of all his wages. The men were given liberty passes - often for 48 hours - which were marked

27 Lewis, M., The Navy in Transition 1814-1864 (London, 1965), p. 213; Malcolm to Milne, private, 11 May 1863, MLN/P/A/1(b).

28 'Precis of Papers relating to the Civil War in America', MLN/105/6; Milne to Scott, 26 Feb. 1862, MLN/103/16/P.

with the date and hour when the liberty expired. But once a man had left his ship it was often difficult to find him. There were no photographs in their service records and they could only be identified by their physical description and any tattoos or other marks on their persons. These were usually noted in their records. An example of a typical description was that of one William Sparrowgrass, deserter from HMS Tartar: 'Age: about 26 years, Height: 5'7", Hair: black, Eyes: Black, Complexion: Fresh, lower part of face very thin.' It was certainly not very explicit. If captured the seamen were often disgraced; under the Naval Discipline Act of 1861, a deserter could be discharged with disgrace. If he was absent with the intention of deserting, he could receive up to forty-eight lashes, the maximum amount of corporal punishment then allowed in the service. For absence without an intention to desert he could only be imprisoned - with or without hard labour and solitary confinement.<sup>29</sup>

The punishment meted out to the individual offender was often mitigated by other factors: the man's rank, whether he was in the first or second class for conduct, etc., so there were few hard and fast rules, even with the new discipline acts. It was often difficult to prove that a man intended to desert while he

29 Milne to LCA, 17 Aug. 1860, MLN/103/1/A; 'Description of Summary Punishments', etc., 6 Aug. 1861, Milne Home papers; Milne to LCA, 14 Aug. 1860, MLN/103/1/A; Milne to LCA, 26 Nov. 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

was still within his leave period. However, if he was found outside the seaport, aboard a merchant vessel, or in disguise on a road to the U.S., he was usually considered culpable.

The Naval Discipline Act of 1861 said:

Every person subject to this Act ... who shall at any time and under any circumstances when absent from his ship do any Act which shows that he has not any Intention of returning to such ship or Place shall be deemed to have deserted. 30

There were few desertions in the West Indies where little leave was given; in North America the men received an almost unlimited amount of it, with on many occasions, the inevitable consequences.

Thus Halifax became, for a time, the great centre for desertion. There were five or more desertion posts established by the military on the main roads from Halifax and in some of the small coastal harbours, in a circle from five to twenty-four miles from the town. The soldiers were given £3 for apprehending deserters. Sometimes the seamen would go in gangs of ten or more, overpower the soldiers and escape by sea or into the interior. The Maritimes and Quebec were plagued with 'crimps', people who would get sailors drunk (often on drugged liquor) and then deliver them - for a price - to an outgoing merchant



ship.<sup>31</sup> An Ordinary Seaman from the Nile went ashore while the ship was at Quebec in the summer of 1860. While in a public house, a stranger asked him to play a game of cards for a pot of beer. The seaman lost the game but the man still offered to buy the beer. The stranger left the room and returned with the beverage '... and giving it to me desired that I should drink hearty - immediately after I became unconscious.' When the sailor woke he was on a merchant ship, sailing down the St. Lawrence, bound for Liverpool. His uniform was gone and he was dressed in a red shirt and dungaree trousers. The Quartermaster of the Nile was also aboard, having been abducted under similar circumstances. The master of the ship told the two men that they had been regularly shipped 'and being on board at sea must ... work.' At Liverpool, the Ordinary Seaman was paid £2. 10. 0. and discharged without a certificate of any kind. He then reported to the naval base at Devonport and was eventually returned to the Nile. The Admiralty told Milne that the removal of the letter R - 'run' - from the man's service record must depend on his future conduct.<sup>32</sup>

31 Maj. Gen. Trollope to Milne, 26 June 1860, ADM 128/19;  
Milne to LCA, 13 June 1861, ADM 128/19.

32 LCA to Milne, 15 Oct. 1860, MLN/105/1.

Sir Alexander fully appreciated the extent of the dangers at Halifax, a port where many of his ships remained during the summer months. He warned Nile's Capt. Barnard, in June 1860, that his men would be 'beset by crimps'. Milne said that if a man had been spirited away he should not fear the consequences but should return at once to his ship '... it is only the actual deserter who can fear punishment,' said the commander-in-chief. He issued a public order in June 1861, apprising his men of the dangers and deceptions that they faced. Anyone who tried to induce a sailor to desert was, the notice said, liable to a £20 fine and anyone concealing or employing a deserter could incur a penalty of £30. Milne believed that too much leave was the great evil on the station '... The men get into debt on shore sell their clothes, are afraid to come back and they desert'.<sup>33</sup>

In the summer of 1861 occurred an incident that Lyons said could have aroused the hostile U.S. press with 'the old cries of 1814'.<sup>34</sup> On 15 June 1861, Sir Alexander determined to

33 Milne to Barnard, 17 June 1860, MLN/103/15/0; 'General Memo' 29 June 1861, Milne Home papers; Milne to Pelham, private, 29 Nov. 1860, MLN/107/3; Capt. Basil Hall in his Fragments of Voyages and Travels (London, 1840), p.149, said that one of the great defects of the service at that time was that not enough leave was given.

34 Lyons to Milne, private, 8 July 1861, MLN/107.

search all merchant vessels - British or foreign - which were about to leave Halifax. He moved the receiving ship Pyramus to Meagher's Beach, MacNab's Island, effectively narrowing the harbour's exit. Naval boarding parties remained aboard the Pyramus and inspected each departing ship for deserters. As a result the commander-in-chief believed that owners and masters of merchant vessels exercised more caution in shipping men and said when he was reporting this, that not a man was absent from any of his four warships and only one deserter was at large.<sup>35</sup>

Albert Pillsbury, the U.S. consul at Halifax, told Milne on 17 June that a U.S. ship about to leave could be inspected by his men. But as the ship was light and not easily managed, once she had left the dock he would not permit her to be stopped '... without civil authority or superior force'.<sup>36</sup> Milne regarded such expressions as 'mere ... bravado', but accepted Pillsbury's offer. Several days later the U.S. consul returned to the subject. Unless Milne's notice of intent to search was to be taken as a 'proclamation of martial law', he denied the naval authorities 'right to search American merchant vessels in Halifax harbour, and promised to uphold his views

35 Milne to LCA, 22 June 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

36 Pillsbury to Milne, 17 June 1861, ADM 128/19; Milne to LCA, 22 June 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

'even to resistance'.<sup>37</sup> Previous to this ultimatum, Milne's men had taken nineteen deserters from U.S. vessels; but the commander-in-chief wrote to the Admiralty for legal advice.<sup>38</sup> Sir Alexander believed that every foreign merchant ship within the territory of a State was subject to that State's jurisdiction and he quoted some American sources, Wheaton, etc., which supported this view. Milne said that the civil authorities were often too slow to act and the suspected vessel might escape; thus he held that the navy could intervene without the consent of the colonial government. He claimed that this was ancient prescriptive right which 'never having been questioned, it had not come before any court of judgement'.<sup>39</sup> That August the Admiralty said that Milne had no right to inspect foreign merchant ships at Halifax.<sup>40</sup> 'I am much taken aback if we are

37 Pillsbury to Milne, 19 June 1861, ADM 128/19. That summer, some Midshipmen of St. George tried to steal the eagle over Pillsbury's office, and carry it to their ship as a trophy. They were caught and fined. Milne was not amused. Harris, Adm. Sir R., From Naval Cadet to Admiral (London, 1913), pp. 75-76. This seems to have been a particular sport of the younger officers; they stole the U.S. Consul's eagle at Honolulu in Aug. 1865. ADM/ 50/312.

38 Milne to LCA, 25 June 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

39 Milne to LCA, 22 June 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

40 LCA to Milne, 6 Aug. 1861, MLN/105/6.

not to have power to search for Deserters without an appeal to the Civil Court; I can find no law to back me up,' and Sir Alexander added, to Grey, that he did not wish to resort to force.<sup>41</sup> He had acted because some immediate strong measures were needed, several warships had just arrived from England and many of their men were slipping away. The St. George 86, for example, lost 98 men, although about a third of these were recovered. The crisis only lasted a few days and when the warships sailed, Milne cancelled his order to board all outgoing ships.<sup>42</sup> Lyons told the station commander that he was gratified that Milne did not argue with the U.S. consul and ignored his intemperate language. 'I always find,' said Lyons speaking of the Americans, 'inflexibility in deed, combined with imperturbable civility in manner to be what succeeds with them'.<sup>43</sup> There was little U.S. reaction to this episode, possibly because that July saw the first large battle, Bull Run, of the Civil War, and official Washington had more important things on its mind. On 11 July 1861, Sir Alexander said that desertion had been entirely stopped at Halifax.<sup>44</sup>

41 Milne to Grey, private, 24 June 1861, MLN/107.

42 Milne to Dundas, private, 24 June 1861, MLN/107/3.

43 Lyons to Milne, private, 8 July 1861, MLN/107.

44 Milne to Grey, private, 11 July 1861, MLN/107.

The Law Officers belatedly gave their opinion of the commander-in-chief's measures. Speaking of a general right of searching for deserters, they said:

where the object is not to apprehend any particular individual, there is not to our knowledge any legal authority. No such right is stated to exist in any book of law to which we have been enabled to refer, we may add that no reference to what may have been the practice of officers of the Royal Navy on the high Seas, can support a General right of searching Foreign Vessels for deserters; over such vessels no such right can be exercised, unless when they are within British territorial jurisdiction, in which case its exercise, to be lawful, must depend on the local law. 45

This opinion seemed to have ended the navy's old 'prescriptive right' of search, which so angered the Americans. Sir Alexander never again, while he was on the station, searched foreign merchant ships for naval deserters. The years 1860-61 were the greatest for desertion while Milne held the command. In two months during the summer of 1860, three warships lost 50 men in this manner. There were fifty-six court martials for desertion in the years that Milne served in North America; an average sentence being 14 - 18 months hard labour and forfeiture of all pay and time. The convicted deserters sometimes, according to the circumstances, received 48 lashes in addition to their prison sentences. While desertion was the main crime there were others committed on the station, principally drunkenness, insubordination, theft, assault and indencies. 46

45 LCA to Milne, 6 Aug. 1861, MLN/105/6.

46 Milne to LCA, 17 Aug. 1860, MLN/103/1/A; 'Court Martial Book', MLN/109/1/AA and BB.

These were the years of transition in many ways. It was in 1860 that the first change in over a hundred years was made in the harsh Articles of War. The Naval Discipline Acts of 1860, '61, '64 and '66 sought to define the limits of discipline, in order to restrict the wide latitude that could be exercised by brutal and capricious captains. The Act of 1866 '... is the basis of modern discipline in that it lays down a list of punishable offences and regulates the scale of punishments, ranging from death to loss of pay.'<sup>47</sup> The Continuous Service system, whereby a man signed on for ten years instead of the usual three year period of a ship's commission, was established in 1853. This system gradually filled the navy with reliable men who wished to make the service a career; and when they had completed 20 years service, received a pension. By 1864, of the 23,000 seamen in the navy, 19,500 were Continuous Service men.<sup>48</sup> The commissioning, in 1854, of the first training ship for ratings helped to reduce desertion, for now a man's whole life from boyhood on was centred around the navy. When he was at the Admiralty in 1849, Sir Alexander created the Good Conduct Badge which added a penny a day to a seaman's pay, for each badge he held. In the 1860's, the first one was earned after three years of good service. Though there was yet a long way to go, the sixties saw a great advance toward a more humane and livable naval service.<sup>49</sup>

47 Llyoyd, C., The Nation and the Navy (London, 1954)p. 211.

48 'Naval Expenditure from 1860 to 1866', p.73, MLN/P/B/1(d).

49 'Awards' MLN/P/B/2(j). See Lewis, M., op.cit., for information on pay, advancement, etc., at this time.

The southern part of the station was especially prone to sickness; from April to September or October of each year, the threat of Yellow fever was ever present. The years 1861-62 were very sickly ones in the West Indies. Havana was an almost constant source of infection, while Nassau and the Mexican coast were also places to be avoided. At this time little was known of the bacteriological basis of various diseases. Yellow fever was ascribed to 'dampness', 'exhalations', 'high temperatures', etc. A Statistical Report of the Health of the Navy for 1860 said of the sickness:

. . .whether it arises exclusively from an infectious virus or from some other physical agent in connexion with the soil or climate is a question which has not yet been decided, though a belief in the former is rapidly gaining ground, but until the causes which give rise to endemic and epidemic diseases are better understood, there is little chance of our arriving at any satisfactory conclusion on the subject. 50

It wasn't until 1881 that the cause of both malaria and Yellow fever was traced to the bite of mosquitos. Not until the early twentieth century did two U.S. army doctors show that Yellow fever wasn't contagious, but that ships could carry it from port to port, since the mosquitos could breed in the ships themselves.<sup>51</sup>

50 'The Health of the Navy', printed by the House of Commons, 1863, The Admiralty Library, p.iv.

51 Lloyd, C. and Coulter, J.L.S., Medicine and the Navy, 1200 - 1900 (London, 1963), IV, p.192.



In 1860 Milne gave confidential orders to Capt. Hutton of the Bermuda dockyard to send all Yellow fever ships to Halifax. The commander-in-chief had given his ships' captains the discretion to take their vessels directly to the north when the disease appeared on board. Milne believed that only a change to a colder climate could halt the spread of the malady.<sup>52</sup> Admiral Sir David Milne, Sir Alexander's father, who served 66 years in the navy, held that dampness was the great generator of the fever. He seldom allowed decks to be washed, cleaning them instead with sand. After a rain storm, he used portable stoves to dry the decks as soon as possible.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the smoke helped to drive the mosquitos away and thus, after a fashion, to avoid the scourge. Sir Alexander, who believed the disease was caused by atmospheric conditions, followed this practice and he was also a great advocate of adequate ventilation.<sup>54</sup> Some of his suggestions were incorporated into ships which were being built or overhauled in the home yards. There was a naval hospital at Jamaica; but located in an area often rife with disease, it was not the safest place for patients. At Havana in the summer of 1861, the Spaniards lost 57% of their fever victims.<sup>55</sup> At

52 Milne to LCA, 15 Nov. 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

53 Ralfe, J., The Naval Biography of Great Britain (London, 1828), vi, pp. 458 - 9.

54 Milne to Grey, private, 21 Sept. 1862, MLN/107/3; Milne to LCA, 15 Aug. 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

55 Milne to Grey, private, 25 July, 1861, MLN/107.

Bermuda there was a hospital and also a quarantine establishment for Yellow fever victims at Ports island, which was isolated from the main islands. Except in cases of real need, Milne's officers had orders not to stop at Bermuda if they had Yellow fever aboard as the inhabitants 'dread the arrival of HM ships from the West Indies! <sup>56</sup> These islands were generally exempt from the fever, although there was an outbreak there in 1856 and a severe attack of the disease in the summer of 1864. At Halifax, the dockyard - barely half a mile in length - was located in the town itself. There was no specific place for Yellow fever sufferers, so Milne was forced to use the hulk Pyramus as a lazaretto. The healthy men of an infected ship were lodged in make shift barracks in the sail lofts and elsewhere; while there was a small hospital there and a larger one being built in Milne's time, Yellow fever cases weren't admitted because of fear of contamination. The sick ship was cleaned, fumigated and the black bilge water - a fertile breeding ground for mosquitos - was pumped out. Those who were ill were cared for by volunteers among their shipmates as well as by the Nile's surgeon, ship's doctors and their assistants. <sup>57</sup> The civil authorities at Halifax, early in 1862, asked that Yellow fever patients be kept as far from the town as possible; the medical society of Nova Scotia asked the navy to build a hospital for

56 Milne to LCA, 15 Nov. 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

57 Milne to LCA, 11 July 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

Yellow fever sufferers away from Halifax.<sup>58</sup> This was not done, but the city was never attacked by the disease. During the worst attack of the fever, Sir Alexander frequently visited the sick in the Pyramus. In August 1861, the crew of the Firebrand, which had sustained 49 deaths from the fever wrote to the commander-in-chief expressing 'our heartfelt thanks to you and your kind Lady for the interest you both have been pleased to take...' <sup>59</sup>

Though the summers of 1861 - 62 were the worst periods for Yellow fever while Milne held the command, yet there was, in 1860, great infection at Jamaica as the result of one ship. The Icarus, fresh from the coast of Honduras after capturing Walker's filibusters, was carrying Yellow fever. She arrived at Port Royal, Jamaica on 9 October 1860. While at sea, the ship was so afflicted that for one whole day it drifted 'absolutely from want of sufficient hands to keep up steam or make sail...' The captain was himself obliged for a time to act as 'Nurse as well as Engineer'.<sup>60</sup> At Port Royal, which had been healthy until then, a small boat manned by ten young sailors rowed out to Icarus to help bring off the sick. A short time later, five of the boys in that boat had died of the fever.<sup>61</sup> The disease raged for

58 LCA to Milne, 30 April 1862, MLN/105/3.

59 Capt. Bruce to Milne, 24 Aug. 1861, Milne Home papers.

60 Milne to LCA, 5 Dec. 1860, MLN/103/1/A.

61 Milne to Dundas, private, 15 Jan. 1861, MLN/107/3.

six weeks, infecting the guardship Imaum and Hydra 6. It took a total of 24 lives, besides the 37 dead from Icarus. Finally, Dr. E.R. Kinnear, chief surgeon of the Jamaica naval hospital said in early December that he felt that the epidemic 'brought by the Icarus' was now at an end.<sup>62</sup> During Milne's command, the worst single period for Yellow fever was the summer of 1861: 132 men died of the disease. Eight ships were struck by it and they hastened to the cooler climate of Halifax. Unfortunately, it was an unusually warm summer in the north. Firebrand lost 49, Spiteful: 37, Jason: 17, Barracouta: 4, Racer: 20, Rinaldo: 2, Ariadne: 1 and Mersey: 2. Besides these fatalities there were many others who had the disease and subsequently recovered; but while they were ill the station's strength was sharply reduced. For example, Firebrand had 167 sick, Spiteful: 88 and Jason: 79. As these ships were needed to inspect the newly established Federal blockade, Milne's surveillance was somewhat curtailed.<sup>63</sup> The station commander summed up the situation in a letter to Grey, written in early September 1861:

62 Kinnear to Dunlop, 3 Dec. 1860, ADM 1/5759.

63 'Summary of Yellow fever cases, 1861', Milne Home papers. The US navy was also hit by the disease. U.S. Rear Adm. Bailey told secretary of the navy Welles in July 1864 that there was a Yellow fever epidemic at Key West, Florida. 'The squadron is much crippled,' he said. CWNC, 1864, p. 92.

So I now have Spiteful, Jason, Racer and probably Barracouta to clean out entirely and fumigate. This is heavy work and it is impossible for me to send them to the West Indies until this is done and until their crews are recovered and get some weeks change of climate to recruit them. 64

The Marine battalion which had served in Mexico in late 1861 and early 1862 is another illustration of the effect of the disease on the efficiency of British forces in the area. It had lost 54 men from a combination of illnesses, but there were so many others sick that Sir Alexander said the '... whole detachment are completely broken down.' 65

The symptoms of Yellow fever were a general lassitude, an inability to take solid food, yellowness of the skin and 'black vomit' (Haemorrhage of the stomach), as well as pain in the back and limbs and a high fever. The Nile's surgeon in the 1861 cases gave calomel as a purgative at the outset and then quinine, which seemed to have little effect, as the patient grew worse. Champagne, brandy and beef tea were also administered.<sup>66</sup> But once the disease had taken hold of a seaman, little could be done for him. Although many did recover, the physician could hardly be credited with the cure. The sick men might also be given:

64 Milne to Grey, private, 5 September 1861, MLN/107.

65 Milne to Drummond, private, 24 April 1862, MLN/107/3.

66 'Memo. by Doctors Lewis and Reid', 1 Oct. 1861, ADM 1/5759.

Brandy, ether, ammonia, turpentine, champagne, draughts containing creosote, chloroform and camphor ...[these] were generally thrown from the stomach as soon as swallowed. 67

Among Milne's books was one entitled: The Scale of Medicines with which Merchant Vessels are to be Furnished (London, 1851) by T.S. Wells, F.R.C.S., Surgeon RN. It included cures for many ailments such as suggestion, that a toothache might be 'kept easy' by filling it with common wax from a candle. For Yellow fever it advised that free perspiration should be induced if possible on the first day of the attack:

. . .by a hot foot bath, warm drinks and an extra blanket, seating the patient in a chair, covering him from the shoulders downwards with blankets, which reach to the deck all around and then burning a saucerful of spirits beneath the chair... 68

Of the other chief killers of seamen, typhus was still a threat; but scurvy had been all but eliminated in Milne's time by the universal adaptation of liberal quantities of lime juice in the sailor's diet.

Sir Alexander said in March 1863 that as far as possible, he tried to withdraw his ships from the West Indies during the sickly season.<sup>69</sup> As has been seen in the case of the Florida

67 'Medicine', p. 15, MLN/P/B/2(h).

68 'The Scale of Medicines,' etc. p. 135, MLN/172. The only valid treatment for Yellow fever is the present day vaccine, which gives immunity for up to seven years.

69 Milne to Grey, private, 31 March 1863, MLN/107.

both the Confederates and Federals also suffered from this tropical disease. During the summer, New Orleans, Charleston, Savannah and other points on the southern American coast were often subjected to the ravages of Yellow fever.

Seamanship was a talent especially needed on the North American and West Indian Station. There were Admiralty charts for most of the region, but they were often outdated and inaccurate. There was a continuing naval survey of a large part of the station being carried out at this time by several officers; it covered the area from Newfoundland to the West Indies. Most of the American coast was shallow and treacherous; the turbulent Cape Hatteras region had long been known as the grave yard of ships. In the West Indies and Bermuda there was very little tidal rise and fall which meant that if a ship ran aground, there was a good chance that the vessel would be lost. Milne's correspondence frequently refers to his ships grounding: at Havana, at Bermuda, along the coasts of the Maritimes, etc. He ascribed this in many cases to the youthfulness, negligence and inexperience of his officers.<sup>70</sup> The station commander favoured the smaller, shallow draught vessels for general use. He especially desired

70 Milne to Grey, private, 21 July 1863, MLN/107.

paddle wheelers, for their roominess and ease of handling. The Federals made great use of paddlers during the Civil War on the inland waters, for their manoeuverability - they could turn and back quickly - and for their shallow draught. But on the station in the years 1860 - 64, there were never more than two or three of these vessels. They were replaced by the more powerful screwdriven warship, whose machinery was better protected.<sup>71</sup>

Sir Alexander was always a proponent of his ship captains having a thorough knowledge of navigation. A prevailing opinion in the service at this time however, Milne thought, was that the captain should not be held personally responsible for the navigating of the ship. This was normally done by the Master, and captains often saw their role as one of exercising overall command without actually doing the detailed work of ship management.<sup>72</sup> This attitude resulted in the loss of two of the navy's ships, both in 1861.

The first was the paddle sloop HMS Driver 6, of 1056 tons which had arrived from England in June 1861. She was lost in fair weather on a smooth sea. Sailing at full speed she struck

71 Milne to Dundas, private, 26 July 1860, MLN/107/3.

72 Milne to Grey, private, 18 Feb. 1862, MLN/107/3.



a reef off Mayaguana Island in the Bahamas at 7.30 pm on 3 August 1861. The ship was a wreck but not a man was lost and much of her stores, as well as her Armstrong guns, were recovered.<sup>73</sup> Her captain was Cmmdr. Horatio Nelson, no relation of the admiral's, though it was an unfortunate name to bear in this situation. The court martial found that the Master had changed course while the commanding officer had neglected to bring the ship back to her original and safe course. Doubtful bearings taken by the Master (navigating officer) the day the ship struck had not been verified by the captain. Cmmdr. Nelson was reprimanded and advised to be more careful in future while the Master was also reprimanded and forfeited all of his seniority.<sup>74</sup> Milne was surprised at the leniency of the sentence. The ship, he said, had certainly been navigated carelessly. Sir Alexander believed, 'it would be for the advantage of the Service if officers in command were held more personally responsible for the loss of their ships.'<sup>75</sup> The commander-in-chief said that he had invariably navigated every ship he had commanded and thought that the sooner the doubts about who was responsible for a warship's navigation were resolved the better it would be. Milne noted that he took the Nile's position - latitude and bearing -

73 Milne to LCA, 5 Sept. 1861, ADM 1/5759.

74 'Court Martial Book', MLN/109/1/AA and BB.

75 Milne to Grey, private, 8 Oct. 1861, MLN/107/3, Milne to Drummond, 24 Feb. 1862, MLN/107/3.

whenever she was near the land; he felt that this was a good check on the Master.

On 29 December 1861, the 99 gun line of battleship Conqueror, with a complement of almost 900 men was sailing through Crooked Island Passage in the Bahamas, scarcely 150 miles north west of Mayaguana Island. She had just come from England with part of the Royal Marine battalion for the allied expedition against Mexico. Having landed the troops at Havana, she was on the way to reinforce Milne at Bermuda as the outcome of the Trent affair was still uncertain. At 5 am on the 29th, the Conqueror, which drew 27 feet, struck a reef 23 feet below her keel off the island of Rum Cay in the Bahamas.<sup>76</sup> Again no men were lost and much of her gear was saved. The court martial was held at Bermuda on 8 February 1862. Capt. E.S. Sotheby, C.B., the Conqueror's commanding officer was acquitted, the officer of the watch admonished and the Master reprimanded. Capt. Sotheby believed he was not responsible for checking the Master's navigation.<sup>77</sup> Sir Alexander laid off the Conqueror's route and showed the ship to have been three miles from the shore. He asked Capt. Drummond, fourth lord of the Admiralty:

76 Milne to Hamilton, private, 17 Jan. 1862, MLN/107/3.

77 Milne to LCA, 17 Feb. 1862, ADM 128/7.

what prudent man would have allowed his ship to have been placed in that position in the night, but the Captain a good man too was ignorant of her position except through the Master. He never verified the Master's work, he never asked a question as to the current, leeway, course, etc., he was no check on the Master, nor was there any check by a second party on him. 78

Milne told Drummond that this ship also was carelessly lost; he said that in all the Packet steamers two reports and independent reckonings were kept. The Admiralty backed Milne, their Lordships contending 'that it is the duty of the Captain to take every precaution for the safety of the ship he commands'.<sup>79</sup> They regretted that Sotheby's views seemed to have been accepted by the members of the court martial board. As a result, the Admiralty issued a memo on 20 March 1862 which added this phrase to the Queens Regulations, Chapter XIX, Navigation and Pilotage: 'The Captain is responsible for the safe conducting and steering of the ship'. In addition, the memo now included the words shown in quotes:

If it shall appear that the Ship has been run on shore, or brought into danger of being run on shore, or wrecked, "and that there has been any want of due care or precaution" or that the foregoing orders have been disobeyed, the captain will be held responsible for the same. 80

This can only have been a source of gratification for Milne as he had lately said that since he had held the command, 18 ships had grounded, some unavoidably but others 'most negligently'.<sup>81</sup>

78 Milne to Drummond, private, 24 Feb. 1862, MLN/107/3.

79 LCA to Milne, 15 March 1862, MLN/105/3.

80 Milne to LCA, 17 Feb. 1862, ADM 128/7. This Admiralty record includes the later memo of 20 March 1862.

81 Milne to Grey, private, 18 Feb. 1862, MLN/107/3.

After Sir Alexander's representations and the prompt action of the Admiralty, there were still occasional groundings, but no further ship losses while Milne was in American waters.

In the years 1860 - 1864, the station commander took a continuing interest in improving both his ships and the conditions of his men. He published and distributed to the squadron a pamphlet on the first principles of steering and casting the lead, in 1861. His suggestion for a new system of night signals was not adopted, but his ideas on improved ventilation were. These included cutting holes in the closed iron bulkheads of the stoke hole so that air could circulate freely throughout the ship; the stoke hole of the Lily registered a temperature of 124 degrees during one August 1863 day in the West Indies, so this improvement was certainly welcome.<sup>82</sup> Milne redesigned the canvas windsails, which were then the only means - besides the hatches - of introducing fresh air into the dark lower regions of his ships. Though HMS Nimble had fixed metal funnels for this purpose, they were still rare in the navy. At his urging, all vessels of the Rinaldo and Greyhound class had shelters built on their forecastles to protect the men from heavy seas breaking over the bows. The upper deck guns were in many cases too close to the rigging, when fired there was a great danger of igniting the ropes. Milne complained about this on several occasions;

82 Milne to Grey, private, 1 August 1863, MLN/107/3.

the continuing changes in shipbuilding and the use of wire rigging seemed to have solved this problem. In February 1863 he suggested that launches be fitted with engines as in the U.S. and French navies. The Admiralty said they were then being tested and were shortly afterwards put into service. This eliminated the tiresome row from ship to quay and back for supplies, etc. In 1863 he proposed that white linen cap covers for the seaman and officers be adopted in place of - for the sailor - the heavy straw hat, in tropical areas. This change was approved as was Sir Alexander's suggestion that lime juice would be more conveniently obtained in the West Indies than, as was previously done, sending it from England. He also urged that the Admiralty send out to Jamaica hospital some books, a small organ and a few pictures to relieve the monotony of the patients' existence. This was partially accomplished. The foregoing are just a few of the many improvements that the energetic and kindly commander-in-chief put forward during his years on the station.<sup>83</sup>

The everyday life of the seamen had improved considerably since the Nelsonic era, though the ship's routine was substantially the same. The men turned out at 6.45am. At 8 am hammocks having been stowed and decks cleaned, mess tables were

83 'Schedule of Propositions which have been made to the Admiralty by Vice Admiral Sir A. Milne...', uncatalogued Milne Home papers at the National Maritime Museum.

lowered from the overhead between the guns, and the crew was piped to breakfast. The high point of the day and the best meal was at noon, when the ship's position was also entered in the log. Grog - 50% rum and 50% water was also dispensed at midday, each man receiving a bit less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a pint. This ration had been considerably reduced since Nelson's days; the spirit ration in the U.S. Navy was abolished in July 1862, the men being paid a small sum of money instead. Supper was at 5pm, work having finished an hour before, and 'lights out' was piped a little after 8 pm. Of course, the individual seaman's life was not so regular, he had his watches at all hours and could be turned out to trim sail, etc., at any time. The daily routine varied according to the location of the ship, and might also reflect personal views of the captain.<sup>84</sup>

If a vessel was at Halifax, the admiral's flagship would hoist a signal at 8 am giving the drill order for the day. This might be drill at the great guns and if they were to have target practice, the ships usually moved up to Bedford Basin for this. Sail, spar or boat drill might also be held. A resident of Halifax at this time said that every boy ashore knew the different signals and watched the drills - the boatswain's pipe giving orders -

84 Fordyce, Lt. A.D. Outlines of Naval Routine (London, 1837) pp. 90 - 3; Royd, J.M'Neil, A Manual for Naval Cadets (London, 1864), p. 347. I am indebted to Cdr. G. Naish of the National Maritime Museum for help with this section.

with keen interest and delight. The ships often competed with each other to see how fast each crew could unfurl the various sails and then hurry to the deck which completed the exercise. Later in the day they would race to furl and secure the sails. On the larger ships, the spar drill usually meant that the two yards above the main top sail yard - the Nile had four yards - were sent down to the deck. The topgallant masts on the fore, main and mizzen masts were also sent down. These exercises helped the men to act quickly when the sails, yards or spars were damaged in action or because of weather. Visitors were allowed aboard on Thursday afternoon, the traditional sailor's holiday. The seaman made carvings from ivory, wood or bone and sold or gave them to the visitors. On the summer evenings the local boats would cruise about the warships, watching the various activities aboard. Flags were lowered at sunset; the ship's band might be playing:

and the sea songs of the sailors assembled on the fore-castle decks, their splendid deep voices frequently accompanied by a violin or other musical instrument, while the lights flashing from the cabin windows or through the hundreds of open port holes cast their cheering gleams upon the water... and the nine o'clock gun from the Admiral's ship followed by the beautiful bugle call, the 'Retreat' ... rang over the waters, [bringing] the reluctant dispersal of the floating audience... 85

When the ships were at sea the men were also drilled at the guns,

85 Storey, D.A. 'H.M. Naval Yard, Halifax, in the Early Sixties', Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, XXII(1933), p. 64. An interesting and quite accurate account of Halifax in Milne's time.

small arms and cutlass, etc. They 'picked oakum', the ancient naval task of shredding rope for use as caulking material; they whitewashed the engine room, bilges, etc. The carpenters, sailmakers, ropemakers, etc., were busily employed; the chief engineer might be supervising the repair of the engines and the Midshipman might be learning navigation by taking sun shots on the poop. There were at this time some 114 different ranks and ratings in the navy from captain to yeoman of signals.<sup>86</sup> As Lady Milne said when she was aboard the Nile en route from England to Bermuda in the spring of 1860, 'A ship is a busy place - it is quite like a beehive, by day there seems to be so much to do, scraping, cleaning, polishing, scrubbing. The Band plays on the Main deck for the sailors to dance by night...' <sup>87</sup>

The larger ships ordinarily carried provisions for three months, and biscuit for a lesser period. The food was usually wholesome; at this time salt beef and pork were still in use, but vegetables, tinned beef and raisins, mustard, tea and chocolate were also issued. Water for drinking and washing was then available

86 'Complement of HM Ship 'Terror', ADM 128/22. For everyday aspects of shipboard life see the ADM 53 series of ships' logbooks.

87 Lady Milne to the Dowager Lady Milne, 5 June 1860, Milne Home papers.



as the steam condensing apparatus was in general use. Sir Alexander, in 1864, ordered soft bread to be purchased from the shore when vessels were in harbour as the ship's biscuit became especially 'weevily' in the tropics.<sup>88</sup> Capt. Hancock wrote from Vera Cruz in January 1863:

... our Bread is all perishing... I have over four months on board still and it is so full of weevils that in 6 weeks time there will be none fit for food! The whole ship has become full of weevil, they are in coal bunkers and everywhere... 89

Though when they were in port, the men usually received one or more days issue of fresh meat, yet the constant diet of bland salted beef or pork led them, when on liberty, to favour spicy food, chilli, etc. Milne advocated, in March 1864, the establishment of a system of canteens aboard ships. This was one of the reasons, he said, why the U.S. Navy was so popular with British sailors. On his initiative, both Challenger and Medea had set up canteens. Stores were sold at less than the prices available ashore or from 'bumboats'. The men were very pleased with the arrangement which provided such articles as sweets, fruits, soups, sugar in large quantities to make lemonade and a limited quantity of beer in the evening. When in earlier years he had commanded

88 Milne to LCA, 20 Feb. and 8 March 1864, MLN/103/8/H. An entry in Icarus log for 15 Aug. 1860: '394 pounds biscuit condemned and thrown into the sea'. AD 53/7888. This was not unusual.

89 Milne to Glasse, 28 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/19/S.

ships in the West Indies, Milne said he always allowed this latter practice:

... it is far better that men should spend their money on board upon harmless luxuries and upon a glass of good wholesome beer when smoking their pipes than in going ashore, bent only on spending their money as fast as possible and ending in getting beastly drunk.. 90

By thus checking the smuggling of spirits into ships and the breaking of leave because of drunkenness, the commander-in-chief said the canteens would make the men 'regard their ships more as their homes than they now do'.<sup>91</sup> But the Admiralty told Sir Alexander in February 1865 that they would not authorize this measure, as the ships were often in harbour and men could go ashore, etc.<sup>92</sup> Milne's enlightened measure was however, adopted later in the century.

Each battleship carried a library of about 400 volumes and many of the smaller ships had libraries as well. The increasing use of these shipboard libraries indicated a corresponding increase in literacy. For the year ending 1865, of 27,689 seamen in the navy, 16,471 could read well and only 3,000 could not read at all.<sup>93</sup> The books most in demand were those which

90 Milne to LCA, 21 March 1864, MLN/103/8/H.

91 Ibid.

92 LCA to Milne, 23 Feb. 1865, ADM 1/5873.

93 'Navy (Education and Religious Denomination) for the year ending 31 Dec. 1865...', MLN/P/B/2.

appealed strongly to the imagination such as 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Pilgrim's Progress'. The Victorian emphasis on morality and individualism was patently obvious in the titles of some of the works carried:

Deeds of Naval Daring.

Dickens' Works

Edgeworth's Moral Tales.

Life and Voyages of Columbus.

Marryatt's Works.

Noble Traits of Kingly Men.

Smiles' Self Help.

Swiss Family Robinson.

Tales of Christian Heroism.

Tales of Christian Endurance.

Two Years Before the Mast.

Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Young Benjamin Franklin. 94

They also had books on exploration and elementary science.

The U.S. Navy generally maintained the same routine as that of the Royal Navy. The day started at 5.30 am, Breakfast was at eight, dinner at noon, work was secured at 4 pm and 'lights out' at 8 pm. On the Union blockaders 'from sunset to 8pm all hands assembled in groups on the forecastle to sing or listen to old

salts'.<sup>95</sup> Music bands and coloured entertainers were very popular. The USN also had ships' libraries. Some of the volumes carried by the USS Penobscott were Cooper's Naval History of the United States, Washington Irving's biographies of Washington and Columbus, text books on gunnery, books on the U.S. Constitution, etc. The rations were somewhat similar: salt beef or pork, dried apples, potatoes, vegetables, tea, molassas, rice and butter, hard crackers, pickles, etc.<sup>96</sup> Despite the monotony of blockade duty, there was always the chance of capturing a blockade runner and gaining a share of the subsequent prize money. On inland waters there was frequent action against the Confederates and occasionally a major battle on the coast, e.g., the battles of New Orleans, Mobile Bay, attacks on Charleston, etc. Both navies were paid monthly; the Ordinary U.S. seaman received about \$ 216 a year, while his RN counterpart earned about £24 or \$ 120 at the rate of exchange then prevalent. The U.S. sailor was generally paid a large bounty to enlist and his additional pay reflected the shortage of seamen. Vice Admiral

95 Merrill, J.M., 'Men, Monotony and Mouldy Beans', American Neptune, XVI, (1956), p.52.

96 Ibid., pp. 55-6. See also Luce, S.B., Seamanship (New York, 1863) for information on daily life in the USN. Flogging had been eliminated from the U.S. navy, while it had all but ceased in the RN by the 1870's.

Milne said during his visit to the U.S. in September - October 1863:

No Seaman can be got for the US Navy. Their ships are detained for weeks and months quite helpless, and they are still without means of going to sea. The Crimping system here is quite awful, my Galley's crew have been offered 600 dollars each and are pestered all day long with people of all classes to entice them away. Some as substitutes for those drafted for the Army, etc., etc. 97

The relations between the officers of the Royal navy and the American belligerents have been noted previously in this study. On many occasions they were friendly, sometimes they were not. Captain Hancock of Immortalite made firm friends among the Federal officers at Port Royal, S.C. in 1861; Cmmdr. Watson of Peterel infuriated Union officers by his actions at Charleston in January and February, 1863. Cmmdr. Ross of Cadmus was lauded by the senior U.S. officer at Charleston, in 1863, for his truly neutral conduct. Cmmdr. Hickley tried to stop a C.S. raider from leaving Nassau, while Cmmdr. Malcolm - who came close to firing on the U.S. officer Wilkes - also castigated the people at Nassau for their Southern sympathies. Sir Alexander himself said of Nassau: 'Southern views and feelings are so strong there that all reports against the North are magnified...' 98

97 Milne to Grey, private, 4 Oct. 1863, MLN/107.

98 Milne to Somerset, private, 1 Jan. 1863, Somerset papers, the County Record Office, Aylesbury, Bucks.

Milne mentioned several instances of the friendliness of Northern officers, including Wilkes, '... indeed the officers of rank have in almost all cases been particularly obliging'.<sup>99</sup> There were few contacts between RN officers and the Confederates simply because there were few C.S. ships and these were usually harbour defence craft or swift raiders who were seldom long on the station. Milne's orders to avoid Southern ports also contributed to this situation. Capt. Semmes of the Alabama received hospitality from a planter at Jamaica in 1863. When the raider entered Port Royal harbour, HMS Greyhound's band played 'Dixie Land'. Semmes added that after a U.S. protest, the ship played 'Yankee Doodle' the next evening.<sup>100</sup> Sir Alexander praised Commodore Dunlop for censuring the Lieutenant who had ordered the Southern tune played as well as other Royal navy officers who visited the Alabama before Semmes had communicated officially with Dunlop.<sup>101</sup> In January 1863, Milne criticized an officer of HMS Galatea for singing the 'Bonnie Blue Flag' - a Confederate song - in the streets of Union occupied New Orleans. The Federals arrested the officer and he was fined.<sup>102</sup> One of the

99 'Memo. relative to the Civil War in America', MLN/105/6.

100 Semmes, R., Memoirs of Service Afloat (Baltimore, 1869) pp. 561-2.

101 Milne to Dunlop, 28 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/19/S.

most unusual acts of co-operation with the belligerents involved Cmmdr. Hood of Pylades. In July 1863, he took a letter from the Confederate Brigadier General Bee, commanding at Brownsville, Texas, to the French naval commander in the Gulf. The French had seized a merchant ship containing arms which they believed were destined for the Mexican forces of Juarez, then opposing the French occupation of Mexico. The officers of the ship claimed that the guns were, in fact, going to the Confederates. General Bee confirmed this statement. The Confederate wrote to Cmmdr. Hood:

I will be under great obligation to you Captain for your good offices in this matter, so important to our safety, and to our efficiency as an Army in Texas. 103.

The entire correspondence was sent to France and orders were sent in December 1863 to release both the ship and its cargo. In the event, Milne approved of Hood's proceedings. 104

An incident worthy of note because of it's rather bizarre illustration of some aspects of international law was the case of the Confederate Acting Master's Mate, J. Hester. When Captain Semmes left the Sumter at Gibraltar in the spring of 1862, there

102 Milne to LCA, 2 Feb. 1863, ADM 1/5819.

103 Hood to Milne, 31 July 1863, ADM 128/52.

104. ORN, II, 3, p.977. Minute by Milne in Hood to Milne, op.cit., ADM 128/52. Capt. Hancock visited General Bee in April 1863, when the British officer was in the Gulf. Fremantle, J.A. The Freemantle Diary (London, 1956), p. 15.

were two of his officers who remained aboard, as well as a few of his men. The second officer, Hester, shot and killed his superior on 15 October 1862, for being as he said, 'a traitor to the Confederate cause'. Hester then surrendered to the British naval authorities at Gibraltar, and believed that he would be tried in that colony.<sup>105</sup> Mason, the C.S. Commissioner in England, after receiving a report, believed that Hester had been pilfering government property from the Sumter and that his contention that the other officer was a traitor had no basis in fact. Mason and the C.S. Commissioner in France, J. Slidell, agreed that the British should handle the matter, for as Mason said to Benjamin, the C.S. secretary of state, 'I should be at a great loss to know how to bring the prisoner to trial and what to do with him in the meantime'.<sup>106</sup> But the Law Officers of the Crown decided he should be returned to the Confederate States to stand trial.<sup>107</sup> Seward said, in May 1863, that he had no objection to Hester being freed or given up to the U.S. government 'to which his allegiance was due'.<sup>108</sup> But the U.S. secretary of state would not permit the Confederate to be sent through the Union blockade to the South. Hester was then sent to Bermuda in HMS Shannon,

105 Capt. Ormanney to LCA, 18 and 21 Oct. 1862, ADM 1/5794.

106 ORN, I, 1, pp. 688-91.

107 LCA to Milne, 4 May 1863, MLN/105/6.

108 LCA to Milne, 6 July 1863, MLN/105/4.



to be handed over to the governor until the international complications could be resolved. Then on 16 May the Admiralty sent Milne a confidential note ordering him to keep Hester aboard Shannon.<sup>109</sup> On 11 June 1863, Sir Alexander told Grey 'The Governor writes me he [Hester] can apply for a writ of Habeas Corpus and be released, such is the opinion of the Attorney General and Chief Justice of the Islands'.<sup>110</sup> The dilemma was pointed out by the Law Officers on 1 July 1863 when they said that since the U.S. wouldn't let Britain deliver the man to a Southern port, 'the Prisoner being a person over whom no British Court has jurisdiction ought not to be detained in custody by a British authority longer than may be necessary for the purpose of disposing of him on shore'.<sup>111</sup> Accordingly, on 22 July 1863, the Admiralty ordered Milne to set Hester free at Bermuda. The Confederate was sent ashore from the Shannon on 29 July 1863; wanted in North and South, an accused murderer, he quickly disappeared from sight.<sup>112</sup> The entire case had lasted more than nine months.

109 LCA to Milne, Confidential, 16 May 1863, MLN/105/4.

110 Milne to Grey, private, 11 June 1863, MLN/107.

111 LCA to Milne, 6 July 1863, MLN/105/4.

112 Milne to Lyons, 14 Aug. 1863, MLN/103/12/L.

J.P. Baxter, in his 1928 article, writes of Milne:

On his squadron, whose officers were for the most part Southern sympathizers, he kept a tight reign, meting out praise for conciliatory treatment of the belligerents and stern censure for indiscreet or unneutral conduct. 113

There can be no quarrel with the second part of this quotation.

Baxter says that the statement of Milne's officers being mostly

'Southern sympathizers' was made to him by Admiral Sir W.

Henderson, K.B.E. Prof. Baxter gives no further proof of this

contention other than a reference to Semmes' Service Afloat, p. 315,

wherein the Southerner says that 'the Army and Navy of Great

Britain were with us, almost to a man' and he adds that British

officers often denounced the 'coldness and selfishness of the

Palmerston - Russell government'.<sup>114</sup> In 1860 Admiral Henderson

was a 15 year old Midshipman in Nile and he also served for a

short time in Styx. He was on the Station from 1860 to 1864.

Henderson was perhaps 17 - 18 years old when he left the area;

his records of those years - in his papers - include a Midshipman's

practice logbooks, several dozen letters and some photographs.<sup>115</sup>

113 Baxter, J.P., 'The British Government and Neutral Rights, 1861-1865', American Historical Review, XXXIV (1928), p. 21.

114 Semmes, op.cit., p. 315.

115 Admiral Henderson's papers are at the National Maritime Museum. His letters while on the station reveal a great desire for war with the North, though this may be attributed to a boyish enthusiasm for action. When he was at New York in October 1863, he liked the people, but deprecated the 'mob'.

Surely, speaking to Baxter at a distance of perhaps fifty years from the events, Admiral Henderson may have been mistaken.

Writing to U.S. Commodore DuPont in April 1862, Capt. Hancock blamed the New York newspapers for much of the animosity of Britain to the North:

... could you know the general sentiments of our service and indeed our people in general you would feel no bitterness against us - but against those unprincipled rowdies who by their vulgar abuse of us and loathsome flattery of everything French - are trying and with only too much success to estrange our best sympathies and feelings from the cause, which every Englishman would naturally have upheld - that of liberalism, progress and honour - as against slavery and Fillibustering. 116

There can be no doubt however, that many of the British upper classes, including naval and military officers, were decidedly sympathetic to the South. In the early years of the war the Confederates seemed to be a people fighting for their homes against an arrogant and wealthy North. Semmes told Capt. Hillyar of HMS Cadmus in August 1861 that the war was a means of enriching the north etc.; Hillyar said he had thought that the struggle was over slavery.<sup>117</sup> The British then, were never entirely taken in by the Southerners, and by 1864, Britain's view was less clouded by sentiment and more concerned with practical realities. When the Alabama was sunk in June of that year, the 'Illustrated London

116 Hancock to DuPont, private, 26 April 1862, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Del., U.S.A.

117 Semmes, op. cit., pp. 186 - 7.

News' reported the fact in its issue of 25 June. The paper praised Semmes for his courage but commented that he had once lured a U.S. gun vessel near the Alabama by pretending to be English, 'and then sunk her with a broadside'.<sup>118</sup> Further it said 'England will not allow him to obtain another warship if she can help it.'

In a confidential return prepared for the Foreign Office at the time of the Geneva Arbitration of 1872, it was shown that British colonies on the station were extensively used by the U.S. navy in the years 1861 - 65. Bermuda was visited 16 times, 5 ships coaled and several were repaired at the naval dockyard. The Bahamas reported 37 visits, two for coal and none for repairs. Barbados had 21 visits, 3 coaled and one was repaired. The Dominion of Canada received 29 visits, no repairs and two ships coaled. Jamaica had 10 visits, 3 coaled and no repairs were given. St. Kitts, Trinidad and the Leeward Islands also reported occasional visits by U.S. warships. Often these were the same ships, making a tour of the area, and then returning again to, say Barbados. The Federal ships usually remained for only one or two days, but some because of the necessity for repairs, stayed

<sup>118</sup> This was a reference to Semmes' sinking of the USS Hatteras off Galveston in Jan. 1863. When the Union ship asked 'What Ship is that' the reply was 'Her Majesty's ship Petrel'. Semmes, R., The Cruise of the Alabama and the Sumter (London, 1864), p. 46. HMS Peterel was then on the station.

for longer periods.<sup>119</sup> The Oreto, Alabama and Nashville were some of the few Confederate warships seen at British colonies on the station during the war years. The C.S. warships received a total of only 'about 2800 tons' of coal from British ports in those years, while the USS Vanderbilt in less than six weeks took aboard 'no less than 2,018 tons at three British ports'.<sup>120</sup>

There were various other incidents of a minor character, involving British and belligerent naval officers; Lyons told Milne in May 1863 that many of the U.S. officers would favour a war with England as they were envious of Semmes and 'would rather roam about picking up prizes, than go on with the dull and harassing work of blockading'.<sup>121</sup> The writer has found few cases other than those mentioned of British naval officers taking 'sides' and therefore concludes that whatever their real sympathies, they acted for the most part in conformity with Milne's neutrality orders.

The role played by the navy in administering justice and maintaining the British 'presence' in the Maritime fisheries cannot be overlooked. Since the Treaty of Versailles of 1783,

119 'Return of Visits of U.S. Ships of War', etc., Feb. 1872, MLN/P/B/L/(M).

120 'Report of the Admiralty Committee', 3 April 1872, MLN/P/B/L/(M).

121 Newton, Lord, Lord Lyons (London, 1913), ii, p. 105.

the French had the right to fish on the Newfoundland and Labrador coasts. By the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 - cancelled by the U.S. in 1866 - the Americans were given the liberty to take all except shell fish on the coasts of Canada, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the islands thereabouts, without restriction to any distance from the shore. They could dry their nets and cure their fish on shore. Because of this treaty's generous terms, Milne's men had no trouble with U.S. fishermen in the years 1860 - 1864. The French fishermen however, in Sir Alexander's view, seemed to be claiming territorial rights in the area and were fishing in the rivers, not just on the coast as the treaties stipulated.<sup>122</sup> There had usually been a British war-ship, for many years, on the fisheries during the fishing season which lasted from May to October. Milne himself had this duty when he commanded HMS Crocodile in 1840.

As had been done then by previous station commanders, Sir Alexander sent the paddler Styx in May 1860, to look in at the various harbours and bays on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Styx returned in October, with little of significance to report. Milne had become impressed with the French

122 'Memo relative to the N. American and W. Indian Station', MLN/105/6. See also Graham, W., 'The Fisheries of British North American and the United States Fishermen', Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, XIV, (1910).

practice of leaving the same officer on the fishery patrols, year after year, so that he would become known and it was hoped, trusted by the fisherman. The station commander suggested this change to the Admiralty. A man must be appointed, he intimated, who would be a match for the clever Frenchmen.<sup>123</sup> Their Lordships acceded to this request and Capt. R. Vesey Hamilton was selected for the post; he served in this capacity in 1861, '62, '63 and '64. For this work, Capt. Hamilton commanded the paddle sloop Hydra 6, and later the Vesuvius 6, also a paddle steamer. Many of the merchants in the area had written previously to the Admiralty asking for a ship during the fishing season as 'there is no established authority whatever police or otherwise for the protection of life or property', in Labrador.<sup>124</sup> The increase in violence they said was due to this absence of authority. There were no roads or communication by land on the coast, only the sea could be the source of aid. The merchants wished a warship to visit the area between the Straits of Belle Isle to Cape Harrison, which was the region covered by Hamilton on his patrols. He also observed many other places on the Newfoundland coasts. Some idea of the magnitude of the fishing operations carried on for salmon, cod, herring and mackerel on the Maritime coasts can be gained by Hamilton's report of

123 Milne to Dundas, private, 2 May 1861, MLN/107/3.

124 LCA to Milne, 10 June 1861, MLN/105/2.

9 October 1861. He said that no less than 5000 boats, employing about 20,000 men and boys were operated, and probably 3 or 4,000 women and children were employed on shore, during the season.<sup>125</sup>

There were always personal quarrels among the fishermen; Milne wrote that on one occasion some of them had armed themselves with seal guns for their personal protection.<sup>126</sup> At the commander-in-chief's suggestion, Capt. Hamilton and his Senior Lieut. were made Magistrates of the Peace by the governor of Newfoundland in June, 1861. But Sir Alexander warned Hamilton that he would not permit naval officers to act as magistrates where the civil government could appoint magistrates from among the inhabitants. Further, he was not to land men to aid the civil or military power unless the latter was insufficient and then only on their joint requisition.<sup>127</sup> It was no easy task being a magistrate, in addition to his naval duties. On one occasion, albeit unusual, Hamilton had to walk four or five miles

125 Hamilton to Milne, 9 Oct. 1861, ADM 128/20.

126 Milne to LCA, 13 June 1861, MLN/103/2/B.

127 Milne to Hamilton, private, 19 Sept. 1861, MLN/107/3; 'Schedule of Propositions' etc., op.cit., Milne Home papers; Milne to Bannerman, 18 Sept. 1861, Papers of Adm. R.V. Hamilton at the National Maritime Museum, VHM 7/b.



to force some men who had rented summer houses from an old widow, to pay what was due. He told the governor that a magistrate's powers on such an unsettled coast, were insufficient:

..... how impossible it is to comply with all the legal forms laid down for an English Magistrate particularly with regard to the evidence of the portion of the population of Irish descent whose talent in evading direct answers has not deteriorated by migration. 128

At the close of the 1861 season, Milne hoped that the navy's advice, friendly aid and medical assistance would help to reduce the animosity between Roman Catholics and Protestants which 'divides and embitters so large a portion of the Newfoundland population'.<sup>129</sup> That same year, Hamilton wrote:

... in every place we visited the Medical officers found considerable work ready for them (and he took two sick men to St. John's because he believed) that my doing would have a beneficial effect on the fishermen, by showing that although a Man of War was prepared to uphold the law, it was also ready to be of any assistance. 130

The appointment of a permanent officer to tour the fisheries was a great success. Capt. Hamilton earned the respect and gratitude of the inhabitants of the bleak Newfoundland and Labrador coasts during the years that he spent in the area.

128 Hamilton to Sir A. Bannerman, Oct. 1862, Milne Home papers.

129 Milne to LCA, 28 Oct. 1861, MLN/103/3/C.

130 Hamilton to Milne, 31 July 1861, ADM 1/5759. During the season of 1861, Hamilton's surgeon treated 'not less than 500 cases, scurvy is not uncommon'. Hamilton to Bannerman, 30 Sept. 1861, ADM 128/20.

CHAPTER VIITechnical Details: New Weapons - New Defences

When Milne's immediate predecessor, Vice Admiral Sir Houston Stewart, K.C.B., left Bermuda in the spring of 1860, he sailed in HMS Indus. This battleship was the last warship driven solely by sailpower, to serve on the station. That same year saw the launching of HMS Warrior, the first British built armoured battleship with an iron hull. During the American Civil War, there were never any British ironclads- with the exception of the floating battery Terror- on the North American Station. The ships that Milne commanded in the years 1860-1864 had auxiliary engines and were capable of steaming for short periods but were mainly dependent on sails for their propulsion. There were few paddle ships because of the vulnerability of the paddles to gunfire; they were being rapidly replaced by the more efficient screw driven vessels whose machinery was better protected. But the paddlers were excellent for shallow water; Capt. Hamilton used two of them in his years on the fisheries, neither of which exceeded 16 feet in draught. <sup>I</sup>

I 'Confidential-List of Ships...Draught of Water' ,Nov.1861,  
ADM 128/6.

During the Trent crisis when the station reached its greatest strength for the war years, Sir Alexander commanded eight wooden, screw driven battleships as well as numerous smaller vessels.<sup>2</sup> Of these larger ships Milne said, 'If these ships of the line now here were cut up into small vessels they would be of use to me, but except for Demonstrations clear of Merrimac and Monitor, they are no use...'<sup>3</sup> These ships were driven by a single, two bladed propeller, which could be retracted into the vessel when not in use. When steaming, the screw was lowered and fit into a slot on the engine shaft. The funnel was also raised at this time, hence the common expression, 'Up funnel, down screw'. The funnel was usually composed of four sections which telescoped when not in use. These sections fit into each other and were raised and lowered by means of chains; one section lifted out the next. This arrangement reduced wind resistance, as the raised screw reduced water resistance. The lifting propeller was invented about 1850 in order to provide existing battleships with auxiliary screws without the necessity for major alterations in their hulls.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this rather make shift arrangement and the low revolutions of the engines, vibration weakened the steering yoke,

2. Milne's 'Notebook', uncatalogued Milne Home papers at the National Maritime Museum.

3. Milne to Drummond, private, 24 April 1862, MLN/107/3.

4. For information on ship's screws, machinery, etc., see Spratt, H.P., Marine Engineering (London, 1953) and Anderson, R.C. Catalogue of Ship Models at the National Maritime Museum (London, 1952)

the stern posts and supporting members. Among Milne's ships there were frequent reports of these defects. In 1864, while the flagship of the Channel squadron was undergoing trials, the caulking was seen working out of her seams, the rudder posts vibrated violently and the Master Shipwright shouted, 'For God's sake, stop those engines, or you'll drive the stern-post out of the ship'.<sup>5</sup> Another disadvantage was that when the screw was lifted, the ship was often difficult to steer because of the open space forward of the rudder, which seemed to diminish the effect of its action.<sup>6</sup> One advantage was that once lifted up, the screw could be cleaned and repaired. There was an Admiralty regulation stipulating that the screw was to be raised at least once a month, or after steaming for 2000 miles.<sup>7</sup> In practice, it was lifted much more frequently. The device was extensively used at the time: Nile, Mersey, Icarus, Rinaldo, Warrior and many other ships were fitted with it.<sup>8</sup> The U.S. navy used the lifting screw in Roanoke, Richmond and other vessels, while Semmes' Alabama also had it.<sup>9</sup>

5. Penn, G., Up Funnel, Down Screw, (London, 1955), p.60.

6. Masfield, J., The Conway (London, 1953), p. 302.

7. The Queens Regulations and the Admiralty Instructions for the Government of HM Naval Service (London, 1862), p. 177.

8. See Adm. 53 series, ship's logbooks for information on this type of propeller and its defects. Before Nile came out, Emerald was 18 feet in diameter and, with its frame weighed 13 tons. Milne to J. Milne Home, private, 29 March 1860, MLN/107/3.

9. Archibald to Russell, 17 July 1861, FO 41/20; Bulloch, J.D. The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe, (N.Y., 1959), i. p61.

It was discontinued in the late 1860's when twin screws were introduced into the navy; they had the advantage of added speed combined with easier manoeuvrability.

The Agamemon 89, which served under Milne, was the first battleship built - in 1852 - from the keel up as a steamer, though it still retained a full set of sails. The ships' engines used in the early sixties were large, inefficient and consumed great quantities of coal. They seldom exceeded seventy revolutions per minute so that smoothness was not one of their virtues. The Nile 78, stowed 250 tons of coal, which at top speed - approximately 13 knots - she expended at the rate of 48 tons daily. Thus, full speed for about five days, covering perhaps 1200 nautical miles. But this was seldom done, as the engines and ship could rarely sustain such a hammering for so long. The Mersey 40, stowed 850 tons and burned - at full speed - 130 tons per day. The small gun vessel Nimble 5, stowed 74 tons, consumed at the rate of 9 to 10 tons daily, at full speed.<sup>10</sup> There was an Admiralty regulation limiting the use of steam to those occasions when sails alone would not suffice to perform necessary duties.<sup>11</sup> This generally meant

10 'Ship Returns', MLN/108.

11 The Queens Regulations, op. cit., p. 175.

entering or leaving harbour, in treacherous waters or in action. Sir Alexander was very strict in holding his officers to this rule; on one occasion he criticised a captain for using steam while making a passage in fair weather on the open sea.<sup>12</sup>

Another factor limiting the speed of the warships at that time was the rather primitive boilers in use. They used sea water, obtained through Kingston valves which were fitted below the water line. The incrustation of salt in the boiler's iron pipes - though copper was sometimes used - led to a reduction in the pressure available. The average pressure was 35 pounds or less, which was just as well for it was found that the box type of boiler employed was unable to stand pressures above 40 pounds to the square inch.<sup>13</sup> With only this limited pressure available to the pistons, the speed attainable was correspondingly low. The Nile could reach 13 knots, the Warrior 14; but the average cruising speed of most warships was then about 6 - 8 knots under steam alone, and a bit higher with sail and steam. In the later sixties, improved boilers and the use of condensed superheated steam enabled higher pressures to be maintained with a consequent increase in speed. Some of the

12 Milne to Ward, 13 Feb. 1864, MLN/103/21/U; Milne to Vessey, 21 April 1860, MLN/110/1/CC.

13 Robinson, C.N., The British Fleet (London, 1894,) p. 302.

larger ships, for example, the Nile, had four boilers, called 'kettles'; they were supposed to be cleaned every month or after twelve hours of steaming.<sup>14</sup> Even with this care, their average life was only three years. They were fitted with condensers which furnished desalinated water for the crew. The only protection afforded the ships' engines and boilers were the iron bulkheads in the stokehold and the practice of piling coal in the spaces around the machinery.<sup>15</sup> Thus when the coal was consumed the ship's critical motive power was virtually unprotected. This was doubtless one reason for Milne's and the Admiralty's concern about the consumption of coal. When the C.S.S. Palmetto State attacked the Union blockaders off Charleston in January 1863, Sir Alexander sent a special despatch to the Admiralty noting that each of the disabled U.S. warships 'suffered from their boilers being unprotected.'<sup>16</sup>

14 'Circular No. 11', 15 April 1862, ADM 1/5795.

15 Ship's interior plans, illustrating machinery, details of construction, etc., are at the National Maritime Museum. The captain of the Kearsage, before he sunk the Alabama, covered his ship's sides with lengths of anchor cable to protect his machinery.

16 Milne to LCA, 18 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/6/F.

The station commander experimented with different types of coal, Pictou, Sydney and the anthracite used by the U.S. navy. He concluded that Welsh was the best and continued to have it sent out from England.<sup>17</sup> While at Nassau in December 1862, he saw a blockade runner leave the harbour and was struck by the 'entire absence of any symptom of smoke from her Furnaces'.<sup>18</sup> Upon enquiry, Milne found that these vessels used a certain type of Cardiff coal which was hand picked when put on board. He asked the Admiralty to send some of this brand out for his ships.

The Orlando, Mersey and the slightly smaller sister ships, Immortalite and Melpomene were four of the new, long frigates recently introduced into the service.<sup>19</sup> These ships, all of which served in North America, were not a great success. They rolled

17 Milne to LCA, 13 Oct. 1860, MLN/103/1/A; Storekeeper General to Milne, 6 Aug. 1861, ADM 128/20; Milne to LCA, 12 Jan. 1863, ADM 1/5821.

18 Milne to LCA, 22 Dec. 1862, MLN/103/6/F.

19 Orlando and Mersey were specially built to counter the new large U.S. frigates: Minnesota, Roanoke, etc., built in the 1850's. The Americans favoured large ships because 'before the Civil War ours was a navy of single isolated cruisers' and should therefore be stronger than a corresponding vessel built by other nations. Mahan, A.T., From Sail to Steam (New York, 1907), p.30.



heavily, worked in rough seas and therefore leaked considerably.

Milne said of Immortalite, 'these fine bowed ships plunge heavily and wash everything away as are all afloat forward'.<sup>20</sup>

Capt. Ewart of Melpomene complained in January 1863 of the excessive working of his ship, which resulted in her taking in 30 inches of water every 24 hours, while at sea.<sup>21</sup> Due to the station's lack of facilities for major repairs, these were usually done in the U.S. Milne advised his officers to use private yards, if possible. The ships usually served for three years on the station, although individual officers might be promoted and go home early, as was the case with commanders Lyons and Hewett .

The expansion of knowledge and inventiveness caused by the Industrial Revolution had a great effect on the navy. The invention of steam, the shell gun, the screw propeller and the French armoured batteries used at Kinburn were all illustrations of the changes that had come about since the Napoleonic wars. Then in March 1862, the Monitor and Merrimac battled to a standstill in Hampton Roads, Virginia. This contest aroused great interest in Europe. News of the action - the first between ironclads - reached London while the Navy Estimates for 1862 were being debated in the Commons. As a

20 Milne to Grey, private, 19 Sept. 1861, MLN/107/3; Milne to LCA, 21 March 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

21 Ewart to Milne, 3 Jan. 1863, ADM 1/5819.

result, though the estimates were not increased, indeed they were slightly reduced, the major emphasis was placed on building armoured warships.<sup>22</sup> By June of 1862, Britain possessed four operational ironclads: Warrior, Black Prince, Resistance and Defence.<sup>23</sup> That May, Somerset asked Milne to obtain as much information as possible on the new type of American warship; he believed this might save the Admiralty 'some expensive experiments here'.<sup>24</sup> The First Naval Lord, Rear Admiral Sir Frederick Grey, minuted on an entreaty by Capt. Coles in January 1862 for consideration of his turret plans: 'Acquaint Capt. Coles that in the present uncertainty as to the value of his invention for Naval purposes my Lords are not prepared to make any offer for the purchase of his rights'.<sup>25</sup> But that November the Admiralty purchased Coles' full patent rights and work shortly began on his revolving turret. From 1 May 1859 to 1 May 1862, 590 ironclad plans flooded into the Admiralty from hopeful inventors; 37 were then being seriously considered.<sup>26</sup>

22 'Naval Expenditure from 1860 to 1866', pp.32-33, MLN/P/B/1(d).

23 'Iron cased ships... Return to the House of Commons', 30 June 1862, ADM 1/5794.

24 Somerset to Milne, private, 3 May 1862, MLN/107.

25 Colesto Paget, 25 Jan. 1862, ADM 1/5791.

26 'Navy (Shot Proof Ships) Return to the House of Commons', 12 June 1862, ADM 1/5794.

Somerset said he had received letters advising him to build ships 'to imitate the scales of the crocodile, the hide of the rhinoceros, the quills of the porcupine, the wings of the beetle, etc., etc.' <sup>27</sup> Though the French had led the way with the ironclad frigate Gloire in 1859 and Britain had countered with the Warrior in 1860, the Americans had given the needed impetus by showing how vulnerable were wooden warships and how impregnable were armoured ones. Sir Alexander believed that the Monitor - Merrimac duel would lead to a 'total change in naval warfare, and in the material of our ships employed on an enemy's coast.' <sup>28</sup> This proved to be the case for in the later years of the Civil War, the American coast was no longer exposed as it was at the time of the Trent affair. By December 1864, the U.S. had 671 warships, 62 of them ironclads. <sup>29</sup> While few of these latter were capable of sailing in heavy seas, yet - combined with the forts built in those years - they effectively denied U.S. harbours to any potential enemy. Many of Britain's ironclads had to be seagoing because of the empire's world wide commitments; but they were then of too deep a draught - Warrior drew 27' - for use in the shallow waters of the American coast.

27 Somerset to Palmerston, private, 27 April 1862, Palmerston papers, used by permission of the Trustees of the Broadlands Archives.

28 Milne to LCA, 3 April 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

29 CWNC, 1864, p. 140.

Since there were no naval or military attachés in the U.S. or C.S. at that time, the government relied on the reports of consuls, Milne's men and occasional visits by British officers, for information on American methods and materials of warfare. As has been seen, Sir Alexander usually kept one or more ships at Fortress Monroe. HMS Rinaldo arrived at that port two days after the historic action. Her captain wrote that there was a great buildup of men and supplies in the area because of McClellan's spring campaign. On 11 April he was anchored in Hampton Roads when the Merrimac came out and cruised unchallenged in the Roads, passing within 200 yards of the British warship. Capt. Hewett closely observed the vessel and later said that she appeared to handle easily and he believed the ironclad could do seven knots, which was faster than the Monitor. The British captain held that Merrimac was superior to her Union antagonist because Monitor's turret would be disabled by a concentrated fire, she could be boarded easily, while her opponent's steep sides precluded this form of attack, and lastly because of Merrimac's greater speed. U.S. Flag Officer Goldsborough told Hewett that he also believed that the Merrimac was the better of the two armoured ships, and agreed with the British officers' assessment of their qualities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Hewett to Milne, 26 April 1862, MLN/104/3. Log of Rinaldo from 4 Jan. to 6 Sept. 1862, AD 53/8149. A full description of this report is in Baxter J.P., The Introduction of the Iron Clad Warship (Cambridge, 1933), pp. 299-300.

Cmmdr. Lyons of Racer went aboard the Monitor on 1 April 1862 and sent Milne a full description of the Union craft as well as a report on the damage she had sustained '... some plates cracked and bent... struck about twenty-six times...'<sup>31</sup> Sir Alexander said in August 1862 that it was becoming difficult to collect information on the ironclads outside of newspaper articles.<sup>32</sup> That June he had sent home details of the Monitor and Merrimac as well as the action at Drewey's Bluff between ironclads and shore batteries. This information was obtained by the British consul at Richmond from an 'informant' who was given £5 by Milne as a 'gratuity'.<sup>33</sup>

But the home authorities wished to gain an even greater knowledge of the whole expanding field of U.S. defences and ship building. With this objective, a Capt. J. Pythessea visited the U.S. in September and October of 1862. This naval officer went aboard the U.S.S. Michigan, the only U.S. warship on the Great Lakes. He visited factories, machine shops, coal depots, the Springfield arsenal, fortifications in most of the Northern ports

31 Milne to LCA, 26 Aug. 1862, ADM 1/5788.

32 Milne to LCA, 26 Aug. 1862, MLN/103/5/E.

33 Milne to LCA, 2 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/6/F; 'Expenses incurred in obtaining information', etc., MLN/110/3/FF.

and many other places of military and naval interest. He boarded those 'IronClad ships as were accessable'. He gave a good description of many places, e.g., Boston Navy Yard, which he said was capable of receiving the largest ships, had a foundry and a machinery repair shop. The captain noted 'on 1 September 1862, U.S. had 14 Iron Clad ships afloat mounting 153 guns and of 14,375 tons... 38 were in course of construction ... maximum [plating] being 4½ inches'. Bythesea was aboard the New Ironsides in Philadelphia as well as the ironclad Nahant at Boston and sent home a good description of the armament and construction of both vessels. He passed on the opinions of many U.S. naval officers, including Capt. Dahlgren, on the qualities of U.S. ordnance. Though forbidden to visit the Boston fortifications, he nevertheless sent a very detailed report on U.S. shipyards, forts and ironclads.<sup>34</sup> That November, the Secretary of State for War, G. Cornwall Lewis said - doubtless speaking of Bythesea - that when a British naval officer had lately visited the North, he had seen 'all their naval establishments. They were very civil to him, and willing to shew everything'.<sup>35</sup> It seems incredible that an English officer - a potential enemy - could obtain information such as the above in wartime U.S. But as Lyons said when he urged Russell to send out another naval officer, 'openly ... without bustle or fuss...

34 Bythesea to LCA, 8 Nov. 1862, ADM 1/5791.

35 Lewis to Palmerston, private, 6 Nov. 1862, Broadlands papers.

Indeed in military and naval affairs as well as in matters in general, the national tendency here is towards publicity, and men with competent professional knowledge knowing how to observe have little difficulty in acquiring whatever information they may seek. <sup>36</sup>

In the winter of 1862 - '63, Capt. Vansittart of Ariadne found little trouble in entering the workshops of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He 'loitered' about-presumably in plain clothes - and though without a pass, was admitted by a 'Scotchman' into the Yard. He got aboard the Keokuk (lost in the Charleston action of April 1863) two days before her launching and sent Milne a complete report on this newest of U.S. monitors. <sup>37</sup> But it was not all so easy. After the unsuccessful ironclad attack on Charleston in the spring of 1863, Sir Alexander said 'as this is the first real attack by a Squadron of Ironplated vessels after long preparation against heavy batteries, it will be of considerable interest to get all the details of the Action which I will procure and send home'. <sup>38</sup> That June, Capt.

36 Lyons to Russell, 3 Nov. 1863, ADM 1/5852. However, Lyons told Russell in December 1863 that he hardly dared mention to Seward the idea of sending a British officer to the C.S. The British Minister thought that if he did so, Seward would probably agree to admit British officers only on condition that they stay out of the South. Lyons to Russell, private, 7 Dec. 1863, PRO 30/22/37. Lyons never did ask Seward if British officers could go to the Confederacy.

37 Vansittart to Milne, 10 Dec. 1862, ADM 1/5819.

38 Milne to Somerset, private, 11 April 1863, MLN/107.

Kennedy of Challenger, told Milne that the Union naval commander at Fortress Monroe had forbidden visits to his monitors.<sup>39</sup> In response to Sir Alexander's memo of 22 June exhorting him to find out about them, Kennedy said lamely on 13 July that the U.S. government would not allow strangers on board these vessels, '... Admiral Lee refused me permission point blank.'<sup>40</sup> Yet Kennedy talked to US naval officers who freely complained to him that the monitors were only useful for harbour defence and that both officers and men disliked to serve aboard them. In the fall of 1863, HMS Vesuvius was in the U.S. Navy Yard at Boston, repairing her hull which was damaged by grounding on the Labrador coast. Her captain, R. Vessey Hamilton, after talking to U.S. officers, confirmed both Kennedy's and Hewett's reports that the monitors were very unpopular with the men because of cramped quarters and poor ventilation.<sup>41</sup> Through these and other communications, Milne was usually kept well informed on American turretted monitors as well as their broadside ironclads. While on the command, Sir Alexander criticised the lack of a proper dockyard. In 1866, Sir Frederick Grey told Milne, then first naval lord, that there should be an ironclad on the station but the lack of a dock capable of handling such vessels was a good reason for not sending them.<sup>42</sup> In 1869, a large floating drydock

39 Kennedy to Milne, 17 June 1863, MLN/104/4.

40 Same to same, 13 July 1863, MLN/104/4.

41 Hamilton to Milne, 3 Dec. 1863, ADM 1/5821.

42 Grey to Milne, private, 15 Aug. 1866, MLN/P/A/1(a).



suitable for ironclads was towed out to Bermuda.

The station commander stated his views on the new types of warships in May 1863 and also in a memo written when he was about to leave for home in 1864. Milne believed that the monitors as a class were a failure. Some of his reasons were: the slowness of their fire, the ease with which the turret jammed, the stunning of the crew by the concussion of their guns and the effect of shot on their sides which often broke off the interior rivet heads and these would fly about inside. He also criticised their want of stowage space and their unseaworthiness. But he added, after seeing Secretary of the Navy Welles' report for 1863, that every day 'brings forth changes if not always improvements'.<sup>43</sup>

In 1860 the most powerful gun in the Royal Navy was the 68 pounder which weighed over five tons and had been introduced in 1840. There was usually only one to a ship, mounted on a revolving carriage on the upper deck. They were supplemented by guns such as the time tested 32 pounders - the normal broadside gun of the time - as well as by 40 and 24 pounders. Ships might also carry the short barrelled carronades for close work and one or more light field guns for the use of landing parties. A ship's armament varied according to her size and mission. All of

43 'Memo relative to the Civil War in America', MLN/105/6; Milne to LCA, 22 May 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

these guns were muzzle loaders, some were rifled. These usually had three or four spiral grooves and the shells had studs which fit into the grooves. The ammunition was composed of solid shot, round shells, case, grape, molten and redhot shot. The last two were especially destructive to wooden ships. The molten shot consisted of molten iron - the 68 pounder held 26 pounds of it - poured into a shell, sealed with a plug and fired. The red-hot shot was ordinary solid shot heated in the ship's furnace and brought swiftly to the gun in a special bucket held by two men. The powder bags were first inserted, then the shot or shell; with red-hot and molten shot, one dry wadding and one damp wadding was placed between the powder and the shot so as not to explode the charge prematurely. After the serge powder bag was first put in, the ordinary shot - if this was to be fired - was pressed home with a rammer. Then a piece of rope wadding was inserted. This held the shot in place, for it was often rusted or deformed and didn't fit the barrel exactly. As in Nelson's day, the shot was painted or greased to retard its rusting. The difference between the size of the shell and the bore of the barrel was called 'windage'. The gunpowder magazine was in oneroom in small ships and there were usually two - one fore and one aft - in larger vessels. Elaborate safety precautions were taken. The magazine was lit by a lantern in the next compartment placed so that its light shone through a glass window into the room, thus eliminating one source of fire.

The powder was kept in pentagon shaped leather cases which fit against each other and therefore usually stayed in place regardless of the ship's motion. The powder, when needed, was taken into handling rooms and put into serge bags whose size varied according to the charge desired. These rooms had leaden floors to stop an accidental spark and were covered with water during an action, for the same purpose.<sup>44</sup>

At this time the flint lock had been replaced by the friction primer as the method of firing the guns. This primer was used in the British, French and U.S. navies, for all types of guns.<sup>45</sup> It consisted of an ordinary bird's quill of varying length. The quill was filled with fine mealed powder and the tapered end left open. At the other end a circular metal ring was inserted and passing through this was a jagged piece of wire with a loop at one end. The other end of the wire was held solidly in place by a leather band around the entire top of the quill. When a gun was ready to fire, the quill was inserted into the vent hole and a lanyard attached to the loop of wire. When the lanyard was pulled sharply,

44 'Gunnery Instructions, 1863' MLN/181, contains complete descriptions of guns, fuzes and ammunition used at the time.

45 Ibid.; Hamilton to Milne, 3 Dec. 1863, ADM 1/5821; Milne to Grey, 23 Sept. 1863, MLN/107. The U.S. and Britain also used the percussion cap.

the jagged wire passing through the metal ring created sparks which ignited the powder in the quill and fired the charge.

There were many different types of fuzes used with the ordinary cannon. One of the most common was the wooden or metal plug type. This was in the form of a tapered cylinder with numbered holes on one side, which corresponded to the number of seconds of flight before the shell exploded. These had to be bored into with a bit and drill at the desired hole and then inserted into the shell. The end of the fuze at the front of the shell was covered with paper and when the gun fired, the flames from the powder ignited the paper and the powder in the plug behind it. This burned for the time required and then the flame exited from the fuze and set off the powder in the body of the shell. Capt. Hamilton said the U.S. had a simpler hard paper fuze, which didn't require a bit and drill. In this type the paper was broken by hand at one of the bands which circled it and denoted seconds of flight.<sup>46</sup> There were many other types of fuzes in use as the government was continually experimenting with them at this period. Except for some small arms, there was no 'fixed' ammunition, i.e., powder charge and shell in one container; they were inserted into the gun separately. Accidents with the muzzle loaders were rare as the drill was simple and the gun uncomplicated. There was one mishap at Quebec in 1860, when several men were killed while saluting

46 Hamilton to Milne, 3 Dec. 1863, ADM 1/5821.

the Prince of Wales.<sup>47</sup> Besides this instance, the writer can recall no other serious accident involving these guns, while Milne held the command.

In 1861 a new type of weapon was issued to the fleet. This was the Armstrong gun, the first modern, breech loading cannon. It was a complete weapons system, with its own ammunition - unusable in any other gun - its own tools and drill. The gun itself was a great advance on the old cast iron types. Heretofore the great stress while firing had been confined to the region of the powder chamber. Thus only limited charges could be used as the gun - cast all of one piece - might otherwise burst as a result of the uneven stresses placed upon it. The new gun used a wrought iron barrel, surrounded by wrought iron spirals shrunk on it while they were heated, which when cooled, compressed and strengthened the piece throughout its length. Michael Lewis has called this method of construction 'probably the key invention in all modern gun-building'.<sup>48</sup> By May 1862, every class of warship in the navy carried Armstrong guns from the 9 pounder used in launches to the 110 pounders carried in the larger ships.<sup>49</sup> Besides

47 Milne to officers of ten ships, 30 Aug. 1860, MLN/103/13/M.

48 Lewis, M., The Navy of Britain (London, 1949) p. 580.

49 'Armaments of HM Ships, 1862' ADM 160/157. For information on the practical defects as well as the advantages of this gun see Parl. papers, VI, (1862) and XI (1863), Reports from the Select Committee on Ordnance.

the strength of the barrel, its principal virtues were greater accuracy, range and penetration. Its ammunition was elongated, with a flat base and came in the form of solid shot, common and segment shell. The cast iron common shell was filled with powder, while the segment shell was composed of a series of thin segments which had the effect of shrapnel when they exploded. It could fire neither red hot nor molten shot, but as these were only effective against wooden vessels, they fell into disuse with the coming of ironclads. A disadvantage of the Armstrong ammunition was that it could not destroy by ricocheting from the water; when it hit the water it went nearly straight up. The Armstrong fuze was also of modern design. Made of brass it was protected by a fuze cap. When this was loosened, a metal band with an arrow on it could be turned and stopped at any place on the scale opposite, which was numbered. After turning the arrow to face a number—which indicated the seconds of flight before the shell burst—the cap was tightened and this held the arrow in place. Only a fuze wrench was required for this work, thus eliminating the bore and bit used with many other fuzes.

The gun's fire was superior for several reasons. The shell, coated with lead for the purpose, was grasped firmly by the rifling—eliminating the effect of windage—and it rotated as it emerged from the barrel. In the large muzzle loaders, shooting was uncertain beyond 1500 yards and usually only accurate under 1000

yards.<sup>50</sup> The 32 pounder Armstrong made good practice at 2000 yards and it could reach a distance of five English miles.<sup>51</sup> At 3000 yards the Armstrong's accuracy was seven times better than the common muzzle loader.<sup>52</sup> The elongated shell presented a smaller frontal area, increasing the range while it lost less motion through the tumbling effect of windage on a missile as it left the gun. Thus practically the whole energy of the powder charge was utilized. Another advantage was that the gun, being served from the rear, didn't have to be partially run in to be loaded. This was a great boon while firing in heavy seas as the less movement of the gun, the easier it was to handle. In addition, the men were less exposed to an enemy's small arms fire. Further advantages were that the possibility of double charging the gun - not infrequent in the heat of action - was eliminated as was the probability of burning fragments from the previous charge igniting the next round.

The 40 pounder, a typical example of the gun was loaded by eleven men in the following manner. The hollow breech at the rear was unscrewed, but not removed. The vent piece was then lifted out and its horizontal firing hole primed. The shell was now put in through the hollow breech and rammed home hard so that its

50 'Gunnery Instructions 1863', MLN/181; Turnent, Sir J.E., The Story of the Guns (London, 1864), p. 117.

51 Turnent, Sir J.E., op. cit., p. 117.

52 Jane, F.T., The British Battle Fleet (London, 1912), p. 172.

leaden coating was just started on to the rifling of the barrel. The powder bag followed. This was fitted at the front with a round wooden lubricating wad with a groove at its edge, filled with tallow to grease the rifling. When the shell, lubricator and powder bag were in, the vent piece was placed carefully in its slot, the powder being directly in front of it. The breech was then screwed up, locking the vent piece in place. A friction primer was inserted into the top of the vent and the gun was ready to be fired. The vent piece had its firing hole at a right angle so that it was necessary first to prime the horizontal part with a piece of match and lastly, put a friction primer into the vertical part. This drill seems to be relatively straight forward, but operationally on shipboard, it proved quite a different thing.

The main trouble was the vent piece. Originally made of steel, in 1861 they were changed to wrought iron.<sup>53</sup> There was a copper ring on the side facing the powder which fitted into a corresponding ring inside the barrel. When handling the vent piece the gunners often bent the soft copper ring, which led to incomplete sealing of the powder chamber. The result was a tremendous and uneven pressure on the ventpiece, often splitting it and driving it out of the gun.<sup>54</sup> The seamen often neglected

53 W.O. to L.C.A., 21 Aug. 1861, ADM 1/5769.

54 Lloyd, E.W. and Hadcock, A.G., Artillery: Its Progress and Present Position (Portsmouth, 1893), p.39. The 110 pounder Armstrong used, in lieu of a copper ring, detachable tin bottoms which fit over the back of the powder bag.



to screw up the breech tight against the vent piece, it then flew out, sometimes wounding the gunners. Rear Admiral Eardley-Wilmot said:

I believe it occurred more than once that the block [vent piece] found its way into the main top to the discomfort of men there! Another defect was the liability of the lead to strip off the projectile on discharge and fall into the water in front of the gun. 55

The lead covering of the shell also 'puffed out', sometimes making it impossible to fit it into the gun.<sup>56</sup> If a ship sank, The Armstrong might lose some of its vital parts, as happened when the Driver grounded in August 1861. Both the vent piece and detachable sights were lost, rendering the gun inoperable.<sup>57</sup> The single piece muzzle loaders had no detachable parts and could usually be reused immediately upon recovering from a wreck.

Sir Alexander's ships received Armstrong guns in 1861; altogether about 3500 were manufactured.<sup>58</sup> By May of 1862, the Nile had two 110 pounders, four 70 pounders and ten forty pounders in addition to her regular guns, for a total armament of 78.

55 Eardley-Wilmot, Rear Adm. Sir S.M., An Admiral's Memories (London, n.d.), pp. 119-120.

56 'Naval Ordnance', a symposium in the Journal of the U.S.I., VIII, Feb. 1864, p.II., MLN/P/B/3(d). A good discussion of the merits and faults of the Armstrong gun with a leading article by Capt. E.G. Fishbourne.

57 Milne to Grey, private, 3 Oct. 1861, MLN/107.

58 Lloyd, E.W. and Hadcock, A.G., op.cit., p. 39.

The Mersey and Orlando had eight Armstrongs, four of them the large 110 pounders, out of a total of 40 guns. Thirteen of Immortalite's thirty-five guns were Armstrongs. Even the lowly Third class harbour defence gunboats at Bermuda, Onyx and Nettle, had two 40 pounder Armstrongs, their sole armament.<sup>59</sup> The man sent out by the Armstrong factory was at Bermuda in February 1862 and told Milne that his tools alone weighed about two tons. The commander-in-chief was skeptical about the gun from the time of its introduction. He believed they were too complicated and required 'more care than Ever will be given in quick firing what with tin Bottoms, lubricating wads, etc.'<sup>60</sup> Despite the impression the gun made in 1861 on the Union naval officer, D.D. Porter, Sir Alexander said in February 1862 that 'the Americans won't look at them'.<sup>61</sup> While the U.S. used some rifled Dahlgren and Parrott guns, none of these were breech loaders. Lyons told Russell in January 1862 that the U.S. thought the Dahlgren's 'simplicity and solidity' stood up better to 'rough treatment' and they had 'no confidence' in the breech loading cannons.<sup>62</sup> Writing to the Confederate purchasing agent in Britain, J.D. Bulloch, the C.S. secretary of the navy said in May 1863, 'Should

59 'Armaments of HM Ships, 1862', ADM 160/157.

60 Milne to Grey, private, 7 Feb 1862, MLN/107/3.

61 Ibid.

62 Lyons to Russell, 30 Jan. 1862, ADM 1/5798.

you send us any navy guns, send the Whitworth in preference to Armstrong guns'.<sup>63</sup>

After the Armstrong had been in use for a time, Milne's comments on its performance became increasingly critical. On 27 May 1862 he did admire its excellent accuracy at ranges of up to 3500 yards, yet at the exercise he witnessed, one of the vent pieces blew out. Sir Alexander ascribed this to a want of care in screwing up the breech and he then issued a standing order to the squadron.<sup>64</sup> This cautioned officers to be careful when loading the guns:

As the vent pieces of Armstrong Guns in ships are frequently injured by being roughly handled by the men at drill - the facings in some cases having been so much dented as to render it likely the chamber would not be perfectly air tight when the breech is screwed up. Accidents are likely to occur if greater care is not taken to prevent ill-usage to the vent pieces. <sup>65</sup>

The vent pieces were modified in 1862 so that iron facings helped to protect the copper ring. In his despatch of 27 May 1862, the station commander asked that each gun be furnished with three spare vent pieces, instead of the regulation two, and said there were then no spare vent pieces at either Bermuda or Halifax.

63 Mallory to Bulloch, 7 May 1863, ORN, II, 2, p. 417.

64 Milne to LCA, 27 May 1862, MLN/103/4/D.

65 'Standing Orders' etc., MLN/110/6/2.

The Admiralty agreed to this addition.<sup>66</sup> Almost a year later Milne advised the Admiralty to send out wooden vent pieces to be used for practice work only.<sup>67</sup> This request was refused as their Lordships felt that a wooden vent piece - even weighed with lead - would be too light for the job.<sup>68</sup> But Somerset himself, in 1861, had expressed decided reservations about the Armstrong. In August of that year he told Palmerston that he had recently witnessed some experimental firings of the guns '... two of them were at once disabled by bursting of the vent piece. I have before this, seen so many small disarrangements of this gun...'<sup>69</sup> Sir Alexander's officers frequently complained about the gun; a large percentage of their remarks centred around the vent piece.<sup>70</sup> There were other faults. In July 1861 Milne said the gun carriages were too low and the men had to stoop in order to aim the gun.

66 'Schedule of Propositions connected with HM service which have been made to the Admiralty by Vice Adm. Sir Alexander Milne, K.C.B.', uncatalogued Milne Home papers at the National Maritime Museum.

67 Milne to LCA, 31 March 1863, MLN/103/6/F.

68 LCA to Milne, 5 June 1863, MLN/105/4.

69 Somerset to Palmerston, private, 19 Aug. 1861, Broadlands papers.

70 Jones to Milne, 5 Aug. 1863, MLN/103/7/G; Tatham to Milne, 29 May 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

Replacement carriages were sent out to correct this defect.<sup>71</sup>

Both the rubber washers in the fuzes and the tallow filled lubricators deteriorated in the heat of the tropics.<sup>72</sup> In February 1863 Sir Alexander wrote that the breeching bolts in the ships' sides were unable to resist the strain of the Armstrong. Because of Milne's complaints, the Admiralty said, that April, that they would increase the strength of the bolts in order to cope with the gun's recoil.<sup>73</sup> Observing gun practice in

Immortalite in December 1863, the commander-in-chief said the recoil was:

so exceedingly violent that the gun and carriage was lifted bodily from the deck and came in with a crash, enough to tear everything to pieces, and the men were obliged to retire from near the gun. <sup>74</sup>

Milne was convinced that only a slide with compression, instead of the old truck carriages then used, would solve the recoil problem. <sup>75</sup> In September 1863, Capt. Key of the gunnery ship Excellent advised the Admiralty that the recently authorised powder reduction should

71 Milne to LCA, 24 July 1861, MLN/103/3/C. 'Schedule of Propositions', op.cit.; Barnard to Milne, 2 Oct. MLN/104/3.

72 Milne to LCA, 5 July 1862, MLN/103/5/E; Milne to LCA, 18 Sept. 1862, ADM 1/5788.

73 Milne to LCA, 26 Feb. 1863, MLN/103/6/F; LCA to Milne, 6 April 1863, MLN/105/4.

74 Milne to LCA, 24 Dec. 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

75 Milne to Grey, private, 25 Oct. 1863, MLN/107. This was the type of carriage later to be used for all large guns.

limit the recoil and he said that Milne should lengthen his breeching ropes to give the gun more room.<sup>76</sup> Later in 1863, Sir Alexander wrote that though they were 'admirably manufactured and of great precision', yet because of their defects the Armstrongs were 'not suitable for naval service afloat'. He preferred the muzzle loader and believed that the men had more confidence in them.<sup>77</sup> 'Our 68 pounder, 95 cwt is decidedly our best gun,' was the admiral's opinion, referring to the muzzle loading smooth bores then in use.<sup>78</sup> One writer, comparing this 68 pounder with U.S. guns, has said:

There is no doubt that the Dahlgren 11" gun when firing solid shot with 30 lbs. of propelling charge had an armour-smashing effect superior to that of the British gun but it was not known until the latter part of the Civil War that such large charges could be safely used.<sup>79</sup>

Yet at short range (approx. 200 yds.) the 68 pounder could penetrate 4½" armor, which was the average thickness of the U.S. ironclad's protection. The Armstrong, said a report, in 1863, was 'useless

76 LCA to Milne, 19 Jan. 1864, MLN/105/5.

77 Milne to LCA, 24 Dec. 1863, MLN/103/7/G.

78: Milne to Grey, private, 25 Oct. 1863, MLN/107.

79 Brodie, B., Sea Power in the Machine Age (Princeton, 1944) p. 182. Milne had pasted a note in 'Gunnery Instructions 1863' MLN/181, that said in the U.S. attack on Vicksburg in July 1863, they had used 38 lbs. of powder in the 15" Dahlgren.

against ironclads'.<sup>80</sup> This statement was reinforced by the report of the Director of Ordnance in May 1865. He noted the gun's 'inability to be used with effect against ironclad vessels of war (for which it was never intended...'<sup>81</sup>

The only major combat situation in which the Armstrongs were used was the attack at Kagoshima, Japan, in August 1863. Vice Admiral Kuper decided to chastise the local warlord after that prince's men had murdered an Englishman and then fired on the British warships which had come to seek redress. Five vessels used their Armstrongs on this occasion. Four of them reported trouble with the vent pieces, while the fifth noted that the tin bottoms of his 110 pounder - they came in two sizes - did not fit properly. The Gunner of Argus said the 'vent piece continually jamming, and its great weight is a serious drawback to quick firing...' The captain of Racehorse summed up his experience:

I am of opinion, that for general service it is not so effective as the 68 pounder, 95 cwt. gun... the smooth bore guns which were being fired under the same adverse circumstances, kept up a continuous and rapid fire. 82.

80 Sandler, S., The Emergence of the Modern British Capital Ship, 1863-1870, Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1965, p. 123.

81 'General Report of the Director of Ordnance for 1864-65', W.O. 33/15.

82 'Adm. Kuper's Official Report of the Performance of the Armstrong Guns in the Action of Kagoshima', MLN/105/6.

Finally on 28 November 1863, Sir Alexander said that it was impossible to fit the fuzes to the shells at night or in action. He was disgusted with the whole Armstrong scheme and thought all his captains agreed that:

... they are far too delicate, refined and complicated for Ships use, and for General Service. That our old Guns up to 2200 yards and I really might say, some of them up to 3000 yards are equally efficient and better adapted for the Service. 83

Though agreeing that one might be retained on a ship for use at long range, Milne felt that - in action - the navy was less efficient with Armstrongs than with the old guns, 'altho I quite admit their accuracy of fire'.<sup>84</sup> In early 1863, production of the gun was halted and in 1864 the navy returned to the muzzle loader for her main armament.<sup>85</sup> This situation lasted until 1880 when an improved breech loader was introduced, ending the long reign of the muzzle loading gun. During the Armstrong's brief life the amount of modifications in vent pieces, changes in carriages, reductions in powder, memos, tools, etc., must have been a storekeeper's nightmare. Its failure can be laid to an insufficient knowledge of metals, the faulty engineering of the vent piece and perhaps the inability of the seamen to handle a rather sophisticated piece of ordnance. Britain was engaged in no major

83 Milne to Grey, private, 28 Nov. 1863, MLN/107.

84 Ibid.

85 Holley, A.L., A Treatise on Ordnance and Armour (New York, 1865), p. 25; Lewis, M., op. cit., p. 581.



struggle during the American Civil War, so that except for short exercises, e.g., Kagoshima, she was lacking in that type of experience with men and weapons which could only be gained under battle conditions. If the U.S. had fought Britain in the years 1861-1864, before the Armstrong had been discontinued, the fact that part of the main armament of almost every British warship was unreliable might have had a telling effect on the war.

The first visit of any importance to the U.S. ordnance works at Washington was made by Capt. Hancock of Immortalite in January 1862. He had gone to that city to convey Lord Lyons away if Mason and Slidell weren't given up, but due to bad weather didn't reach Washington until 6 January 1862, when the incident had been settled. Hancock took advantage of this trip to visit Commander Dahlgren and the Navy Yard. He regretted that the Union officer refused to discuss a new type of fuze and he was hampered by the fact that 'I could take no measurements, and make no notes on the spot'.<sup>86</sup> Yet Hancock sent a very observant report. The captain noted that Dahlgren guns, both rifled and smooth bore, were being turned out at the rate of thirty per week. This gun, he considered 'amongst the most efficient weapons of the day'. The new model, he told Milne, was cast without that great weakness in all guns : trunnions - on which the barrel pivoted; these were added later. They were

<sup>86</sup> Hancock to Milne, 4 Feb. 1862, MLN/104/3.

in two pieces, one on top and the other on the bottom. When they circled the barrel, the two half 'ears' were held together with a band of metal. The U.S. reported great success with this method of attaching trunnions. The Dahlgren could be elevated higher than the comparable British gun because of its short carriage. In addition, Hancock said that the centre of gravity of these guns, when mounted on shipboard was not so near the ship's outer wall as similar British guns. This was an important advantage when firing in heavy weather as it reduced the ship's rolling. The British officer cited several other advantages of the Union weapon, among them the fact that since the muzzle extended further outside the port than the Royal Navy's guns, they 'could be fired with more training without fear of burning the ship's side'.<sup>87</sup> As has been seen, Milne complained several times to the Admiralty that it was unsafe to fire his upper deck guns, their muzzles being so close to the rigging that he feared it would be ignited.<sup>88</sup> Hancock also noted that in some of the U.S. frigates there were small covered holes in the rear of each gun. The powder was passed through these from below directly to the gunners, thus eliminating the confusion of men rushing up the main hatchways with powder as was usually done. Altogether Capt. Hancock seemed much impressed with the U.S. equipment. In September 1863, Stuart, British chargé d'affaires

87 Ibid.

88 Milne to LCA, 24 Oct. 1863, MLN/103/7/G. Most of his ships, Milne said, suffered from this defect.

at Washington, told Russell that the Russians were using Dahlgrens, having some time previously obtained the plans from the U.S.<sup>89</sup> When Milne was aboard the Russian admiral's flagship at New York in October 1863, he said their guns were of the Dahlgren pattern.<sup>90</sup>

When HMS Vesuvius was at Boston Navy Yard in the fall of 1863, Capt. Hamilton spoke to many Union naval officers. He said that every one he met opposed the prevalent system in the USN of arming large vessels with only a few heavy pivot guns. This he said, was the plan of Admiral Dahlgren, an officer 'whose sea service consists of only eight years'.<sup>91</sup> The blockading ships, the U.S. officers confided, had difficulty in casting loose and working the 11" gun in heavy weather. They wanted more and smaller broadside guns which were easier to handle. Hamilton told Milne that because of these protests, the Niagara, built to carry only a few heavy pivot guns was now armed with thirty smaller broadside cannons and only two pivots. He had heard, said Hamilton, that the New Ironsides - a broadside ironclad - was much feared by the Confederates,

89 Stuart to Russell, private, 28 Sept. 1863, PRO 30/22/37.

90 Milne to LCA, 18 Oct. 1863, MLN/103/7/g.

91 Hamilton to Milne, 3 Dec. 1863, ADM 1/5821.

besides being a good sea boat. This latter advantage was one possessed by few of the monitor class, which carried their guns in round turrets. The New Ironsides could, said the British officer, keep up a steady fire because of her numerous guns, while the Confederates were often able to evade the heavy but slow 15" guns of the monitors and recommence firing while they reloaded. The Federals were then introducing 'very much larger charges for their guns the Ordnance (Navy) officer told me...' <sup>92</sup> Hamilton admired the Union's eight shot repeating rifles and thought them excellent for repelling boarders. Milne also saw and liked this weapon as well as the U.S. Minie rifle whose ball he said was larger and more destructive than that of the British service rifle. <sup>93</sup> When Sir Alexander was in the North in the fall of 1863, he believed that the U.S. was making great strides in gunnery and admired their safety type fuze. He procured several books on Union guns, among them a work on experiments with the casting of guns which was privately printed for the government and not on public sale. Milne also toured the Washington Ordnance Department at this time and was 'much struck with the 15" Gun, of large size intended for the Monitors and likewise for Harbour defence'. The rifled Parrott gun, he said, 'appears to be considered by the authorities

92 Ibid.

93 Milne to Grey, private, 11 Oct. 1863, MLN/107.

as the most serviceable gun in their Service'.<sup>94</sup> The station commander always urged his officers to obtain as much information as possible on American equipment. Lyons also wanted the home authorities to secure information on U.S. guns, though he said that if 'bribery' was to be used, he didn't want to know about it.<sup>95</sup>

The attitude of Sir Alexander on the U.S. ironclads and arms might be called one of growing awareness of Federal strength and an apprehension lest Britain fall behind in development. Although Milne did not believe that the monitors were effective sea going warships, neither he nor his officers denigrated Union naval and military weapons.

This was a period of trial and error in weapons, ships and armour. Costly experiments were in progress in all of the industrial countries in an attempt to gain the lead in one or all of these vital fields. But the Americans were the only ones whose arms were being constantly tested in the crucible of large scale war and thus their progress was carefully watched.

94 Milne to LCA, 18 Oct. 1863, MLN/103/7/G. The larger Parrott guns had a tendency to burst.

95 Lyons to Russell, 30 Jan. 1862, F.O. 5/828. In April, 1864, Capt. J.G. Goodenough, RN, who had been sent to report on the North's war effort, told Lyons that the U.S. was preparing for a foreign war. Lyons believed that these preparations were directed against England. Lyons to Russell, 25 April 1864, F.O. 5/948.

CHAPTER VIIISir Alexander Leaves the Station

The commander-in-chief arrived at Bermuda on 6 February 1864 after completing his last tour of the West Indies. That January his successor had been named: Vice Admiral Sir James Hope, K.C.B., the hero of the China wars. Sir Alexander told the Admiralty when about to hand over the command that he was enabled to leave 'without a single question of importance, which has not been finally brought to a close'.<sup>1</sup> Milne left Vice Admiral Hope a long memorandum on the Civil War, including the various problems he had encountered and the probable new ones that would arise. The incoming commander thanked his predecessor for 'the very ample information' afforded to him on all aspects of the station.<sup>2</sup> On his departure Milne received numerous laudatory addresses from various places: Bermuda, Nova Scotia, St. John's, Newfoundland-special thanks for protecting the fisheries- Jamaica, etc., all testified to his dedication to duty. The address from the city of Halifax

1 Milne to LCA, 19 Feb. 1864, MLN/103/8/H.

2 Hope to Milne, 15 March 1864, MLN/105/6.

was signed by 1200 citizens and said that '.... Your father defended the coasts of these Provinces during the last American War'.<sup>3</sup> With his family in HMS Nile, Sir Alexander sailed for home on 17 March 1864, after an absence of more than four years.

The Civil War was to end almost one year after Milne left; Professor Baxter has characterized Vice Admiral Hope's command as 'uneventful'.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the American struggle this was certainly correct; minor legalistic matters were the only incidents. The Confederate raider Florida was ordered by Hope to pledge that she wouldn't destroy British prizes without sending them to a prize court. The Admiralty frowned on this arrangement, holding that if a British merchantman was destroyed by a C.S. warship, 'the proper remedy was diplomatic action by the British government'.<sup>5</sup> The vice admiral's command was marked by several unfortunate episodes. At Bermuda in 1864, there occurred the worst outbreak of yellow fever for many years; the famous race riots took place in Jamaica in 1865, while desertion again became rife, the station commander's flag-

3 'Various Addresses', MLN/P/C/1(c).

4 Baxter, J.P., op. cit., p.24 This is also the judgement of the DNB on Hope's years in North America.

5 Baxter, J.P., op. cit., p.25.

ship lost 106 men in this way.<sup>6</sup> Hope was the first commander of the North American and West Indian Station to have an ironclad - HMS Favorite - among his warships.<sup>7</sup>

On 17 July, 1865, HM Minister at Washington, Sir F. Bruce told Hope that the services of a vessel at Fortress Monroe were no longer required.<sup>8</sup> The end of the war marked the withdrawal of British warships from American harbours and the overall reduction in the number of vessels on the station. While Sir Alexander held the command his force ranged from a low of 20 ships and 2503 men in April 1860 to the Trent crisis strength of 42 warships and 14,088 men in January 1862; the greatest naval force then on any of Britain's eight foreign stations. When he left in 1864, the command consisted of 31 ships and 7,137 men.<sup>9</sup> In the latter year the Federals reached parity with the two great naval powers of the world. The U.S. had in December 1864, 671 ships, including 71 ironclads and 51,000 men; France had 376 ships, with 18 ironclads - including ships' building - and 51,998 men, while Britain had 417 ships, with 30 ironclads, also including those ships being built, and 68,811 men.<sup>10</sup> General Lee

6 'Report of Sir James Hope, May 1867', ADM 128/114.

7 Story, P.A., 'HM Naval Yard, Halifax, in the Early Sixties', Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, XXII (1933), p.70.

8 'Admiral's Journals', ADM 50/305. Lord Lyons had returned to England in December 1864.

9 'Lists of Ships', ADM 8/139-143.

10 'Comparison of Navies of England, France and the U.S., Dec. 1864', Palmerston papers, Broadlands Archives.



surrendered in April 1865 and on 22 June, Secretary of the Navy Welles announced that Britain and France had 'withdrawn from the insurgents the character of belligerents'.<sup>11</sup> The next month Welles ordered a reduction in the number of warships on the Atlantic coast to ten and a further diminution of U.S. ships in the Gulf to twelve.<sup>12</sup> Thus began the rapid decline of the formidable Union navy, a force which had done so much to secure victory. The Atlantic cable was completed in 1866 and by 1869 Havana was linked to the mainland by cable. These advances in communications reduced the ability of the station commander to exercise his personal judgement in many areas, both naval and diplomatic. From the late 1860's the commander-in-chief was more the servant of the Admiralty than, as he had been heretofore, the master of a semi-autonomous command. The North American and West Indian Station was abolished along with the South American and Pacific Stations in Admiral Fisher's reforms of 1904.<sup>13</sup> Their place was taken by a cruising squadron and by 1908, over 80 per cent of British battleship strength was concentrated in or near home waters in order to face the German menace.<sup>14</sup>

11 CWNC, 1865, p. 107.

12 Ibid., p.117. When the war ended, Britain had 26 warships on the station, none of them ironclads, ADM 8/144.

13 Willock, R., Bulwerk of Empire (Princeton, 1962), pp. 69-70.

14 Mahan, A.J., Naval Administration and Warfare (London, 1908), p. 311.

There can be no doubt that the years Milne spent on the station were among the most critical for Anglo-American relations during the Civil War. Besides the Trent affair, the possibility of British recognition and/or mediation was the major continuing danger to the North. H.C. Allen believes this peril was greatest in the fall of 1862.<sup>15</sup> E.D. Adams says of Russell's mediation plan, which the foreign secretary urged on the Cabinet in November 1862, 'Had that plan been adopted ..... war would have ensued' between England and the North', and after the plan was shelved, 'Never again was there serious governmental consideration of meddling in the American Civil War.'<sup>16</sup> F.L. Owsley held that Britain - despite the distress of the cotton operatives - was making so much money from the war that there was no economic motive for intervention.<sup>17</sup> Because of the danger of European intervention, the writer believes that the period October-November 1862 was the time of greatest peril for the Union. Gladstone favoured action of some kind and in a secret memorandum of 25 October, 1862, said that Russia was

15 Allen, H.C., Great Britain and the United States (London, 1954), pp. 478-9, 482.

16 Adams, E.D., Great Britain and the American Civil War (New York, 1966), ii, pp. 73-74.

17 Owsley, F.L., King Cotton Diplomacy (Chicago, 1959) p.557.

the 'vital element, otherwise deficient, of traditional and unquestioned friendliness to America.' <sup>18</sup> Russell

agreed that without Russian cooperation an armistice invitation would be sure to fail. <sup>19</sup> But the Russians had told the British Ambassador on 8 November that they did not wish to offend the North and therefore would decline to join the contemplated British-French scheme. <sup>20</sup> That fall, Lord Lyons also deprecated any attempt at mediation while Palmerston and most of the Cabinet were also against interference at that particular moment; and so the threat came to nothing. <sup>21</sup> The Polish rising in early 1863 and the Schleswig-Holstein crisis soon after turned English thoughts to the Continent. The public could readily grasp these issues; the Poles were heroic, the Russians oppressors; the Danes were a small nation being crushed by Bismarck's Germanic hordes. But the issues in the American struggle were never so clear cut. Many of the British people abominated slavery, yet admired the courage of the Southerners. They might hate the 'Mobocracy' of the North, but their whole tradition favoured the abolitionists. These complexities of the Civil

18 'Mr. Gladstone on the War in America', secret, 25 Oct. 1862, Palmerston papers, Broadlands Archives.

19 Earl Russell, Confidential Memo, 24 Oct. 1862, Palmerston papers, Broadlands Archives.

20 Adams, op. cit., ii, p.66.

21 Russell to Palmerston, private, 25 Oct. 1862, Palmerston papers, Broadlands Archives. Lyons' views at the time are outlined in Lyons to Russell, private, 24 Nov. 1862, PRO 30/22/36.

War accounted for a great deal of the British hesitation in dealing with the American belligerents.

In the bitterness engendered by the fierce fratricidal struggle, when British-American relations were often at a critical point, Sir Alexander was never seriously accused by either side of favouritism. The reason for his unique success is that throughout the war, Milne remained decidedly neutral and tried to hold his officers to this course. <sup>22</sup> He told Hope in 1864 that it was his practice whenever possible to reach a decision at once on all accusations against his officers, without:

waiting even for the formal complaint, thus the delay of reference home has been avoided and I am satisfied that by placing the remedy at once in Lord Lyons hands and enabling him to give the explanation at the same moment that he receives the complaint much needless irritation has been avoided and the best results have followed. <sup>23</sup>

A good example of this policy was the case of the Vesuvius. Capt. Hamilton had gone home on leave and left a Lieutenant Croke in command of the vessel. While communicating with the consul at Mobile in January 1863, that diplomatic

22 Milne to LCA, 11 Feb. 1864, MLN/103/8/H.

23 'Memo relative to the Civil War in America', MLN/105/6.

officer told Croke that he should take £40,000 in specie to Havana, for transshipment to England. This sum represented money owed to British bond holders by the state of Alabama. Unversed in the international complexities of the situation and relying on the consul's word that this was a proper thing to do, Lieutenant Croke took the gold out in the truce boat, through the Union blockade. As soon as Milne heard of his subordinate's action, he censured him and wrote to Lyons, giving the details of the unfortunate transaction.<sup>24</sup> That February, the commander-in-chief issued a circular to his captains saying that HM ships visiting blockaded ports '...are not invested with a shadow of right to embark any property with the object of passing the blockade'.<sup>25</sup> Lyons showed this circular 'unofficially' to Seward.<sup>26</sup> On 14 February, Lord Russell wrote Lyons telling him to inform Seward as soon as possible of 'the whole particulars of this transaction' as well as the fact that the consul's services were being dispensed with.<sup>27</sup> That March Seward told Lyons that the President was satisfied:

with the prompt and just vindication by the British Government of its authority and honour, and of its determination to compel respect by its agents for the authority of the United States.<sup>28</sup>

24 Milne to LCA, 24 Jan. 1863, MLN/IO3/6/F; Milne to LCA, 26 Jan. 1863, MLN/IO3/6/F; Milne to Croke, 26 Jan. 1863, MLN/IO3/18/R.

25 Baxter, op. cit., p. 22.

26 Lyons to Milne, 27 March 1863, ADM 128/60.

27 Russell to Lyons, 14 Feb. 1863, ADM 128/60.

28 Seward to Lyons, 2 March 1863, ADM 128/60.

What could have been a very unpleasant incident was thus amicably settled in less than two months.

Sir Alexander never lost the confidence of the home authorities, which they showed in 1863 by extending his command from the normal three year period to four. Russell said in September 1861, of Somerset's plan to put Milne in charge of the British force being readied for Mexico, '.... I shall have perfect reliance on his discretion'.<sup>29</sup> When the vice admiral was about to leave the station, the Lords of the Admiralty said in April 1864, that they could not allow him to strike his flag:

.....without expressing to you the very high sense they entertain of the manner in which you have invariably discharged the duties of that important command. The war between the Federals and so-called Confederate States of North America added much to the responsibilities of those Duties, and my Lords have observed with great satisfaction the sound judgement displayed by you in the treatment of the numerous questions of difficulty which have arisen, as well as the able manner in which you have carried out the Instructions of the Government for preserving a strict neutrality between the belligerent Parties.<sup>30</sup>

This does not mean that there was never any criticism of Milne. The 'Saturday Review' carried an article in its

29 Russell to Somerset, private, 30 Sept. 1861, Somerset papers, County Record Office, Aylesbury, Bucks.

30 LCA to Milne, 8 April 1864, LLN/P/C/1 (c).

issue of 13 February 1864 which stated that the essential difference between Milne and his successor was that Hope 'is a fighting man' and 'he is more of a warrior than of a diplomatist and of more proved capacity for firing on an enemy than for negotiating a compromise or smoothing a difficulty'. Of Sir Alexander it said, 'He has been, we suspect, the Admiral rather of the Foreign Office than of the Admiralty. He was selected for his tact, patience, temperate demeanour and courteous bearing.' His orders, the article continued, might have been 'cooperate with Lord Lyons to preserve peace by all means in your power. Don't be irritated into a quarrel'. It went on to say that these orders were fully carried out because 'they were in exact harmony with his sentiments, his convictions and his predilections'. The writer of the article believed that possibly peace between England and the Federals 'was purchased very dearly..... by a temporary abdication of national self respect and a temporary abnegation of national honour'. Further it stated that the chief characteristic of the labours of Lyons and Milne was:

..... to have refused to take offence when it was deliberately offered; to have disregarded impertinence, and not to have resented insolence..... to have been indifferent not only to personal slights but even to affronts heaped upon their flag.....

The unsigned article ended with a hope that Milne's successor would carry with him 'the same temper which animated him in the waters of the Peiho', and 'Possibly there may be those who would like to inform mankind that the successors of Hawke and Nelson have learned other lessons besides those of turning their cheeks to the smiter....'

This attack on Milne was answered soon afterward by 'Vindex' in the 'Naval and Military Gazette'. Stating that he knew Vice Admiral Hope well, the writer said that the admiral would 'spurn the assassin who stabs his absent friend'. Pointing out that an 'Admiral like any other subordinate, must obey the orders he received without comment', the anonymous writer claimed that Sir Alexander 'has gained by de facto experience and solid service to the profession, its sympathy and confidence.....' Both of these articles were printed in the 'Bermuda Royal Gazette' of 15 March 1864. The editor of the Gazette said of the 'Saturday Review' piece that it was 'erroneous in its facts as in its references'. He believed that both Federal and Confederate governments would agree:

that Sir A. Milne has, in the honourable manly and straightforward manner in which he has conducted his arduous and delicate duties proved himself to be sans tache et sans reproche.<sup>31</sup>

31 'The Bermuda Royal Gazette', 15 March 1864, Milne Home papers, uncatalogued at the National Maritime Museum.



Russell told Somerset in January 1864 that the Admiralty should give Hope strict instructions to be 'cautious and prudent' in his new command for:

It has required all Sir Alexander Milne's prudence and discretion to keep us on good, tho' not very friendly terms even at the best with the Yankees. Sir James Hope is in my opinion a rash and injudicious officer.... I shall tremble for peace if he is not very sharply cautioned not to take any important step without referring home. <sup>32</sup>

As C.J. Bartlett has pointed out, in his earlier career Milne 'outstayed four changes of ministry.....' <sup>33</sup> Besides general competence, another reason for his success may have been as he told Grey in 1863, 'I entered the Admiralty under distinct understanding I was to have nothing to do with Politics.' <sup>34</sup> This attitude was shared by Lyons, who said in 1871:

I have myself always thought that a regular diplomatist could only impair his efficiency by taking part in home politics, and I have throughout acted upon this conviction. <sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Russell to Somerset, private, 7 Jan. 1864, Somerset papers.

<sup>33</sup> Bartlett, C.J., Great Britain and Sea Power 1815-1853 (Oxford, 1963), p.8.

<sup>34</sup> Milne to Grey, private, 20 March 1863, MLN/107.

<sup>35</sup> Newton, Lord, Lord Lyons (London, 1913), ii, p.11.

The following description of Lord Lyons, who worked so closely and well with Milne, would it seems, also apply to Sir Alexander and is an illustration of the finer points of the Victorian character:

The force of will, the power of self-devotion, the dignity, the reticence, the minute regularity, the sense of order, the degree of submission to authority and the undoubting assertion of his own authority towards others - all were elements in a strong personality. <sup>36</sup>

Milne continued to serve his country for another decade. From July 1866 to December 1868 he was first naval lord of the Admiralty; then commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean from 1869 to 1870, and finally first naval lord again from 1872 until his retirement in 1876. By that date he was a G.C.B. and had been made a full Admiral. In 1881, Milne, now a baronet, was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet, the highest rank in the service. In these later years he served as an advisor on naval matters. In 1879 Sir Alexander was chairman of a committee which enquired into the state of colonial defences and in 1881 he was a member of the Royal Commission on the Defence of British Possessions and Colonies Abroad. <sup>37</sup> The Canadian statesman, Sir John Rose, thanked

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 428.

<sup>37</sup> 'Auto-biographical Material', MLN/P/C/1-3 and the DNB for information on Milne's career.

Milne in 1880 for letting him read the admiral's Civil War despatches. Rose said that they had an increasing historical interest:

I always knew that to your conciliation and firmness we owed an escape from the many perils that so often threatened to involve the two countries in strife,.... Seward more than once spoke to me in grateful and appreciative terms. The Despatches ought somehow to see the light when the history of that critical time is written as it will be. I am not sure that Walpole's next volume will not come near it. 38

But it was not to be. Sir Alexander retired to his family home at Inveresk, Scotland, and died there on 29 December 1896. He had served sixty years in the navy, eighteen of them at the Admiralty. The Reverend Thomas Hannan said at the funeral that, 'His guiding principle, the star of his life, has been "duty"....' 39 Although Milne's only son, Admiral A.B. Milne died unmarried, the family's naval tradition is carried on by his brother's branch of the family, one of whose sons is now an officer on Britain's first nuclear powered submarine. Whereas Sir Alexander was concerned primarily with the protection of British possessions, his descendant has a much wider responsibility, for the Royal Navy now shares in the defence of many countries all over the free world.

38 Rose to Milne, private, 10 June 1880, MLN/P/C/1 (C).

39 'Funeral of Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, Bart.', The Scotsman, 4 Jan. 1897.

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G. The Milne papers are at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. This is an extremely voluminous collection of family papers donated to the museum by Capt. A. Milne Home, RN, in 1949. The captain contributed an additional collection in September 1965, although he still retains some of his family's papers. The writer has been given access to all of these materials at the captain's residence in Scotland. Some of the sources quoted in the thesis are attributed to the 'Milne Home papers'. This means that the writer has read the paper in Scotland but has not seen it at Greenwich among those papers donated in 1965 and which are quoted as 'uncatalogued, Milne Home papers at the National Maritime Museum'. However it may be at the museum, those papers given in 1965 are quite extensive. The following items from the 1949 collection have been consulted:

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5. Acknowledgement of Admiralty Letters, MLN/103/25(y) and 26(z), 1861-64.

6. Letters Received by Sir A. Milne - originals - General letters, MLN/104/1 to 5, 1860-1864; Admiralty letters, MLN/105/1 to 6, 1860-64. MLN/105/6 marked 'Very Important Letters on N. American Command' is one of the most important group of papers for these years, as it deals with some of the chief problems of that period, e.g., Civil War, etc.
7. Returns of Foreign Vessels of War, North American and West Indian Station, MLN/106, 1860-64.
8. Private Letters, MLN/107/1-3, 1860-64. Correspondence to and from Somerset, Grey, Lyons, W. Stuart, Milne's family, etc. A most valuable source of information.
9. North American Station Returns, MLN/108, 1860-64. Includes Standing Orders for the station and details of ships, etc.
10. Court Martials, MLN/109/1(AA) and 2(BB), 1860-64.
11. Sailing Orders, MLN/110/1(CC) to 5 (HH), 1860-64. Includes contingent account book, telegrams from commander-in-chief and a rough index to his records.
12. Private Letters received, MLN/P/A/1(a) and (b) 1852-1861. Correspondents include Palmerston - one letter of little interest - Derby, Coles, etc.; some draft replies.
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- I. Milne's 'Notebook', valuable for his opinions, information on the Station, details of his career, etc.
  2. 'Schedule of Propositions Connected with HM Service which have been made to the Admiralty by Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, K.C.B.'

H. Milne, Sir David. The writer has located and read at a solicitor's office in Edinburgh a collection of letters from Sir David to George Home of Wedderburn in the years 1811 to 1818. There are 132 letters there, 54 of them are quoted in Report on the Manuscripts of Col. David Milne Home of Wedderburn Castle N.B. (London, 1902), a publication of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. These letters are a valuable guide to life at sea, the N. American Station, the War of 1812, etc.

I. The writer is indebted to other members of the Milne family for material used:

Dorothy, Lady Redesdale for Sir. A. Milne's diary for 1863 and photographs;

Mrs. J.B. Hotham for several photograph albums as well as some other materials; and

Col. and Mrs. Home Robertson for various items.

J. Palmerston papers, at the Historical Manuscripts Commission, London; by permission of the Trustees of the Broadlands Archives, 1859 to 1865. Correspondence with Russell, Somerset, Lewis and various Cabinet documents. Also Palmerston Letterbooks, Addl. MSS. 48582-3 at the British Museum.

K. Russell, Lord John, at the Public Record Office. A complete list of materials consulted will be found in the PRO section.

L. Somerset, Edward A. Seymour, 12th Duke of, papers at the County Record Office, Aylesbury, Bucks. Correspondence with Palmerston, Russell, Newcastle, Lewis, Duke of Cambridge, Milne, Grey, Romaine, Hope and Dunlop. The correspondence with Milne is interesting but adds little to that found in the Milne papers.

- M. The writer has attempted to trace, largely through the Principal Probate Registry, Somerset House, the descendants of persons connected with this study. For various reasons, little information has been gained about the following:

Captain W.N.W. Hewett, Commander N. Salmon, Sir F. Grey, Col. W. Monro, Frederick F. Fegen (Milne's secretary), Commodore H. Dunlop, Lt. J.S. Trotter, Paymaster J.T. Sueter and Sir C.L. Wyke.

Three ex-Confederates died in England but, as far as can be determined by the writer, they left no personal papers. They were the Confederate purchasing agent, J.D. Bulloch; the C.S. Secretary of State, Judah Benjamin, and the C.S. Commissioner to France, John Slidell. In the case of three of the Nile's officers, some information has been found. The writer has visited the descendants of Milne's flag Lieutenant, Capt. Basil S. de Ros Hall, Capt. E.K. Barnard, commander of the Nile, and the ship's Master, C.J. Folkinghorne. They have furnished some letters, books, and quite a few rare photographs of the ships and men of Milne's command.

- N. H.M.S. Nile was a schoolship for the merchant navy from 1875 until her accidental destruction in 1953. The writer has visited the merchant navy training school, H.M.S. Conway at Bangor, Wales, and spoken to the captain superintendent, Capt. E. Hewitt. The captain spent many years on the Nile when she was a schoolship and has given the writer information on the warship as well as some photographs of her equipment.

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 355.... From Consuls, Jan. to Dec. 1861, Mexico  
 356.... From Consuls, Domestic, Jan. to Dec. 1861, Mexico  
 357.... From Domestic, Various, Jan. to Aug. 1861, Mexico  
 358.... From Domestic, Various, Sept. to Dec. 1861, Mexico  
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 366.... From Sir C.L. Wyke, June to Sept., 1862, Mexico  
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 35..... Corr. Legation in Washington, 1861  
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786...Lettres Reçues:Divisions Navales:Terre Neuve,29 Fév.-  
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### III. LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Admiralty Library, London.

A valuable repository of rare books on the service, maps of the stations, etc.; has a good index card system.

Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax, N.S.

Bermuda Historical Monuments Trust, Hamilton, Bermuda.

Mr. H.G. Middleton has been extremely helpful, furnishing lists of books, microfilms, etc.

Confederate Historical Society, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

A serious amateur group which produces, several times a year, an informative journal.

Confederate Memorial Literary Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Hydrographer of the Navy, London; for maps.

Imperial War Museum, London, has an enormous collection of ship photographs, not very many for the 1860's, but excellent coverage from the 1880's to the present.

Maritime Museum of Canada, Halifax.

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

Mr. A.W.H. Pearsall, the Custodian of Manuscripts, and many other people at the museum have given valuable assistance to the writer. There is a large library as well as ship plans, models, etc., covering the entire period of British maritime history. An extensive collection of private papers is also at the museum.

Naval Reference Library, Halifax, N.S.

Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

A diligent staff have answered every enquiry promptly and completely.

Public Archives of France, Paris.

The writer paid a short visit to this repository. There was in Milne's time, a French naval station in the same area as his own: La Division Navale des Antilles et de l'Amérique du Nord, and I wished to compare the two forces. Since the minister of the navy also had charge of the French colonies, one can read political as well as naval material in these records. M. Audouy, chief of the naval ministry's 'Service Historique', indicated the relevant materials for my study which are available in the Public Archives. The Custodian of Naval Archives at the Public Archives, M. Taillemite, said that to his knowledge, only one study had ever been done on any of the eight foreign naval stations that France maintained in the 19th century. This is: Faivre, M., L'Expansion Française dans la Pacifique, 1800-1842 (Nouvel Editions Latin, Paris, 1953). While in Paris, the writer also visited the Musée de la Marine, which has a fine collection of ship models, ordnance, etc., pertaining to the years of my study: the beginning of the ironclad era.

Royal United Service Institution, London.

Mr. D. Erskine furnished information as well as copies of naval officers' photos from Milne's personal album.

Science Museum, London.

A fine collection of models: engines, boilers, paddle wheels, the lifting screw, etc., as well as some relevant publications. An indispensable aid to a knowledge of the technical side of the navy, which was of such importance in the 1860's.

Toronto Public Library, for maps of the Maritimes.