



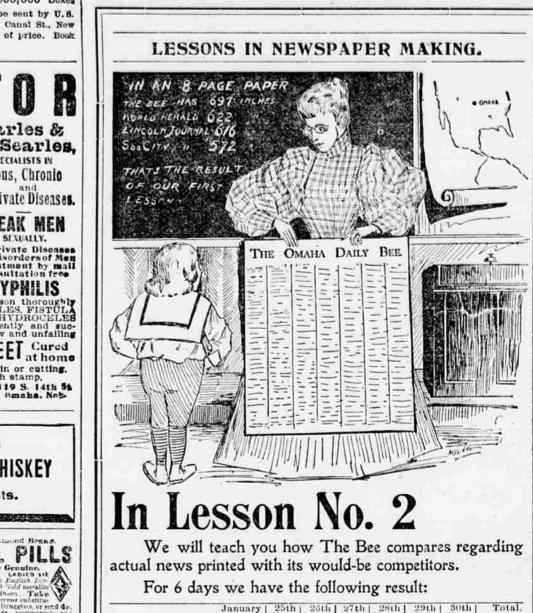
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tack upon the confederate stronghold, showing the methods of attack and defense of that day, in striking contrast with those of the present time. As one of the active participants in the operations of 1862-63 off Charleston, Admiral Erben speaks with the accuracy and eloquence of an old sailor reeling a yarn off the logline at the rate of thirty knots an hour. Admiral Erben writes as follows: The announcement that the North Atlantic fleet will go very soon to Charleston, S. C. for practical operations in attacking and defending that city brings to mind the stirring times and anxious days and nights

from 1863 to 1865, the time of the slege of that port. Surely no better object lesson could be given the fleet than at Charles-ton. Rear Admiral Bunce, the commander in chief, was, during the slege, a most active and energetic officer, being then a lesson at the slege that a lleutenant, and no one knows better than he the different plans of attack adopted, and of the defense as well.

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It is fortunate that an active participant should be in command of this fleet of in-

All through 1861 and 1862 Charleston had been the favorite port for blockade running, being only 350 miles from Nassau, about 300 from Bermuda, and but little more from the coast of Cuba, the points of departure of blockade runners. The harbor, being wide at its mouth, with several channels leading to the city, gave these daring navigators. with their filt-or-miss course, a better chance than at any other port.

In spite of the very vigilant blockading fleet great numbers of vessels ran in and out. The only way to break this up was to capture the place itself. To this end the government had constructed a number of ironclad monitors of sufficiently light draught to cross the bar. During the win-ter of 1562-63 these vessels were completed and rendezvoused at Port Royal, S. C., where the expedition against Charleston was made ready. The monitor fleet consisted of the Weehewken, Captain John Rodgers; the Passale, Captain Percival Drayton; the Montauk, Captain John L. Worden; the Nahant, Commander John Downes; the Nan-tucket, Commander D. M. Fairfax; the Catskill, Commander George W. Rodgers, and the Patapsco, Commander Daniel Ammen, of which I was lieutenant com-mander and executive officer. There was also the Keokuk, a nondescript two-turreted

EQUIPMENT.

These vessels carried mostly two 15-inch guns each, with a complement of 150 souls. ome weeks were spent drilling the men at the guns, handling the heavy ammunition and handling the vessels themselves, as they were most difficult to the inexperienced seaman to steer. Extra plates were bolted on over the shell rooms and magazines, spars made ready to be rigged and with book ropes to calch torpedoes-in fact, everything was done that ingenuity could suggest to make these vessels as invulnerable as pos-

The fleet left Port Royal for Charleston, C., crossing the bar on April 6, 1863. Off bar the fleet was joined by the ironclad frigate New Ironsides, Captain Thomas Tur-She was a most formidable vessel, car-

guns and two heavy rifles, drawing about sixteen feet at the time. She became the flag ship of Rear Admiral Samuel F. Ducommanding the forces. Captain C. R. P. Rodgers was his first captain. The final making ready for battle occupied

the rest of the day. The vessels were stripped of all about decks, boat davits included, only one small boat being retained by each vessel. The finishing touch, and the Inst thing done, was to cover the decks, turrets and pilot house with a thick coating of tallow for the purpose of glancing the barrels of this having been furnished each vessel. Such a nasty mess was never

There were sent down from the north a number of heavy rafts, built of oak timbers. heavily bolted together, about fifty feet long by twenty feet wide and two feet thick, fitted so as to take the bows of the monitors (the men called them the bootjacks), having a number of hook ropes underneath, to catch

any torpedoes coming in the way. These were to be lashed to the bows by chains, Only one vessel-the Wechawken-took one into action, as they caused bad or worse steering. The order of battle was line ahead, the Weehawken leading, the flagship New Ironsides being in the middle and the Keokuk in the rear.

THE SIGNAL GIVEN.

At half-past 12 the signal was made to At half-past 12 the signal was made to get under way, to pass up the main ship channel and open fire when within easy range. It was soon found that the raft im-peded the speed of the Weehawken to such degree that Captain Rodgers cut it adrift, nd it floated toward the shore of Morris and h Island. It did some little service, however, confederates, taking it for some as the Yankee infernal machine, opened fire upon t for a time, thus taking a few guns off the fleet.

Slowly the fleet proceeded, as it was most difficult to handle the vessels among these narrow passages, with strong, uncertain currents, with no leadsman to give the sound-ings, with no compass to guide. The only thing we had to depend upon was the judgment of the commanding officers. It was im-possible after a few minutes of the battle to see anything ahead at times, as a range, for the smoke became so dense. The Weehawken came up to some small flags, which were the

range flags from Fort Sumter and other forts The garrison had been trained at battery fir-ing upon this point. The minute the Wee-hawken reached this spot all the guns in the harbor that could be brought to bear upon her were fired.

Captain Rodgers states that fully 100 guns were fired at that moment. The noise from the discharge was terrific, as this was the the distinctive was terrine, as this was the first time that guns of such great calibre had been used in battle. The Weehawken and Passaic, the leading vessels, received this fire, and each was badiy damaged. Torpedus were around in almost every direc-tion, one exploding under the overhang of the Weehawken, lifting the vessel a little, but doing no very great damage. Each comdoing no very great damage. Each com-manding officer of a monitor opened fire when he corsidered himself in easy range, and scon the battle was general. Obstruction were made out ahead. These were rows of piles driven into the mud, raft because and rows to catch the scores of

booms and ropes to catch the screws of yessels. These were floated by casks, which in turn were roped together. The obstuc-tions caused the leading vessels to stop, thus bringing the other vessels up all together.

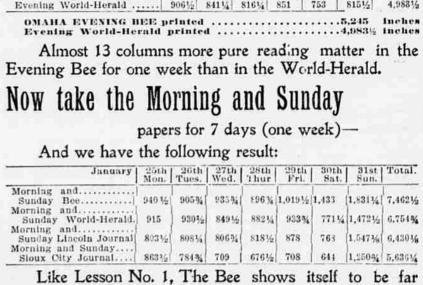
SEVERELY POUNDED. The Patapsco was steaming slowly ahead when she brought up for a few moments upon something. The engines were reversed and she backed off, but during these few minutes we were very severely pounded by the enemy. The vibration caused by the the enemy. heavy shot striking the turrets was very great. Bolts were broken, the heads of which went flying in every direction, injuring people, and on one vessel killing the quartermaster at the wheel and wounding

Juring project at the wheel and wounding quartermaster at the wheel and wounding the pilot badly. A mammoth electric torpedo, made of a steam belier, eighteen feet long, three feet in diameter, filled with 3,000 pounds of powder, was planted in the main ship chan-nel, near Fort Sumter. It was connected with the battery on shore at Fort Wagner,

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