

AUTHORIZING THE PRESIDENT TO PLACE ROBERT SMALLS
ON THE RETIRED LIST OF THE NAVY.

JANUARY 23, 1883.—Recommitted to the Committee on Naval Affairs and ordered to be printed.

Mr. DEZENDORF, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, submitted the following

R E P O R T :

[To accompany bill H. R. 7059.]

The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the bill to retire Robert Smalls as captain of the Navy, beg leave to report as follows :

This claim is rested upon the very valuable services rendered by Robert Smalls to the country during the late war. The record of these has been very carefully investigated, and portions of it are appended, as exhibits, to this report. They show a degree of courage, well directed by intelligence and patriotism, of which the nation may well be proud, but which for twenty years has been wholly unrecognized by it. The following is a succinct statement and outline of them:

On May 13, 1862, the Confederate steamboat Planter, the special dispatch boat of General Ripley, the Confederate post commander at Charleston, S. C., was taken by Robert Smalls under the following circumstances from the wharf at which she was lying, carried safely out of Charleston Harbor, and delivered to one of the vessels of the Federal fleet then blockading that port:

On the day previous, May 12, the Planter, which had for two weeks been engaged in removing guns from Cole's Island to James Island, returned to Charleston. That night all the officers went ashore and slept in the city, leaving on board a crew of eight men, all colored. Among them was Robert Smalls, who was virtually the pilot of the boat, although he was only called a wheelman, because at that time no colored man could have, in fact, been made a pilot. For some time previous he had been watching for an opportunity to carry into execution a plan he had conceived to take the Planter to the Federal fleet. This, he saw, was about as good a chance as he would ever have to do so, and therefore he determined not to lose it. Consulting with the balance of the crew Smalls found that they were willing to co-operate with him, although two of them afterwards concluded to remain behind. The design was hazardous in the extreme. The boat would have to pass beneath the guns of the forts in the harbor. Failure and detection would have been certain death. Fearful was the venture, but it was made. The daring resolution had been formed, and under command of Robert Smalls wood was taken aboard, steam was put on, and with her valuable cargo of guns and ammunition, intended for Fort Ripley, a new fortification just constructed in the harbor, about two o'clock in the

morning the Planter silently moved off from her dock, steamed up to North Atlantic wharf, where Smalls' wife and two children, together with four other women and one other child, and also three men, were waiting to embark. All these were taken on board, and then, at 3.25 a. m., May 13, the Planter started on her perilous adventure, carrying nine men, five women, and three children. Passing Fort Johnson the Planter's steam-whistle blew the usual salute and she proceeded down the bay. Approaching Fort Sumter Smalls stood in the pilot-house leaning out of the window with his arms folded across his breast, after the manner of Captain Relay, the commander of the boat, and his head covered with the huge straw hat which Captain Relay commonly wore on such occasions.

The signal required to be given by all steamers passing out, was blown as coolly as if General Ripley was on board going out on a tour of inspection. Sumter answered by signal, "all right," and the Planter headed toward Morris Island, then occupied by Hatch's light artillery, and passed beyond the range of Sumter's guns before anybody suspected anything was wrong. When at last the Planter was obviously going toward the Federal fleet off the bar, Sumter signaled toward Morris Island to stop her. But it was too late. As the Planter approached the Federal fleet, a white flag was displayed, but this was not at first discovered, and the Federal steamers, supposing the Confederate rams were coming to attack them, stood out to deep water. But the ship Onward, Captain Nichols, which was not a steamer, remained, opened her ports, and was about to fire into the Planter, when she noticed the flag of truce. As soon as the vessels came within hailing distance of each other, the Planter's errand was explained. Captain Nichols then boarded her, and Smalls delivered the Planter to him. From the Planter, Smalls was transferred to the Augusta, the flag-ship off the bar, under the command of Captain Parrott, by whom the Planter with Smalls and her crew were sent to Port Royal to Rear Admiral Dupont, then in command of the Southern squadron.

Captain Parrott's official letter to Flag Officer DuPont, and Admiral DuPont's letter to the Secretary of the Navy are appended hereto.

Captain Smalls was soon afterwards ordered to Edisto to join the gunboat Crusader, Captain R. M. D. He then proceeded in the Crusader, piloting her and followed by the Planter to Simmons' Bluff, on Wadmalaw Sound, where a sharp battle was fought between these boats and a Confederate light battery and some infantry. The Confederates were driven out of their works, and the troops on the Planter landed and captured all the tents and provisions of the enemy. This occurred some time in June, 1862.

Captain Smalls continued to act as pilot on board the Planter, and the Crusader, and as blockading pilot between Charleston and Beaufort. He made repeated trips up and along the rivers near the coast, pointing out and removing the torpedoes which he himself had assisted in sinking and putting in position. During these trips he was present in several fights at Adams' Run on the Dawho River, where the Planter was hotly and severely fired upon; also at Rockville, John's Island, and other places. Afterwards he was ordered back to Port Royal, whence he piloted the fleet up Broad River to Pocotaligo, where a very severe battle ensued. Captain Smalls was the pilot on the monitor Keokuk, Captain Ryan, in the memorable attack on Fort Sumter, on the afternoon of the 7th of April, 1863. In this attack the Keokuk was struck ninety-six times, nineteen shots passing through her. She retired from the engagement only to sink on the next morning, near Light House

Inlet. Captain Smalls left her just before she went down, and was taken with the remainder of the crew on board of the Ironside. The next day the fleet returned to Hilton Head.

When General Gillmore took command, Smalls became pilot in the quartermaster's department in the expedition on Morris Island. He was then stationed as pilot of the Stono, where he remained until the United States troops took possession of the south end of Morris Island, when he was put in charge of Light House Inlet as pilot.

Upon one occasion, in December, 1863, while the Planter, then under command of Captain Nickerson, was sailing through Folly Island Creek, the Confederate batteries at Secessionville opened a very hot fire upon her. Captain Nickerson became demoralized, and left the pilot-house and secured himself in the coal-bunker. Smalls was on the deck, and finding out that the captain had deserted his post, entered the pilot-house, took command of the boat, and carried her safely out of the reach of the guns. For this conduct he was promoted by order of General Gillmore, commanding the Department of the South, to the rank of captain, and was ordered to act as captain of the Planter, which was used as a supply-boat along the coast until the end of the war. In September, 1866, he carried his boat to Baltimore, where she was put out of commission and sold.

Besides the daring enterprise of Captain Smalls in bringing out the Planter, his gallant conduct in rescuing her a second time, for which he was made captain of her, and his invaluable services to the Army and Navy as a pilot in waters where he perfectly knew not only every bank and bar, but also where every torpedo was situated, there are still other elements to be considered in estimating the value of Captain Smalls' services to the country. The Planter on the 13th of May, 1862, was a most useful and important vessel to the enemy. The loss of her was a severe blow to the enemy's service in carrying supplies and troops to different points of the harbor and river fortifications. At the very time of the seizure she had on board the armament for Fort Ripley. The Planter was taken by the government at a valuation of \$9,000, one-half of which was paid to the captain and crew, the captain receiving one-third of one-half, or \$1,500. Upon what principle the government claimed one-half of this capture cannot be divined, nor yet how this disposition could have been made of her without any judicial proceeding. That \$9,000 was an absurdly low valuation for the Planter is abundantly shown by facts stated in the affidavits of Charles H. Campbell and E. M. Baldwin, which are appended. In addition thereto their sworn average valuation of the Planter was \$67,500. The report of Montgomery Sicard, commander and inspector of ordnance, to Commodore Patterson, navy-yard commandant, shows that the cargo of the Planter, as raw material, was worth \$3,043.05; that at ante-bellum prices it was worth \$7,163.35, and at war prices \$10,290.60. For this cargo the government has never paid one dollar. It is a severe comment on the justice as well as the boasted generosity of the government, that, whilst it had received \$60,000 to \$70,000 worth of property at the hands of Captain Smalls, it has paid him the trifling amount of \$1,500, and for twenty years his gallant daring and distinguished and valuable services which he has rendered to the country have been wholly unrecognized.

Report of Flag Officer DuPont.

FLAG-SHIP WABASH,

Port Royal Harbor, South Carolina, May 14, 1862.

SIR: I inclose a copy of a report from Commander E. G. Parrott, brought here last night by the late rebel steam-tug Planter, in charge of an officer and crew from the Augusta. She was the armed dispatch and transportation steamer attached to the engineer department at Charleston, under Brigadier-General Ripley, whose barge, a short time since, was brought out to the blockading fleet by several contrabands.

The bringing out of this steamer, under all the circumstances, would have done credit to any one. At four o'clock in the morning, in the absence of the captain, who was on shore, she left her wharf close to the government office and headquarters, with Palmetto and Confederate flags flying, passed the successive forts, saluting as usual by blowing her steam-whistle. After getting beyond the range of the last gun, she quickly hauled down the rebel flags and hoisted a white one.

The Onward was the inside ship of the blockading fleet in the main channel, and was preparing to fire when her commander made out the white flag. The armament of the steamer is a 32-pounder, or pivot, and a fine 24-pounder howitzer. She has, besides, on her deck four other guns, one 7-inch rifled, which were to have been taken the morning of the escape to the new fort on the middle ground. One of the four belonged to Fort Sumter, and had been struck in the rebel attack on the fort on the muzzle. Robert, the intelligent slave and pilot of the boat, who performed this bold feat so skillfully, informed me of this fact, presuming it would be a matter of interest to us to have possession of this gun. This man, Robert Smalls, is superior to any who have come into our lines—intelligent as many of them have been. His information has been most interesting, and portions of it of the utmost importance.

The steamer is quite an acquisition to the squadron by her good machinery and very light draught. The officer in charge brought her through Saint Helena Sound, and by the inland passage down Beaufort River, arriving here at ten o'clock last night.

On board the steamer when she left Charleston were eight men, five women, and three children.

I shall continue to employ Robert as a pilot on board the Planter for the inland waters, with which he appears to be very familiar. I do not know whether, in the views of the government, the vessel will be considered a prize; but, if so, I respectfully submit to the department the claims of this man Robert and his associates.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

S. F. DUPONT,
Flag Officer, Commanding, &c.

Hon. GIDEON WELLES,
Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.

UNITED STATES STEAMSHIP AUGUSTA,
Off Charleston, May 13, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to inform you that the rebel armed steamer Planter was brought out to us this morning from Charleston by eight contrabands, and delivered up to the squadron. Five colored women and three children are also on board. She carried one 32-pounder, and one 24-pounder howitzer, and has also on board four large guns, which she was engaged in transporting.

I send her to Port Royal at once, in order to take advantage of the present good weather. I send Charleston papers of the 12th, and the very intelligent contraband who was in charge will give you the information which he has brought off.

I have the honor to request that you will send back, as soon as convenient, the officer and crew sent on board.

I am, respectfully, &c., your obedient servant,

E. G. PARROTT,
Commander, and Senior Officer present.

Flag Officer S. F. DUPONT,
Commanding South Atlantic Blockading Squadron.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., January 3, 1863.

SIR: Your communication of the 26th ultimo, in relation to your services on the steamer Planter during the rebellion, and requesting copies of any letters from General Gillmore and other officers on the subject, has been received.

The records of this office show that the name of Robert Smalls is reported by Lieut. Col. J. J. Elwell, Hilton Head, S. C., as a pilot, at \$50 per month, from March 1, 1863,

to September 30, 1863; and from October 1, 1863, to November 20, 1863, at \$75 per month.

He was then transferred to Capt. J. L. Kelly, assistant quartermaster, November 20, 1863, by whom he was reported as pilot from November 21 to November 30, 1863. He is reported by that officer in same capacity from December 1, 1863, until February 29, 1864, at \$150 per month.

The name of Robert Smalls is then reported by Captain Kelly as captain of the steamer Planter, at \$150 per month, from March 1, 1864, until May 15, 1864, when transferred to the quartermaster in Philadelphia.

He is reported by Capts. C. D. Schmidt, G. R. Orme, W. W. Van Ness, and John R. Jennings, assistant quartermasters at Philadelphia, as captain of the Planter, at \$150 per month from June 20, 1864, to December 16, 1864, when transferred to Capt. J. L. Kelly, assistant quartermaster, Hilton Head, S. C., by whom he is reported to January 31, 1865.

From February 1, 1865, he is reported as a "contractor, victualing and manning the steamer Planter."

I respectfully inclose herewith copy of a letter, dated September 10, 1862, from Capt. J. J. Elwell, chief quartermaster, Department of the South, in relation to the capture of the steamer Planter, which is the only one found on file in this office on the subject.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ALEX. J. PERRY,
Deputy Quartermaster-General, U. S. A.,
Acting Quartermaster-General.

Hon. ROBERT SMALLS,
Member of Congress, Washington, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF QUARTERMASTER,
Hilton Head, S. C., September 10, 1862.

GENERAL: I have this day taken a transfer of the small steamer Planter, of the Navy, This is the Confederate steamer which Robert Smalls, a contraband, brought out of Charleston on the 13th of May last. The Navy Department, through Rear-Admiral DuPont, transfers her, and I receipt for her just as she was received from Charleston. Her machinery is not in very good order, and will require some repairs, &c.; but this I can have done here. She will be of much service to us, as we have comparatively no vessels of light draft. I shall have her employed at Fort Pulaski, where I am obliged to keep a steamer.

Please find inclosed a copy of the letter of Rear-Admiral Dupont to General Brannan in regard to the matter.

I am, general, very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

J. J. ELWELL,
Captain and Assistant Quartermaster.

J. G. CHANDLER,
Deputy Quartermaster-General, U. S. A.

Personally appeared before me Charles H. Campbell, of the city, county, and State of New York, who, being by me duly sworn according to law, deposes and says as follows:

That during the year 1862, and from that time up to and including the year 1866, he was doing service in the Department of the South, headquarters at Hilton Head, S. C.; that he knows Hon. Robert Smalls, of Beaufort, S. C.; that he was present when the steamer Planter, of the city of Charleston, came into Hilton Head on or about the 13th of May, 1862; that he went on board the Planter and made a personal examination of her condition, and found she was built of live oak and red cedar, and a first-class coastwise steamer, well furnished and complete in every respect; that he was, and is, well acquainted with the value of steamers, and has been engaged in the business of steamboating, both as captain and owner, for the last fifteen years; that the steamer Planter was fully worth, at the time she came into Hilton Head, the sum of \$60,000 in cash for the boat alone; that the United States Government was paying at that time for steamers of her class \$400 per day under a charter-party agreement with the chief quartermaster at that place, the government finding both wood and coal; that he chartered to the United States Government at or about that time the steamer Geo. Washington for \$350 per day, which was only about half the size of

the Planter, and not more than half her value; that he executed seven charters for steamers with the government, and also had a valuation set on them in case of loss, and the above statement is made in accordance with the prices paid by the government at Hilton Head and elsewhere during the time the Planter was in the service; that, at the close of the war, and while the Planter was laying up in Charleston and in a very bad condition from the nature of her past services, I was commissioned by her former owner, Captain Ferguson, to purchase the Planter from the government for the sum of \$25,000, which sum I did offer, and the same was refused on the part of the Government of the United States; that the steamer Planter was an extra strong built boat, her frame was live oak and red cedar, and built as strong as possible; she was built expressly for the coastwise trade, and she is running out of the city of Charleston to-day, and is considered by steamboat men one of the strongest and best built steamboats in the South.

CHAS. H. CAMPBELL.

Subscribed and sworn to before me the 23d day of March, 1876.

[OFFICIAL SEAL.]

JAS. A. TAIT,
Notary Public.

Personally appeared before me, a notary public, E. M. Baldwin, of the city of Washington, District of Columbia, who was by me duly sworn according to law, deposes and says:

That during the year A. D. 1862 and afterwards was doing service for the Navy Department at Hilton Head, S. C., in the South Atlantic blockading squadron; that he was captain of the steam-tug Mercury, and was one of the first persons that boarded the Planter at Hilton Head on the 13th day of May, A. D. 1862.

That he has been for years, and is now, engaged in the steamboat business as an officer and owner, and is familiar with the prices paid for charters by the quartermaster at Hilton Head, and the value of steamboats generally at that time and since; that he examined the Planter when she came into said harbor at Hilton Head, and found her a first-class steamboat, built of live oak and red cedar, and her outfit and findings complete in every particular; that she could have been readily sold at the time she arrived at Hilton Head for \$75,000 in cash for the steamboat alone, or could have been chartered to the government for \$400 per day, which at that rate would have paid the purchase money at the price aforesaid in less than one year, and would have left a large surplus to the purchaser; that she was considered by both the officers of the Army and Navy, on account of her light draft and great strength, by far the best steamer for that coast service in the Department of the South.

E. M. BALDWIN.

Sworn to before me and subscribed by him in my presence this 25th day of March, A. D. 1876.

[OFFICIAL SEAL.]

JAS. A. TAIT,
Notary Public.

Exhibit of the estimated values of certain ordnance and ordnance stores on board the Rebel steamer Planter, which came out of Charleston, S. C., to the United States blockading fleet on the 15th day of May, 1862.

| Articles of ordnance and ordnance stores on board the Planter. | Estimated under the supposition that the guns and projectiles of value to the United States only as old material, the powder being considered as useful for saluting. | Estimated supposing that all the articles are valued at prices paid before the war, except the Brooks rifle and its projectiles, which are given at war prices. | Estimated supposing that all the articles are valued by the United States at war prices. |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1 long 32-pounder of 72,000 lbs. | At $\frac{1}{2}$ ct. per lb ... \$54 00 | At 5 $\frac{1}{10}$ cts. per lb. \$403 20 | At 10 cts. per lb. \$720 00 |
| 1 short 32-pounder of 3,300 lbs. | At $\frac{1}{2}$ ct. per lb ... 24 75 | At 5 $\frac{1}{10}$ cts. per lb. 222 00 | At 9 cts. per lb.. 297 00 |
| 1 short 24-pounder of 1,476 lbs. | At $\frac{1}{2}$ ct. per lb... 11 07 | At 6 $\frac{1}{10}$ cts. per lb 82 66 | At 9 cts. per lb.. 132 84 |
| 2 8-inch Columblads of 9,240 lbs. each. | At $\frac{1}{2}$ ct. per lb... 138 60 | At 5 $\frac{1}{10}$ cts. per lb 1,027 49 | At 11 cts. per lb. 2,032 80 |
| 1 7-inch rifle of 10,500 lbs. | At $\frac{1}{2}$ ct. per lb... 78 75 | At 12 cts. per lb. 1,260 00 | At 12 cts. per lb. 1,260 00 |
| 200 32-pounder shot.. | At 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per lb. 113 00 | At 66 cts. each .. 132 00 | At \$1 each..... 200 00 |
| 150 8 inch 32-pounder shot. | At 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per lb. 170 62 | At 83 cts. each .. 124 50 | At \$1.25 each.... 187 50 |
| 200 32-pounder shell, loaded and fuze. | At 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per lb. 78 75 | At \$1.80 each.... 360 00 | At \$2.50 each ... 502 00 |
| 100 24-pounder shell, loaded and fuze. | At 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per lb. 29 26 | At \$1.40 each.... 140 00 | At \$2 each 200 00 |
| 200 7-inch rifle shell, loaded and fuze. | At 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per lb. 315 00 | At \$6 each 1,200 00 | At \$6 each 1,200 00 |
| 150 8-inch rifle shell, loaded and fuze. | At 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cts. per lb. 131 00 | At \$2.33 each.... 349 50 | At \$3.30 each.... 508 00 |
| 400 32-p'nder charges, 3 lbs. each, 3,200 lbs. | At 22 cts. per lb. 704 00 | At 18 cts. per lb. 576 00 | At 30 cts. per lb. 960 00 |
| 100 24-p'nder charges, 2 lbs. each, 200 lbs. | At 22 cts. per lb. 44 00 | At 18 cts. per lb 36 00 | At 30 cts. per lb. 60 00 |
| 200 7-in. rifle charges, 10 lbs. each, 2,000 lbs. | At 22 cts. per lb 440 00 | At 18 cts. per lb. 360 00 | At 30 cts. per lb. 600 00 |
| 300 8-inch Columblan charges, 10 pounds each, 3,000 lbs. | At 22 cts. per lb. 660 00 | At 18 cts. per lb 540 00 | At 30 cts. per lb 900 00 |
| 1 32-p'nder carriage, Army pattern, | At 22 cts. per lb 40 80 | At 18 cts. per lb. 330 00 | 500 00 |
| 1 24-p'nder carriage, Army pattern. | At 22 cts. per lb. 10 00 | 20 00 | 30 00 |
| Total | 3,043 05 | 7,163 35 | 10,290 60 |

