"The leadsman on board a blockade runner occupied a very responsible position; he had to have great physical endurance and courage. When shoal water was reached, the safety of the ship and the lives of all on board depended upon his skill and faithfulness. Were he disposed to be treacherous, he could, by false soundings, put the ship in the hands of the enemy or run her in the breakers and endanger the lives of all.

"My leadsman was a slave owned by myself. On the last trip of the *Atalanta,* while under fire, the ship going very fast toward shoal water, I thought possibly he might get rattled, and to test him I said: 'Irwin, you can't get correct soundings, the ship is going too fast, I'll slow her down for you.' He answered: 'This is no time to slow down, sir, you let her go, I'll give you the bottom'; and he did, he being a leadsman without a peer. I have had him in the chains for hours in cold winter weather, with the spray flying over him cold enough to freeze the marrow in his bones, the ship often in very shoal water, frequently but a foot to spare under her, and sometimes not that. Yet I never knew him to make a mistake or give an incorrect cast of the lead. He is the man to whom, when pointing to the island of New Providence, I said: 'Every man on that island is as free as I am, so will you be when we get there.' He answered: 'I did not want to come here to be free, I could have gone to the Yankees long ago if I had wished.' And afterwards, when the war was over, I said to him: 'I am going to England, perhaps never to see Savannah again, you had better go home.' His answer was: 'I can not go without you'; and he did not. The feeling that existed between us can only be understood by Southern men; by a Northern man, never.

"My brave old quartermaster, William Cuthbert, who had been with me in the chances and changes of blockade running, always took his place at the wheel on trying occasions. He had the courage necessary to steer a ship without flinching through the whole United States fleet. He was a sailor, every inch of him. He it was who, when I heard a crash and asked him if he was hurt, answered: 'We are all right, sir, but I do not know how much wheel there is left, and the compass is gone; give me a star to steer by.' A shot fired by a ship astern of us had passed the two men at the wheel, taken out two spokes, destroyed the compass, and buried itself in the deck. He was steering the ship as though nothing unusual had happened.

"While in command of the *Armstrong,* a very poorly built, light draft, side-wheel ship, on a trip from Nassau to Wilmington, having experienced very heavy weather, our steam-pipe was injured to such an extent that we found it impossible to make more than three miles an hour. At that rate of speed we could not reach the entrance to Wilmington before daylight, and to remain at sea would place us at the mercy of the cruisers, then as thick as bees. So we shaped our course to make the land in the neighborhood of Georgetown, S. C.

"When daylight broke, the weather bitterly cold, we found ourselves among three of the enemy's ships lying at anchor near the entrance to Georgetown, the farthest not more than two miles from us. We, of course, ran away from them as fast as our crippled condition would allow, expecting to be chased and captured in short order; but, to our surprise and delight, they remained quietly at anchor, and we continued on our course and, when far enough to feel safe, circled around them and came to anchor ourselves under the beach near Little River Inlet, about twenty miles from the mouth of the Cape Fear. This remarkable luck can only be accounted for by the extreme cold, which must have prevented the Yankee ships from keeping a proper lookout.

"After making all preparations for setting fire to the ship and landing the people if we should be discovered by the Federals, we blew off our steam and proceeded to make temporary repairs to the steam-pipe.

"Before coming to anchor my attention was attracted to a party of six men on shore making signals to us. I sent a boat and brought off the men, who proved to be Federal prisoners escaped from Florence, S. C., and who, after many days of suffering in a strange country, had succeeded in reaching the coast, only to find themselves prisoners on board a blockade runner instead of one of Uncle Sam's gunboats, which they fondly imagined us to be. One poor fellow remarked: 'I believe the dogs would catch a fellow in this country; this is the third time I have escaped, only to be recaptured each time.'

"I had on board at this time seven Confederates who had escaped from Johnson's Island, and whom it was my good fortune to come across in Halifax, N. S. Having been on board ship some time, they were anxious to get on shore, so I landed and found that we had anchored in the neighborhood of some salt works, which were quite numerous on this coast, and whose fires at night frequently served us in lieu of lighthouses.