The *Raleigh,* a vessel of light construction, was built later at the wharf near the foot of Church Street; and after being launched was completed at Cassidy's shipyard. Her construction and armament were similar to that of the *North Carolina,* but she was covered with heavy iron plates of two thicknesses running fore and aft and athwart ship.

The star of the Confederacy was waning in the spring of 1864; a depreciated currency and the scant supply of provisions and clothing had sent prices almost beyond the reach of people of moderate means. In Richmond, meal was $10 per bushel; butter, $5 per pound; sugar, $12 per pound; bacon, hog round, $4 per pound; brogan shoes, $25 per pair; felt hats, $150; cotton cloth, $30 per yard; and it was a saying in the Capital of the Confederacy, that the money had to be carried in the market basket and the marketing brought home in the pocketbook.

Early in May the condition of the commissariat was alarming; but a few days' rations were left for Lee's army, and only the timely arrival of the blockade runner *Banshee* with provisions saved the troops from suffering.

Wilmington was the only port left to the blockade runners, and the blockade of the mouths of the Cape Fear had become dangerously stringent. Some twenty steamers guarded the two inlets, besides two outer lines of fast cruisers between this city and the friendly ports of Nassau and the Bermudas. On dark nights, armed launches were sent into the bar to report outgoing steamers by firing rockets in the direction taken by them. The ceaseless vigilance of the forts could scarcely make an exit for friendly vessels even comparatively free from danger. An hour after dark, Fort Fisher, having trained its sea-face guns upon the bar, would ricochet its Columbiad shot and shell upon that point, so as to frighten off the launches; and then the blockade runners would venture out and take their chances of running the gauntlet of the blockading fleet.

In this emergency, Commodore Lynch, commanding the Confederate fleet in the Cape Fear River, determined to raise the blockade of New Inlet, the favorite entrance of the blockade runners.

The ironclad ram *Raleigh,* already described, Lieut. J. Pembroke Jones commanding, and two small wooden gunboats, *Yadkin* and *Equator,* were chosen for the purpose. Our late townsman, Capt. E. W. Manning, chief engineer of the station, and the late Engineer Smith, Confederate States Navy, of Fayetteville, were in charge of the machinery of the *Raleigh.* On the afternoon of May 6, 1864, the commodore visited Fort Fisher, to take a reconnaissance and obtain as far as practicable the coöperation of the fort. Seven vessels were at anchorage at sundown: the *Tuscarora, Britannia, Nansemond, Howquah, Mount Vernon, Kansas,* and *Niphon.* He arranged a distinguishing signal for his vessels—a red light above a white one—so that they would not be fired upon by the fort.



Fort Fisher had its sea-face guns manned after dark by experienced artillerists, and about eight o'clock the range lights were set on the mound and the Confederate flotilla put to sea. The commander of the fort, Col. William Lamb, with some of his officers, repaired to the ramparts opposite the bar and awaited the result.

Within thirty minutes after the vessels had disappeared from the vision of the anxious garrison, a few shots were heard from seaward, and some Coston blue lights were seen in the offing; then all was dark as Erebus and silent as the grave. Speculation was rife among the Confederates who manned the guns. Had the foe been dispersed or destroyed? Why were no rockets sent up to announce a victory, to cheer the thousand hearts which beat with anxious hope within Fort Fisher? A long night of waiting was spent without any sign save the occasional twinkle of a distant light at sea. The gunners were relieved at midnight, but all continued dark and silent.

At last day dawned, the breakers on the bar became visible, the *Raleigh* and her consorts appeared, and then outside of them, at long range, the enemy's fleet. Shots were exchanged between the combatants after daylight; one of the Federal vessels fired rapidly at the *Raleigh,* approaching as she fired, but, receiving a shot from the ironclad through her smokestack, withdrew to a safer distance.

Then the seven blockaders came closer to the Confederate fleet, showing fight, and probably with the intention of trying to run the *Raleigh* down; but that vessel and her consorts headed for the fort and steamed slowly in, the enemy prudently keeping beyond range of the guns of Fort Fisher. It was a great disappointment that the garrison saw the *Raleigh, Yadkin,* and *Equator* come over the bar and under the guns of the fort, leaving the blockading squadron apparently unharmed.

The *Yadkin* and *Equator* came safely into the river, but the *Raleigh,* after passing the mound and rounding Confederate