



*From Painting by Warren Sheppard*

**Wanderer**

*Making the Middle Passage*

# The Rudder

Edited by THOMAS FLEMING DAY

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN YACHTS

THE SLAVE YACHT WANDERER

Winfield M. Thompson

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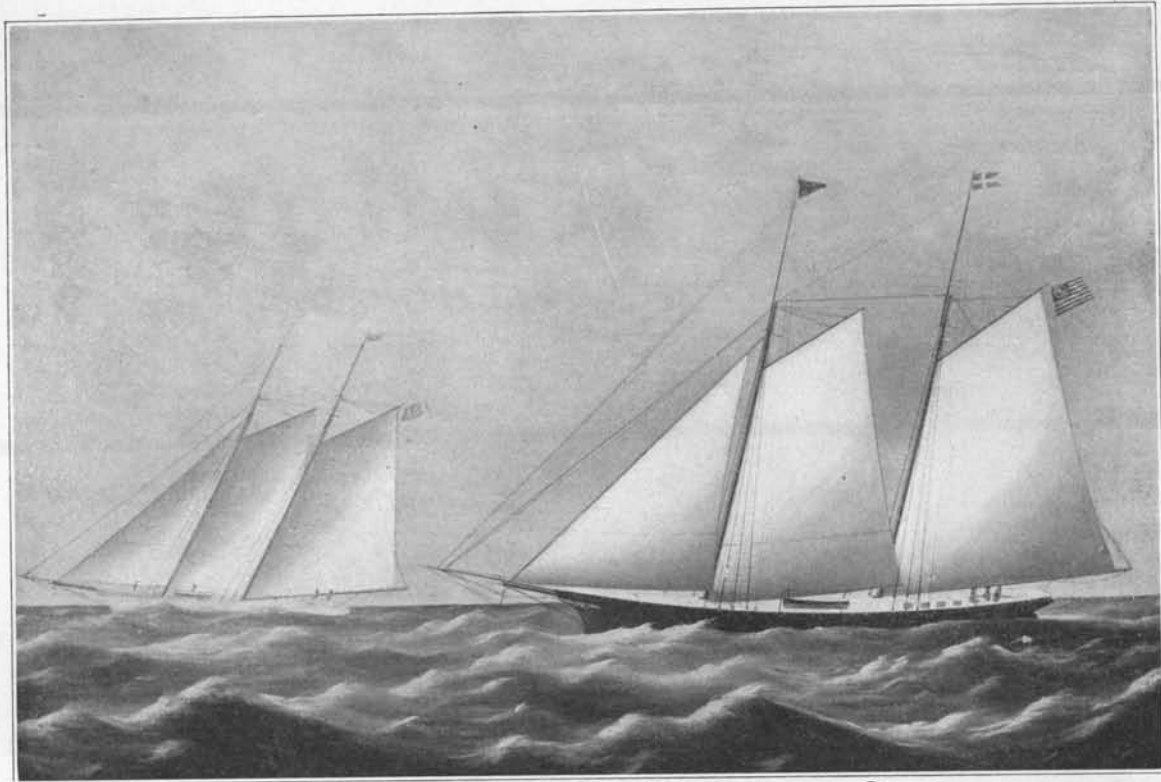
**I**N the life of a vessel, as in the life of a man or a woman, it sometimes happens that the most interesting passages leave but a vague record. Many of us have looked upon an old craft with regret that she could not impart to us her memoirs. We are sure she would be truthful in the relation, for vessels, being merely the passive instruments by which men work out their pleasures or their fortunes, can in themselves do no harm, and rarely deserve an evil name. Yet we think of them as things imbued with life and sense, and bear ourselves toward them as if they were a good part human. If their careers reflect glory for the men who have sailed in them, we call them "famous." If the record is one of secret voyages and midnight landings, of defiance to law and human rights, of violence and death, we say "notorious." In deference to the different aspect of things when observed from different points of view, it is perhaps well, if we would consider calmly and judicially the story of any vessel, to avoid the use of extreme adjectives in describing her, and hold to some safe and equitable descriptive term, such as "historic."

There are many vessels especially worthy of note in the large pleasure fleet that has had its day in American yachting and passed on to the obliterating sands that encircle "life's unresting sea." Many have passed their allotted period of years in the quiet and uneventful pursuits of pleasure sailing. Others have raced for glory and trophies, or sailed foreign seas for the edification of far, and, in our insular esteem, less favored peoples. Yet others, the rare few, have been diverted from their origi-

nal uses, and have made history in the more serious affairs of men. Such a one it is we treat of here—the schooner *Wanderer*, built as a yacht, but destined to achieve distinction from the common run as a vessel of fortune. Although looting of cargoes, scuttling of ships and marooning of men were not among the acts of the worthies who sailed on her, the business in which she fixed public attention was not entirely lacking the spirit which moved those merry citizens of the world called buccaneers, who two centuries before her time turned many an honest penny on the Spanish main—for she was, in brief, primarily a slaver, and incidentally, toward the end of her career, a potential pirate. Short though the *Wanderer's* record as a marine outlaw proved to be—it covered less than three years—it had some dark chapters, in no sense lightened or redeemed by the fact that her owners were members of refined families prominent in the South. Suffering and sacrifice of human life were common enough in the scenes enacted on her decks and under her hatches during one of those years. Nor was there absence of carousing, love-making and the burning of powder, needful to give a spice of comedy to the play. Deception and cunning were the weapons most commonly employed to secure her free passage, and from her truck there flew on occasion no less important a symbol of respectability and pleasure than the burgee of the New York Yacht Club.

Few narratives of fiction could trick out a yacht with a more striking story than that of the *Wanderer*, as revealed by patient search in the realm of facts. It is a story not easily learned. Old newspaper cuttings, records of courts, official documents of various departments of the government, custom house entries, and stray fragments of information about the vessel gleaned here and there supply the synopsis of it, and occasionally an illuminating bit of color. The untold incidents are such as only the men who figured in them could portray, and

## THE RUDDER



The Wanderer (right)

*From a Painting, owned by her first sailing master, Thos. B. Hawkins*

most of these men have passed on. The narrative given here is therefore a faithful assembling of recorded facts, with as little of the embroidery of fancy as may be.

It should be borne in mind in reading the story of the Wanderer that the incidents described took place at a time when society in the South was greatly agitated over the slavery question, and individuals assumed attitudes toward the national government, in matters pertaining to slavery, that in a sounder condition of the body politic would not have been necessary. It is not within the premise or desires of the present writer to pass on the ethics involved in the acts of the men who controlled the Wanderer. In justice to the better element of slave-holders in the South it should be stated that few of them had ever identified themselves with the actual importation of blacks, preferring to leave the business to the many unprincipled sea-rovers ready to engage in it. The records show that most of the slave traders were Northern men, until the fifties, when renewed impetus was given the traffic by a band of so-called Southern gentlemen, who claimed the trade to be within their constitutional rights, and professed, on entering it, a loftier purpose than some of them felt. It was in the service of this company of gentlemanly adventurers and their followers that the Wanderer passed through the scenes and incidents described in this narrative.

## II.

Before beginning the story of the slave-yacht Wanderer, it may be well to refresh our minds regarding the fact that there have been two large American schooner yachts of that name. The second is yet in existence, and is often referred to as "the slave-yacht" Wanderer. In fact, when the leader of a religious sect recently acquired her for use as a gospel ship, a valuable, though intangible asset believed to go with her was her black record as a slaver. Without desiring to rob the sky-pilot of any

of his moral effect when saving souls on his gospel ship, we must record that she never was a slaver, for the slave-trade was dead ten years before she was laid down.

The original Wanderer was built in the winter of 1856-7, at the village of Setauket, on the harbor of Port Jefferson, Long Island Sound. Her owner was Colonel John D. Johnson, a resident of Louisiana, who had a summer place near Islip, on the south side of the island.

Colonel Johnson and several brothers had gained wealth as sugar planters on the lower Mississippi. Originally they had been New Orleans pilots. Though that period of their lives was far behind them in the fifties, a habit of sea-going remained, which they indulged by spending their summers in the North, and engaging in yachting in the neighborhood of New York. Colonel Johnson was an active member of the New York Yacht Club, and before ordering the Wanderer had owned the sloop Rosalie, after her the schooner Starlight, 38 tons, and later the sloop Irene, which was one of the best medium-sized single-stick racers in the club's early fleets. At the time Colonel Johnson owned the Starlight a brother, Edwin A. Johnson, had a schooner called the Twilight, 71 tons. Another brother, Bradish Johnson, was also well known in New York, but does not appear to have owned any vessels of note. The same is true of yet another of the brothers, Theodore, who was, like the others, a wealthy sugar-planter.

The Johnson plantations, which are situated, about fifty miles below New Orleans, are historic places, and among the richest in Louisiana. The waters of the river lies before them, and those of the Gulf come in very close behind. The situation is an ideal one for the winter residents of a wealthy man with a love for the sea, and probably a desire to realize a dream of seeing a noble vessel swing to anchor off his estate led Colonel Johnson to plan a cruising schooner that should be larger, faster and



more elegant than any other of her time on this side of the Atlantic. At that period it was not a hard task to improve on the schooners flying our flag, for no especially fast



W. J. Rowland, Builder

American vessel had been built since the *America*, launched six years before. The *Wanderer's* design was entrusted to W. J. Rowland, of Setauket, builder of *Irene*, and other successful yachts. Captain Thomas B. Hawkins, of Port Jefferson, the owner's sailing-master and right-hand man, superintended the yacht's construction. We may readily believe Port Jefferson manifested a proper sense of civic pride in the building of this fine yacht within its borders. Many were the sloops and schooners that passed in and out of its harbor, and its inhabitants held pronounced ideas on the merits of vessels, as became a sea-faring and ship-building community. By the time the *Wanderer* was ready for launching her points had been fully discussed, and Port Jefferson went on record, through the words of various citizens, that a finer vessel had never been built on the Sound. Her model was turned for speed and sea-going ability. Her principal dimensions (for which I am indebted to Neils Olsen, the veteran superintendent of the New York Yacht Club), were as follows: Length on keel, 95 feet; length on water line, 98 feet; over all, 114 feet; beam, 26 feet 6 inches; depth of hold, 10 feet 6 inches; draught, 10 feet 6 inches. Her spars were of the following lengths: Mainmast, 84 feet; foremast, 83 feet; main topmast, 35 feet; fore topmast, 34 feet; bowsprit, 17 feet outboard; with jibboom, 36 feet. Her registered tonnage was 123.34, and her club tonnage 243 tons. Her registered number was 26,752, and her code signals J B H K.

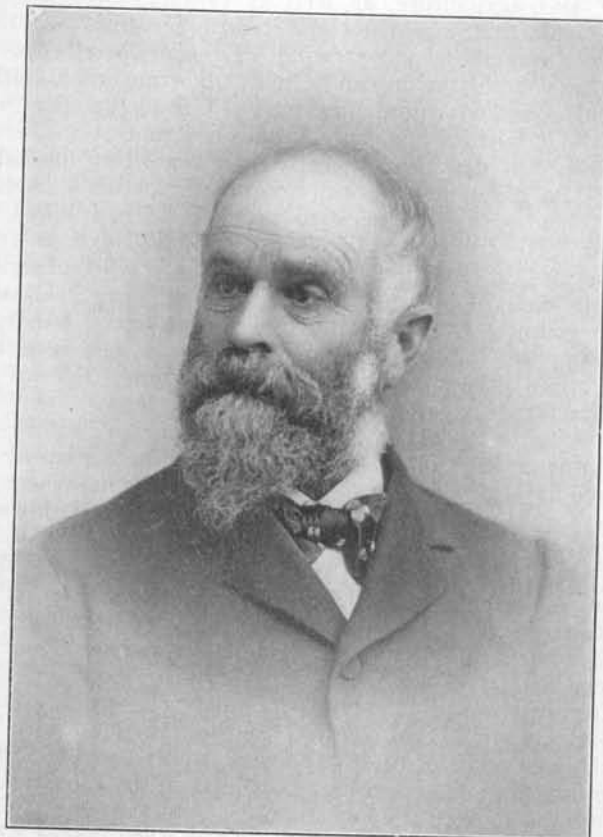
From a contemporaneous newspaper account of the vessel's appearance, we gather the following salient points regarding her model: "She is a beauty, with spacious decks and low bulwarks. She has raised skylights and booby hatches. Her bow is very long and very sharp, with concave lines full three feet deep; that is, a straight line extended from the cut water to the round or curve of the side would measure three feet from its middle to the planking. The curve somewhat resembles a bent bow, or segment of a circle. Her stern is an acute-angled triangle, the taffrail forming the base, and has no knuckles, nor bilging quarter-pieces, so that, by the wind, even when pressed down to her bearings, there is nothing aft to impede her progress. Her sides are boldly

convex, and her run, like her bow, is long and clean. Her masts are beautiful spars, long and stout."

The *Wanderer* was given a large sail-spread, her canvas being designed and made by R. H. Wilson, of Port Jefferson, from whose original drawings the accompanying draft of her sail-plan on a scale of  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch to the foot is taken, through the courtesy of the sail-maker's son and successor in business, F. M. Wilson, of Port Jefferson. The plan shown here was for the first suit of sails made for the yacht. In the winter following her launch Mr. Wilson also made her a complete set of light sails, as well as a large square-sail, that could be set for running free on a long yard on the foremast. There was also a ring-tail in the outfit, intended to increase the area of the mainsail for light-weather sailing. In none of the records of her voyages has any mention been made of this sail, though doubtless it was often used.

On the 19th of June, 1857, the *Wanderer* was launched. She was put off too late to appear at the New York Yacht Club's regatta of that year, which was held June 4, but it is doubtful if her owner would have raced her had she been ready, as her sail-spread was so much greater than that of most of the other schooners in the club she could not have afforded to allow her class the one second per mile, on each square foot excess sail, exacted by the then-existing system of allowances.

After a pleasant summer's sailing, which included accompanying the New York Yacht Club's squadron on its annual cruise, taken that year to New Bedford, Colonel Johnson began preparations for the *Wanderer's*



Captain Thomas B. Hawkins, who Superintended the *Wanderer's* Construction

first long voyage. She was provisioned for a trip south, and in December sailed from New York. A more finely fitted pleasure vessel than she had never sailed out of that

port; and to conform to her owner's ideas of the proprieties when going a-cruising to the coral isles of the Caribbee, she carried two guns on deck (described as "light 6's"), and in an armory beside the main companionway a considerable equipment of light arms, such as rifles, cutlasses and boarding pikes. These weapons were not entirely without value as ornaments, and, as will appear, in time served another purpose as well.

Touching at various points in the Southern states, the *Wanderer* attracted much favorable attention. At Charleston and Savannah she was critically examined by a number of prominent citizens, several of whom entertained Colonel Johnson, and were entertained in turn. At Brunswick were several yachts, and a regatta was arranged to furnish the *Wanderer's* owner an opportunity to show her speed. The visitor, it is easy to believe, won the race, though the reports of the event are not explicit on that point.

Among the persons who saw the *Wanderer* at Savannah, and met her owner socially, was Charles A. L. Lamar. As he will figure conspicuously in this narrative, it may be well to describe him here. He was the son of Gazaway B. Lamar, well known throughout the South (although then a resident of New York), and a nephew of L. Q. C. Lamar, subsequently secretary of the Interior and later justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. In Savannah the Lamars enjoyed the distinction which comes with good family. Socially and politically C. A. L. Lamar was active, and had some influence. He had large, but not especially substantial business interests, in cotton, banking, and agriculture, as well as ventures by sea, of a character that would not stand close scrutiny. In 1858 Lamar was about 35 years old. He was described as of medium build, with sandy hair and mustache, rather florid complexion and blue eyes. This description may not be a faithful one, but if there is doubt as to his appearance at that time, there is none regarding his habits and temperament. He was sanguine, impetuous, choleric and loud-spoken. Quick to quarrel, he had killed his man. He frequently invoked the *duello*, and was accustomed, in settling disputes with persons who subscribed to the code of honor, to send fiery challenges to combat. But young Mr. Lamar was a good host, and it is natural to suppose Colonel Johnson found him no less entertaining than others who had seen the sunny side of his character.

After a pleasant sojourn in Georgian waters the *Wanderer* kept on to Havana, where she remained for some days, proceeding thence to New Orleans, where she lay for a period, after which she was taken down to her owner's estate.

At New Orleans the suit of light sails made by Wilson, already mentioned, were received, for use on the return voyage. To such good advantages were they employed that the *Wanderer* made the run from New Orleans to New York in 12 days, arriving April 11, 1858, after an absence of about 4 months. Her quick passage—which would be counted to the credit of any fast schooner-yacht of to-day—as well as her entire Southern voyage, and the interest she aroused in the ports visited, were the subject of congratulatory comments in the press. After lying four days off the New York Yacht Club's house at Hoboken, with her owner ashore, the *Wanderer* made sail on April 14, and went down the Sound to Port Jefferson. The old town was glad to see her after such a successful voyage. She had been a credit to its reputation.

Not many days passed before Port Jefferson had something new to talk about in connection with its famous yacht. Colonel Johnson had decided to sell her. Presently appeared at Port Jefferson a tall, suave and striking Southerner, by name William C. Corry (pronounced Curry). He was a new species in those parts, and interest in him, tolerably strong on his arrival, doubled when it became known that he had bought the *Wanderer*. It was proper, then to address the newcomer as "Captain" Corry, and this was done with some deference, for the captain had a way of impressing everyone with whom he came in contact that he was a superior sort of person, and nothing if not a gentleman.

Captain Corry had recently become a member of the New York Yacht Club, and when Colonel Johnson's private signal came down from the *Wanderer's* main truck, and Captain Corry's went up, there was no necessity for lowering the club burgee from the fore. The transfer of the *Wanderer* to such a fine gentleman as Captain Corry was a subject for further congratulation of the public by the press. *Porter's Spirit of the Times*, the leading sporting journal of the day in New York, noted the sale of "this celebrated yacht, which has created such a sensation in Southern waters," to "Captain C. W. Corry, of South Carolina, for \$12,000," and continued: "We are delighted to hear that this beautiful craft has fallen into such excellent hands. Captain Corry is a high-toned Southern gentleman, and one of the most liberal patrons of sports, of any and all kinds, in the South. We congratulate him on his purchase, and the public on the fact that the *Wanderer* is in the hands of a gentleman who will maintain her name and fame."

Captain Corry was seen much in New York for several weeks after his purchase of the *Wanderer*. As a Southerner of good social standing he commanded the entree to some of New York's best homes, while he did not fail to frequent the more popular places of public resort, where he told his plans to his drinking companions with charming frankness. Many of these companions were dealers in merchandise, who had found in Captain Corry an excellent customer. He purposed taking a long cruise in his yacht with a party of friends, and considered it wise to provision her well. As the voyage doubtless would take them to countries not blest with civilization, he also considered it expedient to include in her stores such articles of primitive barter as beads, knives, cloth and rum. The goods bought by Captain Corry were sent in divers lots to a pier on the East River, and there were loaded on an old schooner called the *Charter Oak*. When the goods were on board the *Charter Oak* had a full load, and with it she stood up the East River, and entered the Sound.

In the meantime Port Jefferson had taken note of certain circumstances in connection with the *Wanderer* that made unusually fine topics of conversation. Captain Corry had discharged most of her crew of Long Island men, and had sent down from New York a hard-looking lot of foreigners to take their places. He had also ordered some unusual changes made in the interior arrangements of the yacht. Chief among them was the installation of a number of large, galvanized-iron water tanks, between her frames, some under the floors, others in the wings, and two in the fore-castle. This work was in charge of Captain Hawkins, who "went with the vessel" when she changed hands, Captain Corry having expressed a desire to avail himself of the services of so experienced a man in fitting the yacht for her long cruise.

The ancient mariners of Port Jefferson, who watched





Port Jefferson, Where the Wanderer was Fitted Out for Her Slave Voyage

every change on the Wanderer with critical eyes, couldn't just fathom those water tanks. Captain Corry said the tanks were for water ballast, as the iron ballast used on the vessel's first cruise had not worked well. That was very good, said the salt men of Port Jefferson, but if they were for water ballast why not put them all under the floors? If they were to be used for fresh water, as their number and position indicated—and Port Jefferson was not wanting for information as to how to carry water for a long voyage—who was to drink it up, in any common cruise shorter than around the world? The tanks would hold enough water for the use of 500 men for a trip across the Atlantic, at least. Besides, tanks could be refilled at almost any port of call.

Thus it chanced that the seed of suspicion was sown in the mind of Port Jefferson. It grew apace, and conversation about the Wanderer was brought down to stage whispers. Suspicion soon gave way to settled conviction, but as the fitting out of the vessel was a good thing for the town, nobody seemed anxious to bring the situation to a climax until S. S. Norton, Surveyor of the Port, decided when the Charter Oak was reported off the town, loaded to the scuppers with boxes and bales and barrels for the Wanderer, to say nothing of a few more water tanks, that the time had come for conveying some information to the government regarding the shady character of the work on the Wanderer.

So Mr. Norton put on his best clothes, slicked up his beaver, and journeyed to New York. Straight to the Federal offices he went, and there imparted his opinions to Isaiah Rynders, United States Marshal. They were, in short, that the Wanderer was being fitted out for the slave trade. The intelligence put the Marshal's office into a delightful state of excitement. Slavers had been altogether too active in eluding the officers of the law, and here was an expedition that could be nipped in the bud!

The steam revenue cutter Harriet Lane lay at the Battery. She was new, fast, and in charge of an experienced man, Captain Faunce—just the vessel, in fact, for seizing a slaver. To the Harriet Lane, therefore, betook themselves Marshal Rynders and Surveyor Norton, and away steamed the cutter down the Sound. Next morning at daylight was decided on as the best time for the capture, as the Wanderer probably would not attempt to leave the harbor before then. There was a light breeze going in the early morning, and as the cutter passed down the Sound a schooner was observed over under the Connecticut shore, holding uncommonly close to the land. The cutter ran over and brought her to with a hail. It was the faithful Charter Oak, still loaded with provisions. She had appeared to avoid the hail, but her captain cheerfully explained that he had been hugging the shore to hold a better breeze.

A line was passed aboard the Charter Oak, and she was towed across the Sound in the direction of Port Jefferson. Off Old Field Point the Wanderer was sighted, with all sail set, standing out into the Sound. This confirmed the suspicions of the men on the Harriet Lane, and it seemed certain to them the suspected slaver was trying to escape. When hailed the Wanderer kept her course, but a second hail brought her into the wind. A few words of explanation to Captain Corry, who was on the yacht's quarter deck, were sufficient to make clear the errand of the cutter. Captain Corry demanded, with furious words, across the bit of water between the two vessels, by what right Captain Faunce pretended to hold up a gentleman's yacht.

"The government will find it has waked up the wrong passenger," said he, "and somebody should smart for it, or his name was not Corry."

But Captain Faunce was unmoved, and a line was passed to the Wanderer. Her sails were lowered, and she

fell in behind the cutter, which, now having the yacht and her tender, started back for New York. It was late when the city was reached and the cutter and her prizes came to anchor. The *New York Herald* was the only paper to have an account of the affair next day. The persons named as being on board the *Wanderer* at the time of her detention were: Captain William C. Corry, owner, described as a member of one of the first families of South Carolina, "and said to be immensely rich;" Captain T. B. Hawkins, described as the yacht's builder; Mr. N. C. Trowbridge, of New Orleans, and Captain Egbert Farnum, "an overland rider, well known in Texas, and late of Nicaragua," friends of Captain Corry; Captain V. V. Brooks, "alias Seth Briggs," sailing master; three American, and eight foreign seamen.

The day after the *Wanderer's* detention Captain Corry received Marshal Rynders, when he came on board accompanied by Marshal Morris O'Keefe, of Port Jefferson, as if both had been distinguished guests whom he was proud to honor. He put them quickly at their ease, and conversed with them freely and genially, although he assured them that he had been greatly annoyed by the incident, and purposed having Norton discharged, and sued afterwards for heavy damages. It was really absurd, said he, to think of the *Wanderer* as a slaver. She was entirely unsuited to the slave trade, with her expensive fittings and limited room. She "wouldn't carry ten niggers," and anybody could see it. The gentlemen could observe, by looking her over—he would be glad to show them through her—that she was a yacht from stem to stern, and no changes had been made in her except in the matter of tanks, which were needed for water ballast, and additional fresh water for a long cruise, as the captain and his friends would put no limit on the length of their voyage. They might be gone a year, two years or three years, as fancy should dictate, for none of them was tied down to the routine of business.

Captain Corry took the marshals still further into his confidence, and told them his reasons for buying the *Wanderer*. He had seen her when Colonel Johnson had her South, had admired her for a gallant craft, and had persuaded Colonel Johnson to sell her at the end of his cruise. This the colonel had agreed to do because of his desire to buy a steamer.

As to sending the provisions into the Sound by lighter, and all that, Captain Corry felt he could give the gentlemen a very reasonable explanation. He had merely decided to take on the stores at Port Jefferson because told that his yacht when laden with stores could not pass out over the bar at New York without risk of striking. He had decided to take no risks, and besides, it was easier to collect the stores on a lighter and put them all aboard the yacht at one time; then it would be done with. When they were on board he had contemplated going out of the Sound at the eastern end, after clearing for Charleston, his home. But on learning that there had been a question raised as to the *Wanderer's* character, he had felt it his duty to proceed at once to New York with the yacht and the lighter, to disarm suspicion, even though such suspicion was grossly unjust. He was, in fact, on his way to New York with both vessels when met by the *Harriet Lane*.

Thus discoursed Captain Corry to the attentive marshals, who saw nothing illogical in his remarks, and entered into a state of beautiful sympathy with him, as a misrepresented and abused man.

Such a charming gentleman on his own yacht a slaver? There was a mistake somewhere. Norton had been too

blanked suspicious! So when the marshals came ashore from the *Wanderer*, O'Keefe was free to declare to the *Herald* reporter that the seizure was ridiculous, and "the



S. S. Norton, Surveyor at Port Jefferson

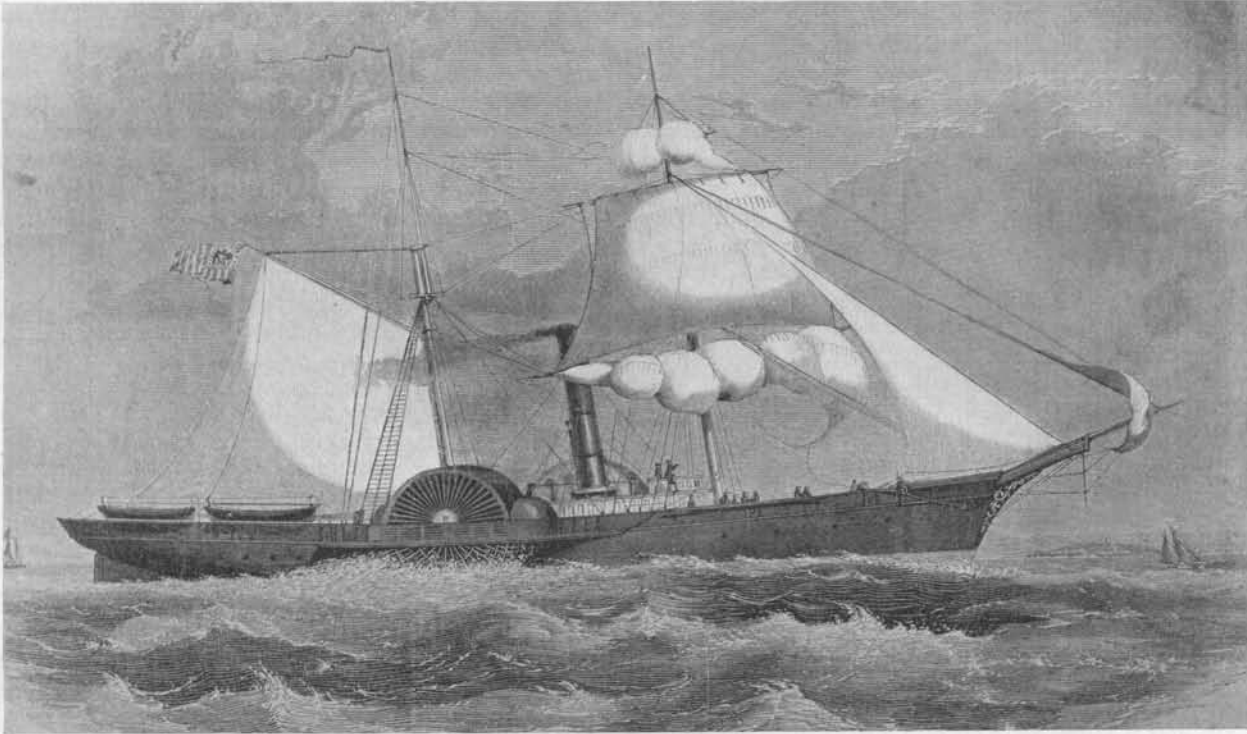
whole thing a fizzle." Within a week the *Herald* scouted editorially the idea of the vessel being intended for a slaver, and rebuked Marshal Rynders for his "absurd" seizure of a gentleman's private yacht. Marshal Rynders was humbled to the dust, while no one could be found so poor as to do the suspicious surveyor of Port Jefferson reverence. The case against the *Wanderer* was quietly dropped, and one fine day she slipped out of port, with her provisions aboard, and plenty of water under her keel as she went over the bar. She had cleared in due form at the custom house, for Charleston. Very little was said of her departure in the newspapers, which appeared satisfied that a grave mistake had been made by the government's blundering officials.

If there was anyone connected with the case unconvinced that Captain Corry had suffered a moral injury, we may assume that man was the surveyor of Port Jefferson. When he went back home to think it over, his character must have undergone a sudden change if he did not hold to the opinion that the New York people had been cleverly hoodwinked.

### III.

At Charleston, where the *Wanderer* arrived in due time, no secret was made among the friends of Captain Corry, of the fact that she was intended for "the trade." The *Wanderer's* commander lived on a plantation on the North Edisto River, about 20 miles south of Charleston as the bird flies. He was a person of influence in the country round, was in the prime of life, being about 40, and bore the proper hall-mark as to family. He was known to be associated, socially and in business ventures, with a smart set of Southern gentlemen, of which C. A. L. Lamar, of Savannah was a shining light. It soon became common information among Captain Corry's admirers that Mr. Lamar was largely interested in the purchase of the *Wanderer* and the plans for her proposed "cruise." If proof of this were wanting when, not long after this, the attention of the government was again attracted to the yacht's movements, it was subsequently supplied by declarations of Mr. Lamar himself, and by copies of his business letters of that period, curiously brought to light a few





The Revenue Cutter Harriet Lane, Which Seized the Wanderer in Long Island Sound

From Harpers' Weekly

years ago. Imprints of these letters were retained by Mr. Lamar in a common letter-copying book, that turned up in the early nineties in a lot of paper-stock intended for a New England mill. The book, happily, was preserved, and its contents were summarized, for the benefit of historians and others, in a carefully prepared article that appeared in the *North American Review* for June, 1896. It is probable that the book was part of certain papers and other effects owned by Mr. Lamar that were secured in the civil war by the navy from a captured blockade runner on which Mr. Lamar had been an important passenger.

Mr. Lamar's letter-book shows that he had been engaged in the slave-trade for a year, at least, before the *Wanderer* was bought. A bark, the *E. A. Rawlins*, and a ship, the *Richard Cobden*, were in his service, and had run cargoes to the neighborhood of New Orleans, where, it appears from Mr. Lamar's correspondence, Mr. Theodore Johnson was agent for the vessels, and Mr. N. C. Trowbridge (of whom we caught a glimpse on the *Wanderer* when she was detained in New York), was active local manager of the business.

A letter from Mr. Lamar to Mr. Trowbridge, under date of November 5, 1857, relates to the captain of one of these vessels, who, it appears, did not follow orders. "He knew the vessel was fitted for nothing else but *the trade*," wrote Mr. Lamar. "Why did he not go to the [West African] Coast? He knew, before he took command, there were armed vessels on the coast, and a number of them. He ought to have known that *he was running no risk*—that the captain and crew are always discharged."

This indicates that Mr. Lamar had some difficulty in finding fearless and trustworthy men to do his work, and explains the selection of a man of Captain Corry's stamp to put through the enterprise with the *Wanderer*. So active had been the operations of Mr. Lamar's vessels that

questions had been raised in Washington about granting them clearance papers. The statutes not only forbade the importation of slaves, but the fitting out and sailing of vessels intended for the slave trade. Throughout the South at that time there were, however, government officers prone to close their eyes to anything they did not wish officially to see, and Mr. Lamar's ships always cleared, with papers in proper form. So when the *Wanderer* was ready for her "cruise," she was cleared from the Charleston custom house as a pleasure yacht bound for Trinidad.

Flying the colors of the New York Yacht Club, with Captain Corry and the adventurous Captain Farnum, "late of Nicaragua," on board, and in charge of a seasoned sailing master, named on the papers as N. D. Brown, but probably the same person who at New York bore the name V. V. Brooks, "alias Seth Briggs," the *Wanderer* slipped gaily out past Sumpter one fine July day, crossed the bar and shaped a course that would bring her into the Old Bahama channel.

She was now a free lance of the sea, fully embarked on an enterprise that might lead to serious consequences to all concerned, as principals in her management, should luck go against her at a critical moment, as it did, for example, against the slaver *Echo*, which was captured shortly after this. The *Echo's* captain unwisely resisted the blue-jackets sent on board his vessel off Charleston, and, perhaps by accident, killed one of them, for which indiscretion he paid with his own life, he being hanged at New York. Captain Corry and his associates were not unmindful of the embarrassing possibilities of their calling, and wisely held to deception and finesse so long as these weapons could be made to serve their purpose; and in such adroit hands they were well-nigh invincible, as will appear presently.

With fair, strong winds the *Wanderer* made short work of the run to Trinidad. Here the ingratiating man-



ners of Captain Corry quickly secured for him properly signed and sealed clearance papers for St. Helena. The voyage thither was without incident. On the lonely rock of exile the arrival of a fine American yacht was a welcome break in life's monotony, and when she was ready to proceed on her cruise of course Her Majesty's officials knew no reason why she should not have clearance papers for the west coast of Africa.

Judging from Captain Corry's habit of gentlemanly romancing, we may believe he avowed, over a friendly glass with the resident officials at St. Helena, that his purpose in visiting the slave coast was to witness, as a mildly interested investigator, some of the features of the trade, of which he had heard much. Perhaps he might be so fortunate as to fall in with a fast-sailing slaver, in which event, his word for it, the Wanderer should show them what fast sailing really was!

Early autumn found the Wanderer at Punta de Lehna, in the neighborhood of the Congo's mouth. England kept a considerable fleet watching the slavers in those days, and the Wanderer fell in with one of them, the Medusa, as soon as she came on the coast. The yacht did not escape careful scrutiny, we may be sure, by the officers of the Medusa. If a distant view of her tall spars and rakish hull roused suspicion, a closer inspection quickly dispelled it. The speedy-looking stranger showed the colors of the only American yacht club known to Englishmen, and it could be seen at a glance that she had all the appointments of a gentleman's private yacht.

No sooner was she comfortably at anchor than the yacht sent a boat to the man-of-war. In it was Captain Corry, whose errand was the paying of his social respects to the commanding officer of the Medusa.

Such a diversion as the arrival of a cultivated and companionable American gentleman was welcomed by the officers on the Medusa, all of whom met Captain Corry, after he and the commander had exchanged compliments. They were duly invited on board the Wanderer, accepted the invitation, and, as Captain Corry's guests, went through the ancient and respected forms of fellowship. They were shown over the yacht, and Captain Corry jokingly asked them "what sort of a slaver they thought she would make?" The laugh went round at the joke—it was really not half bad, said the Sons of the Widow of Windsor—but doubt was expressed as to the Wanderer being large enough to make a successful slaver. All hands agreed, however, that when Captain Corry became a slaver he could have things his own way on the coast, as there was no vessel in those waters to which the Wanderer would not be likely to show a clean pair of heels.

The Wanderer lay near the Medusa for some time, and the officers and Captain Corry came to know each other tolerably well. They went together to such places of interest as there were on shore, and afforded each other as much amusement as possible in the somewhat depressing neighborhood of the Congo. An English yacht happened to be on the coast, and a race was arranged between her and the Wanderer. Everyone enjoyed the match, the Americans especially, as the Wanderer sailed much faster than the English boat, and won handily. The name of the yacht thus vanquished is not preserved in the short account of the stay on the coast given by Captain Farnham to the *Albany Statesman* in the year following the Wanderer's return to the United States.

The farce comedy of yachting was kept up on board the Wanderer until, one dark night, the Medusa was

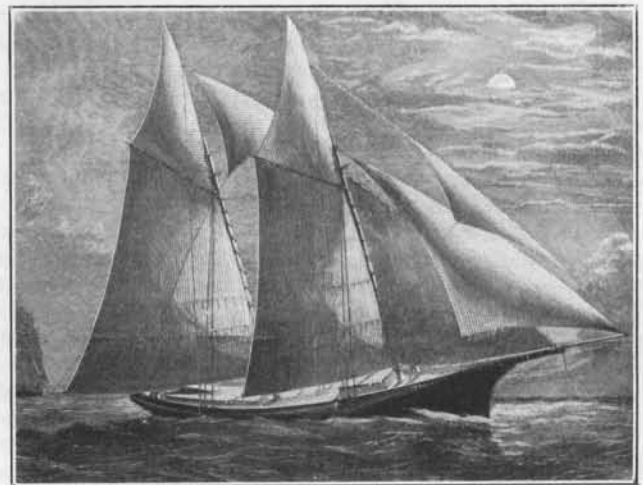
called away by an alarm that resulted in a chase. The absence of the cruiser was a signal for action on board the gallant bark of Captain Corry. The easy ways and gentle habits of men of leisure were put aside by the quality on the Wanderer like finery after a *bal masque*, the curtain was rung down abruptly on comedy, and the stage cleared for scenes of more spirited action. The first work done was to divest the yacht of the interior trappings of her disguise, that must be made to give way to the necessities of "the trade." Partitions must come down, and the main hold of the vessel must be converted into a slave-pen.

But things had been arranged for this change in scene long in advance, and while the vessel was dropping down to a chosen spot on the coast the work was going rapidly forward. At the rendezvous the traders in slaves, with whom Captain Corry had been in almost daily communication since his arrival on the coast, were ready to deliver their human merchandise. Hard, cruel work now followed in getting the miserable herds of negroes from the barracoons to the yacht. Tied together in pairs with thongs of hide they were driven to the beach, and aboard lighters, in which they were carried off to the waiting vessel, riding without lights beyond the surf. Through the hot, dark night the slave-drivers worked silently and swiftly, and before daylight the yacht's "cargo" was all on board. Their number was out of all proportion to the vessel's capacity. They were stowed like herring in the hold, and on deck they were stalled like sheep in a crowded fold. Various statements have been made as to the number put on board, and the most conservative places it at 600.

Thus burdened the Wanderer, before dawn on a clear morning in October of 1858, left the West Coast. The wind was free, and by daylight the yacht was not a speck on the horizon of the traders on the beach.

#### IV.

With the southeast trades clear and strong behind, the Wanderer laid a straight course for the safest of routes home, the middle passage. Here, midway between the two continents, she need have little fear of meeting unwelcome sails, and if she did her speed was great enough to enable her, deep-laden though she was, to get away from any of the heavy old cruisers then looking for slave-vessels.



The Wanderer off the West Coast of Africa

From Harpers' Weekly

But one thought dominated the men in charge of the yacht while making this homeward passage: to crack on sail and get across before the "niggers" died. So they cracked it on in the fair and steady trades until the spars bent and the vessel groaned. The great square-sail was carried constantly, and so was everything else that would draw, including fore and main topsails and main topmast staysail.

At night no lights were shown. Even the light in the binnacle was screened. By day, if a sail were sighted on a course that would bring it within hail, the wheel was put over a couple of spokes, to send her wide. Thus the overburdened yacht ploughed along, day after day, under a blazing sun, and night after night under the jewelled tropic heavens, until the equatorial calm belt was reached. Here the negroes, which had done fairly well thus far, began to show the effects of their confinement. All were stiff from sitting in cramped positions, and all suffered from lack of exercise. Those in the hold gasped in the foul air, and were tortured by vermin, while those on deck were stricken by exposure to the sun, and many of them were half-blinded from salt and the glare of the light on the water. Unclothed, and fed on a meager diet of farina mush, with a few beans, it was but natural that many of them, savages though they were, should have sickened and died.

Before the doldrums were left behind not a day passed in which the sea did not receive several stark, black bodies over the side of the Wanderer. There were no funeral rites, no covering of even a bit of canvas for the dead. Captain Corry and his mates had neither time nor inclination for sentiment over dead "niggers." It was drive her and save the rest, for live blacks were worth money and dead ones nothing.

How many died during the voyage cannot be stated. None of the men engaged in the cruise ever told the details of the homeward trip. It must have been too horrible for even calloused adventurers to dwell on. Only the statement of Mr. Lamar, made in his letters, that he "lost two out of three" before the negroes were finally landed and acclimated, gives an inkling of the conditions that must have existed on board the Wanderer.

As no log of the voyage was kept, its length, in days, cannot be given. It appears to have been an average voyage for the middle passage. However, there is no uncertainty of the date of the vessel's arrival on the coast, as it afterward became a matter of official record. From this source, and from letters, the remainder of the story of this celebrated cruise has been obtained.

On the night of the 28th of November, 1858, the keeper of the light on Cumberland Island, below Brunswick, Ga., while on duty watching the light, received a call from two men, who appeared to be from a vessel. One stated his name was Captain Cole, and that he had a pleasure yacht outside the bar, which he wished piloted to a safe anchorage inside Jekyl Island, where he intended to take on board a party of gentlemen.

The night was overcast, and an easterly wind was rising, as if for a storm. The water runs off shoal a considerable distance at this point, and it is a bad place for a lee shore in a breeze. The lighthouse keeper was willing to lend what aid he could, and went with Captain "Cole" to secure the services of a pilot who lived near.

The pilot responded quickly to the call, and the light-keeper went back to his duty. On the way off to the

vessel the pilot was informed the vessel he was to bring in was the Wanderer, from the Congo with 400 negroes, and that he was dealing with Captain Corry, owner of the vessel. The information was imparted in the Wanderer's small boat, and the pilot had no choice but to go along with Captain Corry.

That the vessel was a slave ship the pilot could soon testify. As he stepped aboard a stench assailed his nostrils. On the deck lay fifty or sixty blacks, nearly all naked, and "huddled together like pigs," to quote the pilot's story, told afterward under oath. The night air was raw, and caused even an acclimated person, properly clothed, to shiver. The negroes it appeared to numb completely, and in their cramped attitudes they appeared to the pilot, called from his warm bed, to be suffering everything but death. Sail was quickly made on the Wanderer and she was headed for the bar. While crossing it one of the negroes died and the body was thrown overboard. As soon as the vessel came to anchor inside Jekyl Island preparations began for landing the cargo.

Captain Corry again went ashore, this time to the Du Bignon estate, on Jekyl Island (now the property of a sportsmen's club), where all arrangements had been made by Mr. Lamar for landing and harboring the blacks.

A tap on a window pane, and a softly spoken "Friends," woke a trustworthy servant asleep in a detached house. A few selected men were next aroused, and ordered to get out a flat-boat that lay in the creek, and bring it to the Wanderer, at anchor near the beach. Before dawn the work of transporting the negroes to the shore began, and by the time pale daylight was streaking the gray eastern sky it was completed. Stiff, numb, sick and naked, the poor wretches presented a sorry spectacle as they reached the land. Some were unable to use their limbs, and others were too weak to stand. Most of them were young men, but there were a few women, and an old man, who acted as interpreter for the others, and seemed a sort of chief among them. To warm this miserable company a great fire was built on the top of the beach, and around this they gathered with every evidence of appreciation. Corn meal was brought from the plantation for their breakfast, and was cooked before the fire in the form of a hot mass, like cattle feed, mixed in an iron trough brought from the schooner.

As soon as the cargo was ashore the Wanderer was taken into the Little Satilla River, which empties into St. Andrew's Sound back of Jekyl Sound, and here she was moored. Her crew, with a few exceptions, were paid off, with the parting injunction to "scatter." Captain Brown, with two men, stood by to keep ship.

Entry was made in due time at the Brunswick custom house of the arrival of the Wanderer, her papers purporting to be a clearance from St. Helena. There were no seals on the papers presented, but the absence of these was explained by the statement that there was no American consul at the place named. There is no reason to believe the vessel called at St. Helena on her way home, for papers could easily be forged on the old forms secured on the outward passage. The ease with which a vessel's papers could thus be made to meet exigencies of "the trade," and the difficulties that sometimes followed such acts, will be shown by certain incidents in the subsequent career of the Wanderer, yet to be related in these columns in some detail.



## AUTHOR'S NOTES

## CAPTAIN FARNUM

THE Captain Farnum mentioned in connection with the cruise of the Wanderer was John Egbert Farnum, well known in New York for his adventurous spirit, who in the civil war gained distinction for bravery as an officer in a New York regiment.

Born in New Jersey, April 1, 1824, he served through the Mexican war as a sergeant major in the 1st Pennsylvania regiment of volunteers, in 1850 took part in the Lopez filibustering expedition to Cuba, and consequently joined the adventurer William Walker in his exploits in Nicaragua, where Walker established himself as dictator, and subsequently was seized and shot. In 1857 Captain Farnum was in New Orleans, after a stay of nearly two years in Nicaragua, and it was here his attention was turned to slave-trading. The next year he joined the Wanderer and went with her to the West Coast as Captain Corry's chief adviser.

At the outbreak of the civil war Farnum assisted General Sickles in recruiting the 70th New York volunteers. He was made a major in the regiment, was in all its early battles and received the rank of brigadier general of volunteers for gallant conduct at Gettysburg, but was soon retired, being incapacitated by wounds. After the war he was an Inspector in the New York Custom House. He died in New York, May 16th, in 1870.

## PORT JEFFERSON ANECDOTES

Some of the older residents of Port Jefferson have a lively remembrance of the Wanderer and tell some interesting and amusing stories about her.

F. M. Wilson, whose father made the yacht's sails, was a lad when the Wanderer was fitted out at Port Jefferson for her slaving voyage. Like the average boys in the town he hung around the yacht a good deal, and when the Charter Oak appeared in the harbor with a load of

provisions for the Wanderer, he satisfied his curiosity concerning the newcomer by rowing off to her, as she lay in the harbor. The men in the Charter Oak entered into conversation with the boy, which led to their asking him to go ashore and borrow a needle and palm for them from his father, as they had torn one of their sails and wished to mend it. Young Wilson performed the service with alacrity, and on returning went on board the Charter Oak to hand over the needle and palm. Here he looked about a bit, but before he could make a close inspection he was invited below. Here, to his surprise, he soon found himself a prisoner, with the slide drawn close and fastened from the outside. He was kept until after dark, when he was permitted to go ashore. That evening the Charter Oak left the harbor, and in the night the Wanderer sailed also. Next morning both were seized by the cutter Harriet Lane.

Captain Hawkins, on the yacht's return from her southern cruise, brought ashore at Port Jefferson various souvenirs of the voyage, among them being a barrel of aguardiente secured at Havana. This he stowed in a building near the water front until an opportune moment should arise for taking it home. After the incident of the Wanderer's detention at New York, Captain Hawkins, who did not sail further with Captain Corry, returned to Port Jefferson and prepared to remove his barrel of liquor from its storage place. A cart was backed up to the door, and the captain took hold of the barrel to roll it out. The barrel did not budge. More strength was exerted, but still it stuck. A search was made for obstructing chocks under it, but none were found. As a last resort the captain got a good strong piece of timber and pried the barrel up. Then he discovered that some rogue had bored up through the floor, tapped the barrel, and drawn off the rum, securing the empty barrel to the floor by means of a plug driven up through the hole.

*(To be continued.)*

