



# SHENANDOAH'S GLOBAL WAR

HOW A CONFEDERATE RAIDER CIRCLED THE EARTH IN A WAR AGAINST UNION  
MERCHANTMEN — A WAR THAT WENT ON EVEN AFTER THE SOUTH SURRENDERED

BY ROBERT MANSTON

Confederate raider CSS *Shenandoah*  
in pursuit of a prize during the Civil War.

**O**n 19 June 1864, after issuing the last-ever formal challenge between warship commanders, Confederate

Captain Rafael Semmes sailed his CSS *Alabama* out of the harbor of St. Mere Eglise in France to face the USS *Kearsage*. Sorely outgunned, *Alabama* quickly went down off the French coast, to become an object of enduring fascination for scuba-equipped historians of a later era, but the warring American factions lost interest in her as soon as she slipped beneath the murky English Channel waves. It was time for the Confederacy to find a replacement for this prolific (64 merchant kills) raider, and for the Union to start watching for that ship.

Confederate commissioners in England came to secret terms with the owners of the *Sea King*. At 1160-tons and 227-feet long, she was a swift vessel and constructed from extra-sturdy teak planking over an iron frame that enabled her to withstand being caught in ice floes as well as to weather cannonades. Built by Alexander Stephen & Sons in Glasgow, Scotland, she had been commissioned by Robertson & Company as a composite passenger/cargo vessel. This induced the Confederate Navy to dispatch this new acquisition to the northern Pacific to hunt the New England whaling fleet, which was supplying the Union with prized whale oil for lighting and to lubricate its vital locomotives.

On 1 October 1864, 23 shipless CSA naval officers who had been awaiting orders in England and France were notified by the senior Confederate naval commander in Europe, Commodore Samuel Barron, to rendezvous in Liverpool and report to Confederate naval agent Capt. James D. Bulloch. Liverpool was the unofficial overseas home of the Confederate Navy and the city provided ships, crews, munitions, and the like. Joined by twelve surviving sailors from *Alabama*, these men were told nothing of their assignment-to-be, but merely directed to the CSA-owned steamer *Laurel*, and to tell any curious bystanders they were being transferred back to America.

Command of the vessel fell to Lt. James Iredell Waddell. A graduate