

**Robert Small Commanding his own Vessel.**

Robert Small, the brave negro who brought the steamer *Planter* out of Charleston harbor some two years since, has since that achievement been almost constantly in the service of the government. He was on board the ill-fated *Keokuk* as pilot in the first attack upon Sumter by Dupont, and has since in the same capacity penetrated nearly every inlet and creek along the entire coast, and been under fire for days, and sometimes weeks at a time. After serving on many vessels he again found himself in the same steamer he brought out of Charleston harbor. A recent letter says:—

A few days since Lieutenant-Colonel Elwell, chief quartermaster of this department, required the services of this vessel where she would be liable to come under the fire of Rebel guns. The captain, a brawny white sailor, refused to go with the vessel. The moment the fact became known at headquarters, Lieutenant-Colonel Elwell, without consultation with any higher authority, issued the following order, which for simple justice to a brave and loyal negro, officially acknowledged, has seldom been equalled in this or any other department. It is unnecessary to say that Robert Small took command of the vessel, and faithfully discharged the duty required of him.

"OFFICE OF CHIEF QUARTERMASTER, )  
PORT ROYAL, S. C., November 26, 1863. )

"Captain A. T. Dunton, Chief Assistant Quartermaster,  
*Folly and Morris Islands:*

"SIR—You will please place Robert Small in charge of the United States transport *Planter* as captain. He brought her out of Charleston harbor more than a year ago, running under the guns of Sumter, Moultrie, and the other defences of that stronghold. He is an excellent pilot, of undoubted bravery, and in every respect worthy of the position. This is due him as a proper recognition of his heroism and services. The present captain is a coward, though a white man. Dismiss him, therefore, and give the steamer to this brave black Saxon.

"Respectfully, your obedient servant,

"J. J. ELWELL,

"Chief Quartermaster's Department South."

It may interest some to know that the above order was immediately approved by General Gillmore.