

## Reminisces of the Confederate States Navy

By Captain C. W. Read.

[The following is one of what we hope to make a series of sketches of the Confederate States navy. We are anxious that no branch of our service shall be neglected, and that those who made the history shall record it.]

When I received intelligence that my native State, Mississippi, had by the sovereign will of her people, severed her connection with the American Union, I was serving as a midshipman on board the United States steam frigate "Powhatan," then stationed at Vera Cruz, Mexico. I immediately tendered my resignation, which was duly forwarded by the Commodore to the Secretary of the Navy at Washington. By the steamer from New Orleans, which arrived at Vera Cruz about the last of February, 1861, I received private advices that my resignation had been accepted, but no official information to that effect reached me. The day after the arrival of the mail steamer the United States sloop-of-war "Macedonian" joined the squadron, and brought orders for the Powhatan to proceed to the United States. On the 13th of March we arrived and anchored off the Battery, in the harbor of New York. The following day I started for the South, and was soon in Montgomery, the capital of the Confederate States. I called on Mr. Mallory, the Secretary of the Navy, who received me kindly, and informed me that no doubt my services would soon be needed by the Government. I also called on Mr. Davis, with whom I was acquainted. He asked me many questions about the Naval Academy, and the naval service, and seemed anxious to know how the officers of the navy from the South regarded the secession of the States. He said he hoped there would be no war, but if coercion was attempted, that the army of the South would be the place for a young man with a military education.

I met several naval officers in Montgomery who, like myself, had resigned from the United States service, among them the gallant Lieutenant Hartstine, of Arctic exploration fame. There were a great many strangers, from the different sections of the country, at that time in the capital of the Confederacy. I formed the acquaintance of quite a number of them, and received my first information of how the people of the South regarded the events of the day. From what I could learn, the people of the South were almost unanimously in favor of the secession of the States, for the reason that they could see no other way of protecting their rights; but they hoped for peace and the friendship of the people of the North, and a great many hoped for a reunion, in which there would be no contentions, and in which the people of the South would be guaranteed equal rights with all the States.

I had been in Mississippi but a few days, when the country was aware that war had commenced, and that the stronghold of Fort Sumter, in Charleston harbor, had been compelled to surrender to the Southern forces. Soon news came that Lincoln had called for 75,000 men to march upon the States which had swung loose from the Federal Union. The youth of the South sprung to arms in

obedience to the call of their President, and everywhere the fife and drum were heard. It was, indeed, hard for me to keep from volunteering for the army, but I remembered that the South had but few sailors and would need them all on the water.

On the 1st day of May, 1861, I reported, in obedience to an order from the Secretary of the Navy, to Captain Rosseau, of the Confederate States navy, at New Orleans for duty on the Confederate steamer McRae. I was directed by Captain Rosseau to go over to Algiers and report to Lieutenant T. B. Huger, the commander of the steamer. I found Lieutenant Huger an agreeable gentleman, and felt that he was just the man I would like to serve under. He directed me to take charge of the sailing master's department, and to push ahead as rapidly as possible, as he was desirous of getting the ship ready for sea before the blockade could be established. The McRae was a propeller of about 600 tons, barque rigged, and mounted six thirty-two pounders, one nine-inch Dahlgreen gun on pivot, and one twenty-four pounder brass rifle, also on pivot, making in all eight guns. The line officers above me were Lieutenants Warley, Egleston and Dunnington, all of the old navy. The midshipmen were Stone, John Comstock, Blanc and Morgan. Our surgeon was Dr. Linah, of South Carolina, and the purser was the best old gentleman in the world, Mr. Sample. The steamer Sumter, a propeller of 400 tons, mounting five guns and commanded by Commander R. Semmes, was fitting out near us. Captain Semmes was untiring in his efforts to get his vessel ready for sea, and finally threw his guns aboard in a half fitted state, started down the river, and in a few days was on the ocean destroying the commerce of the enemy.

While the McRae was getting ready for sea, Captain Higgins, formerly of the navy, but at that time on the staff of General Twiggs, proposed an expedition to capture the Launches of the enemy that were raiding in the Mississippi Sound, and called on Captain Huger for volunteers, which were readily furnished. So taking one thirty-two pounder, one eight-inch gun and two howitzers, we armed and manned two of the lake steamers. We went through the Sound but did not find the boats of the enemy. It was decided by Captain Higgins that we would land our guns on Ship Island and hold on there until troops could be brought from New Orleans. We commenced landing about 4 P. M., and after very hard work got our guns through the soft sand, up to the highest point of the island, and parapets around them before dark. Our steamers left as soon as the guns were on shore. About dark a steamer was made out coming in from seaward, and it was evident to all that she was a gun-boat of the enemy. The light on the island had been kept burning as usual since the war commenced, but on this night it was extinguished. After dark the gun-boat fired a couple of guns, as it seemed, to let the light-keeper know that a light was needed. However, the gun-boat came in and anchored within a mile of our position. The next morning at dawn of day Lieutenant Warley, who commanded us, directed me to open fire on the steamer with the eight-inch gun. As soon as the first shot had been fired, some one on lookout on the lighthouse reported that the steamer had up a white flag. As it was

rather misty, it was believed by the commanding officer that the enemy had surrendered. Smoke was seen issuing from his funnel however, and some of us suspected that he meant anything else than striking his colors. In a few minutes all doubts were dispelled by a thirty-two pound shell, which came whizzing from the steamer, knocking the sand in our faces and exploding amongst us. We now opened with all of our guns, but with what effect we could not ascertain. The gun-boat replied briskly, but fired wildly. In about an hour, the steamer having raised steam, withdrew out of range and proceeded out to sea. That afternoon our steamers re- turned, bringing the Fourth Louisiana Regiment, in charge of Colonel Allen. Our sailors embarked and went back to the city.

The McRae was soon out of the hands of the carpenters, and started up to Baton Rouge for her ordnance stores. Near that place some portion of her machinery gave way, and we were compelled to return to New Orleans for repairs. In a few weeks our engines were reported in good order, and every preparation for sea having been completed, we bade adieu to our friends in the city and steamed down the river. Arriving at the forts, some forty miles from the sea, we anchored and let our steam go down. The "Joy," a side-wheel river boat, formerly a tow-boat, occasionally reconnoitered the river below. Once and awhile the McRae got under way and went down the river as far as the Jump, or up as far as the quarantine. One day, while at the Jump, a steamer was discovered coming up the river. We went to quarters and awaited under way the report of the Joy, which was in advance of the approaching steamer. The stranger proved to be a French man-of-war, and informed us that he had arrived off the Southwest Pass the night before; had grounded in trying to get over the bar; that he saw no blockading vessels until 10 o'clock next day, when a small side-wheel gun-boat called the "Water Witch" arrived off the Pass.

Captain Geo. N. Hollins had now arrived in New Orleans and assumed command of all our naval forces in the Mississippi river. He was aware that the Government was anxious for the McRae to get to sea, and he at once commenced preparations to open the river. Some enterprising and patriotic citizens of New Orleans had purchased a very staunch, fast double propeller of about 300 tons, which had been a tow-boat on the river, and was known as the "Enoch Train."

This steamer was arched over from the water line with 20 inches of oak, and covered with two-inch iron plates. An iron prow was placed on her. She mounted one 9-inch gun, which could be fired only right ahead. She was commanded by Captain Stevenson, who was part owner and designer of the ram. The McRae was at the forts when the ram (now called the "Manassas") came down on her trial trip. By order of Commodore Hollins, Lieutenant Warley, senior lieutenant of the McRae, took the ram from her owners and assumed command of her. The enemy's vessels had now ascended the river and were at anchor at the Passes. They consisted of one large sloop-of-war, the "Richmond," carrying a formidable battery of 20 guns; two sailing sloops-of-war, and a small steamer, the "Water Witch." Commodore Hollins determined to attack the enemy and endeavor to sink

the Richmond and drive the sailing ships ashore or destroy them with fire rafts. So on the night of—our fleet, consisting of the "Manassas," the McRae, Joy, Calhoun, and the tug-boats Tuscarora and Watson, each with a fire raft, started from the forts. On arriving at about ten miles from the head of the Passes, where the enemy's gun-boats lay, the Manassas was directed to proceed in advance and run into the Richmond at full speed. The tugs followed, and were instructed to set fire to their combustible rafts, or barges, as soon as the Manassas should throw up a rocket, which was the signal that she had obeyed her instructions. The night was dark, and we all waited anxiously for the signal. Presently a rocket was seen to shoot high in the air, and in a few minutes the thunder of a broadside told us the Yankee blue-jackets were at their guns. The fire rafts were lighted and drifted down the river with the current; a few colored lights were seen down the river, and all was quiet. Those were anxious moments for us on the McRae, who, standing afar off in the dark, were waiting for daylight to tell us of the fate of our friends on the Manassas. At early dawn the ram was alongside of the bank of the river near the head of the Passes. We soon ascertained that she had run into a ship; had entangled her propellers, disabled her engines, and carried away her smoke-stacks. All of our vessels now proceeded down the Southwest Pass, and soon we made out the Richmond and Vincennes aground on the bar. On arriving at extreme range we fired a few shots—all of which fell short. One of the enemy's shells falling near the "Joy," who had ventured nearer than the other boats, signal was made to "withdraw from action" and we steamed gallantly up the river. At the head of the Passes a small schooner, loaded with coal, was found aground; also a small boat belonging to the Richmond. There were no blockading vessels off Pass a'Loute, and Captain Huger was about to proceed to sea in obedience to his orders from the Secretary of the Navy, and to take advantage of what was regarded as the object of the expedition, when the McRae was ordered to follow the other boats up the river to the forts. The belief was general that the "Manassas" had sunk one of the enemy's ships, but which one, no one could tell, as two were on the bar and the other two were off Southwest Pass at sea. It was afterwards ascertained that the "Manassas" had run in between the Richmond and the coal schooner alongside of her, and had injured neither. All on the McRae thought we would go down the following night, but great was our disappointment when we found that we were neither to attack the enemy again nor attempt to go to sea. We went to New Orleans, and I am sorry to say the good people of that city applauded us. After remaining several days off New Orleans, the McRae filled up with coal and proceeded down the river to run the blockade. Our engines not working smoothly, we returned to the city for repairs, after which we managed to get down as far as the quarantine, where most of our men took the swamp fever, and where we finally received orders not to run the blockade.

The three senior line officers were now ordered to other duty and I became executive officer. We sent down our spars, unbent our sails, and became a river gun-boat. The commanding officer having accompanied Commodore Hollins, by

rail to Columbus, Kentucky, I was directed to proceed with the McRae up the river to that point where in due season we arrived. Columbus was then held by the Confederate forces under General Polk. The battle of Belmont had just been fought, and the enemy was concentrating at Cairo. The Yankees had two small wooden gun-boats above Columbus. A number of iron-clads had arrived at Cairo, but they were without guns or sailors. The Confederates had at Columbus, the Manassas, McRae (8), Polk (5), Jackson (2), and Calhoun (2). A small fort below Cairo was all the Confederate gun-boats would have to encounter. An advance was urged by many of us. The enemy's gun-boats were allowed to take on board their armaments, to receive their sailors, and with a fleet of transports and men to bring the first disaster to the Southern arms—the capture of forts Donalson and Henry. Columbus was evacuated and the guns of the fortifications were placed in position on Island 10, a short distance. Our gun-boats now dropped down to New Madrid to assist in defending that place. The gun-boats Pontchartrain and Joy joined our squadron, which was known out West by the title of "Hollins' fleet."

The enemy's fleet under their intrepid Commander Foote, appeared in front of No. 10 and commenced throwing their mortar shells into our works. Occasionally the fight was varied by a sharp stand up fight between the gun-boats and the batteries, in which the forts seemed to get the best of it. The Yankee gun-boats were mostly Mississippi river steam-boats, strengthened and casemate with wood and covered with felt and iron, and were designated as "tin-clads." They could resist field pieces, but not heavy artillery. New Madrid is situated on the right bank of the river, and is about ten miles below Island 10. A good road leads to Cape Gerideau, a point on the river above Cairo. Hence, New Madrid was an important point as long as we held No. 10. The place was poorly fortified, had an insufficient garrison, and was commanded by an Arkansas demagogue by the name of Gant. Jeff. Thompson, with his few "Jayhawkers," galloped around the town occasionally, and once brought in a Yankee cavalryman too Dutch to give any account of himself.

On the 3d day of March, 1862, the enemy's forces under Pope appeared in front of New Madrid, and entrenching themselves commenced an investment. Our gun-boats shelled them continually and did very good service, and the Confederate batteries annoyed the enemy's working parties considerably. I saw Gant when the Yankee shells first began to fall in our lines. He took the "shell fever" quicker than any man I ever saw. This man Gant, afterwards deserted the Confederate cause when it began to wane before the overwhelming legions of foreign mercenaries that flocked over the sea in 1864 to get good rations and \$900 bounties! On the night of March 13th it was decided to evacuate New Madrid. A darker and more disagreeable night it is hard to conceive; it rained in torrents, and our poor soldiers, covered with mud and drenched with rain, crowded on our gun-boats, leaving behind provisions, camp equipments and artillery. Gant was so demoralized that he forgot to call in his pickets.

Our fleet was at this time strengthened by the arrival of the "Maurapas," a large

side-wheel steamer, having her machinery protected by an iron-clad casemate. She was commanded by Lieutenant Joseph Fry. She mounted five rifle guns—pivots. A similar gun-boat, the Livingston, Commander Pinckney, also arrived. Our gun-boats after landing from New Madrid, took a position at Tiptonville, a point 30 miles below No. 10, by the river, but only four miles by land. It was therefore an important point. We had been at Tiptonville but a few days, when early one morning we perceived a number of men on the opposite side of the river from us, engaged in throwing down a large pile of wood that had been placed on the bank for the use of our transports. About the time Commodore Hollins had made up his mind to send over and ascertain who the party were, a puff of smoke was seen to rise near the men, and a shell came screaming across the river, striking the bank near us. Fortunately our boats had steam up. The signal was hoisted on the McRae to engage the battery at "close quarters." The gun-boat "Maurapas" was the first boat under way, and followed by the "Polk" and "Pontchartrain," thundered away at the Yanks. The McRae fired away at long range, but soon perceiving a small yawlboat adrift (which had been cut from the "Maurapas" by a shell), we ceased firing, and went a mile below to pick up the boat. In the meantime the Polk had received a shot between wind and water, and signaled that she was leaking badly. The Yankees had left all their guns except one and were firing slowly and wildly, when the McRae signaled to withdraw from action." So we all steamed down the river five or six miles and anchored. The next day the enterprising Yankees opened fire on us from the shore with some light guns; we replied for a few minutes, and again "withdrew from action." The Commodore stated that it was useless to fight batteries with wooden gun-boats, as the guns on shore were protected by parapets, and that nothing was to be gained even if he did succeed in killing a few artillerymen. Our gun-boats were ridiculed by Confederate soldiers and citizens, and treated with contempt by the enemy. By the urgent request of the commander of our troops at Island 10, one of our gun-boats was sent up to Tiptonville with supplies every night, and though the enemy's batteries fired at them regularly, not one of their shots ever took effect.

The night of April 4th, 1862, was one of those dark, stormy, rainy nights that they have up there at that season of the year. On that night one of the enemy's gun-boats ran the batteries at No. 10. She was a tin-clad called the Carondelet," and mounted 13 guns. For a few days she remained under the guns at New Madrid; but perceiving that our gun-boats were not disposed to molest her, she went along the east bank of the river below New Madrid, and attacked in detail our small batteries which had been, constructed to prevent the crossing of troops. One day we received information that the tin-clad was ferrying the men of General Pope's army over to a point above Tiptonville, and the general commanding at No. 10, urged Commodore Hollins to attack the gun-boat with his fleet, for if the enemy got possession of Tiptonville, and the road by which supplies were sent to No. 10, the evacuation or capture of that place was certain. Commodore Hollins declined to comply with the request of the general, saying

that as the "Carondelet" was iron-clad, and his fleet were all wooden boats, he did not think he could successfully combat her. Lieutenants Dunnington, Fry and Carter, of the gun-boats "Pontchartrain," "Maurapas" and "Polk," begged Commodore Hollins to allow them to attack the enemy's gun-boat, but the old commodore was firm in his decision to remain inactive. The three gun-boats mounted together 17 guns, 8 and 9-inch smooth bores, 6 and 7-inch rifles. That same gun-boat "Carondelet" was afterwards engaged in the Yazoo river by the "Arkansas," under the heroic I. N. Brown, and after an action of twenty minutes (the "Arkansas," using only her two bow guns, 8-inch), the "Carondelet" was driven ashore riddled, disabled and colors down. Pope's army having been safely crossed by the "Carondelet," moved on the rear of No. 10, and in a few days that place with all its fine ordnance and several thousand men surrendered to the enemy. Our fleet steamed down the river, and anchored under the guns of Fort Pillow, the next fortified place below. News now reached us that the fleets of Farragut and Porter had entered the Mississippi river, and had commenced to throw their mortar shells into Forts Jackson and Saint Phillip. Commodore Hollins telegraphed to the Secretary of the Navy for permission to go with all the vessels of his fleet to the assistance of the forts below New Orleans. The Secretary replied to Commodore Hollins to remain where he was, and to "harrass the enemy as much as possible." The Commodore answered that as all of the enemy's gun-boats on the upper Mississippi were iron-clad, while those on the lower river were wood like our own, he was of the opinion that he could be of more service with his fleet below New Orleans than at Fort Pillow. Without waiting to hear further from the department, the Commodore started down the river on the "Joy," and ordered the flag ship McRae to follow as soon as the next in command, Commodore Pinckney, should arrive from Memphis, where he was on leave. The fleet thus left was now under command of the commander of the McRae, Lieutenant Huger; the day after the commodore left, the fleet proceeded up the river to reconnoiter. We steamed all day and saw nothing of the enemy. Just after dark our attention was attracted by some one on shore, hailing and waiving a torch. On sending in to ascertain what was wanted, we were informed that the enemy's fleet was anchored a few miles above, around a bend in the river. We therefore anchored for the night. The next morning the "Pontchartrain" went up to reconnoiter, and sure enough found the fleet of the enemy. The Yankee gun-boats, consisting of seven tin-clads, came down in line abreast, and our flotilla started down the river at full speed. The McRae being of great draught, was obliged to follow the channel of the river. We were forced to steam hard to keep out of range. When we reached Fort Pillow the enemy's fleet was only three or four miles astern. The Yanks came to, above the fort a few miles, and without delay began to shell it.

A few vessels now arrived at Fort Pillow from New Orleans belonging to what was known as the "Montgomery fleet." The State of Louisiana had appropriated a large sum of money for the defence of the Mississippi river. The funds were given to General Lovel, at New Orleans, and he at once set to work and had all of the

powerful, fast and staunch tow-boats and ocean steamers at New Orleans fitted as rams and gun-boats. They were all strengthened and protected with wood and iron, and were really the most serviceable and formidable war vessels of the river on either side. The general superintendence of the fitting out and manning of these boats was entrusted to a steamboat captain by the name of Montgomery, who afterwards played commodore of a portion of them. Each of these gun-boats had a frigate's complement of officers, and they all wore the blue uniform of the United States navy. The officers of the "Montgomery fleet" were mostly river steamboat men, and of course were very much prejudiced against gentlemen and officers of the regular naval service; and everywhere on the river, from New Orleans to Fort Pillow, ridicule of the graduates of the naval school could be heard in all the bar-rooms and like places that steamboat men frequented and fought the battles of the Confederacy. The idle talk of those sort of people did not annoy our officers of the navy, and we all hoped that the fresh water sailors would fight up to their "brags."

Commander Pinckney having returned to Fort Pillow and assumed command of our fleet, the "McRae," in obedience to the order of Commodore Hollins, proceeded down to New Orleans, where she arrived in a few days.

The authorities of New Orleans were thoroughly alarmed for the safety of the city, and men were kept working night and day on the two great iron clads, "Mississippi" and "Louisiana." The "McRae" was ordered to fill up with coal and to go down to the forts without delay. Shortly after our arrival at New Orleans, I called on Commodore Hollins, at the St. Charles Hotel, and was very glad to learn that he proposed to give us a brush with the enemy. He told me that he intended taking the Louisiana without waiting for her engines to be finished, but to use her as a floating battery, and with the ram "Manassas" and "Montgomery" rams (six or eight of them), the "McRae" and a number of fire-rafts, and to attack the enemy's fleet of wooden ships below the forts and drive them out of the river. A few hours afterwards I heard that the Commodore had received a dispatch from the Navy Department ordering him to Richmond.

The "McRae" arrived at the forts on the 16th of April, 1862, and anchored close into the bank just above Fort St. Phillip. The enemy's fleet was around the bend below Fort Jackson, and his mortar-boats were throwing about ten shells every minute in and around the forts. The river was obstructed by schooners anchored across the river, in line abreast, between the forts, and chains and lines were passed from vessel to vessel; but a passage was left open near each bank. The forts were well garrisoned and had a large number of the heaviest guns. There were six Montgomery rams, one Louisiana ram called the "Governor Moore," the ram "Manassas" and the "McRae," and also a number of fire-rafts and tow-boats all on the Fort St. Phillip side of the river between that fort and the point above. On the 20th of April the large iron-clad Louisiana, mounting 16 guns of the largest and most approved pattern, arrived and anchored just above the obstructions. She was in command of Commander McIntosh, of the navy. Captain Jno. K.



Mitchell was placed in command of all the boats of the Confederate navy, viz: "Louisiana," "Manassas" and "McRae." The Montgomery rams were under the command of Captain Stevenson, the designer of the "Manassas." The "Governor Moore," of the "Louisiana navy," was in charge of Lieutenant Kennon, formerly of the navy. Captain Mitchell endeavored to get control of everything afloat, but succeeded only in obtaining the consent of the other "naval" commanders to cooperate with him if they should think proper, but under no circumstances were they to receive or obey orders from any officer of the regular Confederate navy.

The "Louisiana" was in an unfinished condition; several of her guns were unmounted, and a few could not be used on account of the carriages being too high for the ports. Her machinery was not all in, and as a steamer she was regarded as a failure; it was believed by competent engineers that she would not have power sufficient to enable her to stem the current of the Mississippi river during high water. Mechanics labored day and night to get the Louisiana ready, as Captain Mitchell designed to move on the enemy as soon as that vessel could be used as a steamer. General Duncan, who commanded the fortifications of the department, and Colonel Ed. Higgins, who commanded the forts, were both of the opinion that Captain Mitchell should drop the Louisiana below Fort St. Phillip and drive the enemy's mortar-boats out of range. The mortar shells had injured Fort Jackson somewhat, eight or ten guns having been rendered unserviceable. Fort St. Phillip was entirely uninjured, as but few shells could reach it. Captain Mitchell objected to placing the Louisiana in the position desired by the army officers, because he proposed to attack the enemy in a few days that is, as soon as the Louisiana was ready, and he thought Fort Jackson could stand the mortars for that time; furthermore, he thought it was hazardous to place the Louisiana in mortar range, as she was not ironed on her decks, and as mortar shells fall almost perpendicularly, if one should strike her on deck it would probably sink her.

On the afternoon of April 23d I visited Fort Jackson, and with Colonel Higgins observed from the parapet of the fort the fleet below; their light spars had been sent down, and the ships were arranging themselves in lines ahead. We were both of the opinion that a move would be made on the forts the following night. So, when I returned on board the "McRae," I directed the cable to be got ready for slipping and a man stationed to unshackle it at a moment's warning; one-half of the men to be on deck; steam to be up; the guns cast loose and loaded with 5-section shell. I remained on deck until after midnight, when, retiring to my room, I cautioned the officer of the deck to keep a bright lookout down the river and call me the moment anything came in sight. At 3 A. M., I was called and informed that a steamer was coming up. In less than a minute the McRae was under way and her guns blazing at the approaching ships of the enemy. I saw the rams "Governor Moore" and "Stonewall Jackson" rushing for one of the Yankee steamers, but they were soon lost in the smoke, and I saw them no more. The commanders, officers and men of the Montgomery rams (except those of the Stonewall Jackson) deserted their vessels at the first gun and fled wildly to the

woods. The enemy's gun-boats were soon through the obstructions, and turning their attention to the Confederate flotilla made short work of it. The deserted rams were set on fire and served as beacons through the darkness and smoke which hung over the river. On the McRae we had little trouble to find something to fire at, for as we were out in the river the enemy was on every side of us, and gallantly did our brave tars stand to their guns, loading and firing their guns as rapidly as possible. Our commander, Lieutenant Huger, was what we all expected—cool and fearless, and handled the McRae splendidly. One of the enemy's shell, fired from one of the howitzers aloft, went through our decks and exploded in the sail-room, setting the ship on fire; and as there was only a pine bulkhead of 2-inch boards between the sail-room and magazine, we were in great danger of being blown up. Just then one of the large sloops-of-war ranged alongside and gave us a broadside of grape and canister, which mortally wounded our commander, wounded the pilot, carried away our wheel ropes and cut the signal halyards and took our flag overboard. New tiller ropes were rove and soon we were at close quarters with a large steamer. Just after daylight, being close into the west bank of the river, about three miles above Fort Jackson, we found one of the Montgomery rams, the "Resolute," ashore, with a white flag flying. I sent Lieutenant Arnold, with twenty men, to take charge of her and to open fire with her two heavy rifle pivots. At 7.30 A. M. we ceased firing, being at that time about four miles above the forts. In going around, to return to the batteries, our wheel ropes were again shot away, and the ship ran into the bank before her headway could be checked. Captain Mitchell sent one of the tugs to our assistance and we were soon afloat. At 8.30 we anchored near the "Louisiana." While we were aground the ram "Manassas" was discovered floating helplessly down the river. I sent a boat to her, and ascertained that she was uninjured, but had her injection pipes cut, and that it would be impossible to save her.

It was afterwards ascertained that the enemy's fleet, consisting of twenty ships, under the command of Commodore Farragut, had endeavored to run by the forts; only thirteen succeeded in passing. The advance was made in two lines *en echelon*, and the steamers passed through the gaps in the line of obstructions near each bank. The guns of the forts, being mounted mostly in *barbette*, were silenced as soon and as long as the gun-boats were in canister range. The passages through which General Duncan thought the enemy could not pass were the very ones Farragut preferred; for, as his ships carried heavy guns, and plenty of them, it was his object to get within point-blank range, so as to drive the Confederates away from the *barbette* guns by keeping a steady rain of canister on them. Had the "Montgomery rams" fought, or towed the fire rafts out into the current, it is very doubtful if any of the gun-boats would have passed. One of the enemy's gun-boats, the Veruna (9 guns), was gallantly assaulted by the rams "Governor Moore" and "Stonewall Jackson." The "Governor Moore" hung on to his enemy like an avenging fate, and did not quit him till he sunk him.

Every night, previous to the one the fleet passed, a fire-raft had been sent down

below the obstructions, and burnt for the purpose of lighting up the river; but by a strange chance no raft was sent down that night. The importance of having the fire-raft below on that night has been greatly exaggerated; for, after the firing commenced, the smoke was so dense along the river that a dozen fire-rafts would have done but little in showing the ships to the forts. Captain Mitchell has been blamed by many for not placing the "Louisiana" in the position desired by General Duncan. Had the "Louisiana" been moored below Fort Saint Phillip there can be no doubt that she would have driven the mortar boats out of range of Fort Jackson. But by occupying that position she would have done nothing towards deterring Farragut in executing his bold move; and it is quite certain that she would not have been more serviceable against steamers under way in one place more than another. The day after the fleet passed the forts I was ordered by Captain Mitchell to transfer all the officers and men (except barely enough to run the vessel) from the "McRae" to the "Louisiana," and to carry on board all the Confederate sick and wounded, and to proceed to New Orleans under a flag of truce. The "McRae" had been badly cut up in upper works and rigging during the action, besides having several large shots through her near the water-line, which caused her to leak badly; her smoke-stack was so riddled that it would scarcely stand, and the draft was so much affected that it was difficult to keep steam in the boilers.

I applied to Captain Mitchell for permission to take the "McRae's" crew, get the ram "Resolute" afloat, and at night to go down, ram one of the mortar fleet, and go on a raid on the coast of New England. The "Resolute" was well protected; had two large pivot guns, was full of coal and supplies, was a sea-going steamer, and was faster than any war vessel the enemy had. Captain Mitchell replied that my proposition would be considered. The following day the enemy's fleet at the quarantine attacked the "Resolute" and succeeded in planting a shell forward below the water line, which exploded and rendered her useless.

On the morning of the 26th the "McRae" started up the river under a flag of truce. At the quarantine I went on board the steamer "Mississippi," and received permission from the commanding officer of the squadron to pass his lines with the cartel. On account of the condition of the "McRae's" smoke-stack we could get but a small head of steam, and consequently but slow progress against the strong current. We passed various floating wrecks, which told us too plainly of the destruction of our shipping at New Orleans. While we all deplored the loss of our rams and gunboats, and the successful advance of such a large number of formidable ships of the enemy, we confidently expected that the Confederate commanders at New Orleans would use our resources above in such a way as to make Farragut repent his bold undertaking; for we well knew that the iron-clad "Mississippi" had been launched at New Orleans and was nearly ready for service, and that the rest of Hollins' fleet and eight Montgomery rams, then above Memphis, could soon descend the rapid current of the Mississippi river; besides, the large number of river and ocean steamers on the river could have been readily and easily converted into rams and used successfully against Farragut's

wooden fleet. The "Mississippi" was a most formidable iron-clad, with plenty of power, and was to mount twenty of the heaviest guns. She could have been ready for action within ten days after the enemy passed the forts. The lower forts were uninjured, and had six months' provisions, and were supported by the iron-clad battery "Louisiana."

About 10 A. M., April 27, the "McRae" arrived in front of the city. Farragut's fleet was anchored in the stream abreast of New Orleans, and was treating for the surrender. Getting permission to land our wounded, the "McRae" was anchored at the foot of Canal street, and all of our poor fellows were landed safely that afternoon. I went on shore to see our commander, Lieutenant Huger, carried to his residence, and returned on board about 6 P. M. The donkey-engine had been going steadily since the fight, but having become disabled the water was rapidly gaining. I put the crew to work at the bilge-pumps. The steamer commenced dragging just after dark. All the chain was paid out, but she would not bring up; but getting in the eddy, near the Algiers shore, she swung around several times, striking once against one of the sunken dry docks, which caused the ship to make water more freely. The pumps were kept going until daylight next morning. The shot holes having got below the water, the steamer settled fast, and we were obliged to abandon her. The crew had hardly reached the shore when our good old ship went down. I went on board the enemy's flag-ship and reported the occurrence. On the 29th I had prepared to return to the forts in one of the small boats of the "McRae," when, going to the mayor's office to get the flag-of-truce mail, I was astonished to learn that the forts had surrendered, and that the "Louisiana" had been blown up. I went down on the levy and met a number of the officers and men of the forts and gun-boats, and learned that the surrender had been brought about by a mutiny in Fort Jackson. Late on the night of the 27th the officers of that fort awoke to find that about two hundred of the garrison were under arms, had spiked some of the guns, and demanded that the very liberal terms offered the day previous by Commodore Porter, of the enemy's mortar fleet, be accepted. General Duncan and officers appealed to the men to stand by their colors and country; that the forts were in good condition and could hold out many months. But the mutineers were firm, and insisted on an immediate surrender. General Duncan then promised that the forts should be surrendered at daylight.

The men who thus deserted their country in her dark hour were mostly of foreign birth and low origin, and had been demoralized by the mortar shells, the contentions between the military and naval commanders, the discouraging tone of army officers' conversations, and the liberal terms offered by Porter. So at early dawn a boat was sent down to inform the enemy that his terms would be accepted. Fort Saint Phillip, on the opposite side of the river, was entirely unhurt, and was well supplied and had a full garrison of true men. The "Louisiana" mounted sixteen heavy guns, and was invulnerable. Comment is unnecessary.

Before the fleet passed the forts I talked freely with the officers ashore and afloat,

and but one of them would admit the bare possibility of the enemy's steamers being able to run the batteries. Colonel Edward Higgins (afterwards Brigadier-General and one of the most gallant soldiers in the Confederate army) told me on the afternoon of the 23d of April the eve of the attack that the fleet could pass at any time, and probably would pass that very night! When the "McRae" came down the river, in the summer of 1861, Duncan had command of the forts. I heard him say one day that all the vessels in the world could not pass his forts; that the forts had once driven back the fleet of Great Britain; and that at that time the forts were nothing compared to what they were in 1861. It did not seem to occur to Duncan that the English ships were sailing vessels, sailing against a strong current; that they were "crank and tall," and mounted 24-pounders, long-nines, and such like small ordnance. He was oblivious of the fact that modern war ships carried huge 11-inch pivots and 9-inch broadside guns, and that double stand of grape and canister were prescribed by the naval manual of the United States.

At Jackson, Mississippi, shortly after the fall of New Orleans, I met several of my naval friends, who had been in the city when the news of Farragut's passing the forts was known, and from them I heard the particulars of the destruction of the great iron-clad steamer "Mississippi." There was no real effort made to get that vessel up the river; two river steamboats, poorly commanded and miserably handled, made a show of trying to tow the iron-clad, humbugged a few minutes, and then set her on fire. The assertion that the Mississippi could not have been towed up to Vicksburg by the steamers at New Orleans is perfectly absurd. The large flat-bottomed, square-ended floating batter, built at New Orleans, was easily towed up to Columbus. The naval steamer "Joy" was a regular lower river tow-boat. The magnificent steam ship "Star of the West," one of the Pacific mail steamers, a powerful double walking beam engine ship of over 3,000 tons, was in command of a Lieutenant Bier, but instead of taking hold of the "Mississippi"—the hope of the great Southwest—he steamed gallantly away. The "Mississippi" could have towed under the guns at Vicksburg, and in ten days would have been ready for service. She was invulnerable to any shot the enemy had at that time, and as the enemy had only wooden ships below, there can be no doubt that Farragut's fleet would have been driven out of the river or destroyed.

After the fall of New Orleans I proceeded to Richmond, and there received orders to report to Commander Pinkney for duty in the fleet formerly commanded by Commodore Hollins. I lost no time in getting out West. At Memphis I got on a river steamer and started up to report. At this time the ridicule of "Hollin's fleet" was so great and general, that I was really ashamed to own that I was on my way to join it, and it was only the hope of getting on detached duty that prevented me from throwing up my commission in the navy and joining the army. At Randolph, a few miles below Fort Pillow, I found Commander Pinkney with the gun-boats "Polk" and "Livingston." He gave me command of two heavy guns, mounted on a bluff four miles below Randolph. The guns of the "Polk" and "Livingston" had been placed in batteries on shore at Randolph. It was hard to understand why the

guns had been taken off the gun-boats. Randolph could not hold out if Fort Pillow fell, and as Pinkney had no infantry supports, he was at the mercy of the Yankee raiders by land. At this time there were eight of the "Montgomery" rams at Fort Pillow; they had had an engagement with the enemy, and all the steam-boatmen were jubilant. On the 4th of May, 1862, General Jeff. Thompson was placed in command of the "Montgomery" fleet, and at once determined to see what they could do. The enemy's fleet of tin-clads, mortar-boats and transports, were around the bend above Fort Pillow. Thompson proposed to ram the tin-clads, and asked Commander Pinkney to go up and use the guns of his four gun-boats against the mortar-boats, and against light draft-boats that might run into shoal water; but the "Artful Dodger" could not see it, and so old Jeff, went up with the rams, and without much system went in, rammed one or two of the Yankee vessels, which were only saved from sinking by running into shoal water. The fight lasted only a few minutes, and the Confederates dropped back under the guns of Fort Pillow. The Montgomery rams were uninjured, having resisted the heaviest shot at close quarters. Had Pinkney co-operated more might have been accomplished.

One month after this attack the Confederates evacuated Fort Pillow. As soon as Commander Pinkney heard of the evacuation, he hurried away, leaving everything standing—the executive officer of the Polk, Lieutenant Stone, disobeyed orders, and saved two guns. The gun-boats left Randolph twenty-four hours before the last transport got away from Fort Pillow. The gun-boats "Maurapas" and "Pontchartrain" had already been sent up White river, where, under the gallant Commanders Fry and Dunnington, they did efficient service. The "Livingston" and "Polk" succeeded in getting up the Yazoo river to Liverpool landing. As soon as the enemy learned that Fort Pillow had been evacuated, Foote's fleet started down, and on June 5th arrived in sight of Memphis. The bluffs at Memphis were crowded with people upon the approach of the enemy's fleet. The Montgomery rams, jeered, hooted and cheered by the populace, turned and advanced to meet the Yankee gunboats, but their courage failed them under fire, and they ignominiously burnt the rams, and the crews crawled and scampered over the levees for safety. One of the rams, the "Van Dorn," being a "little lame"—unable to steam over 15 miles an hour—started on retreat early, and hence escaped, and joined Pinkney up the Yazoo. I had been in command of the battery below Randolph but a few days, when I received orders to dismount my guns and ship them up White river to Lieutenant Fry. I was then sent to Vicksburg to recruit men for Pinkney's boats.

Just before the evacuation of Fort Pillow the Confederates had launched at Memphis a very pretty little gun-boat called "Arkansas." She was about four hundred tons, double propeller, was to be iron-clad, and to mount ten guns. When the news reached Memphis that our people were evacuating Fort Pillow, the "Arkansas" and all of the river transports were run up the Yazoo river, where they were protected by batteries on shore and a raft across the stream. Pinkney's boats and the "Van Dorn" arrived at Liverpool landing too late to get above the

raft. The two guns saved by Lieutenant Stone were placed on shore, and several smaller guns were also mounted. The sailors and Mississippi troops manned the batteries. The crews of the gun-boats lived on board.

The unfinished "Arkansas" was towed up to Yazoo City. The officer in charge of her seemed indifferent as to the time of her completion. The leading citizens of the town telegraphed to Richmond and asked that an energetic officer be placed in command and the steamer be got ready without delay. Accordingly the Department detailed Lieutenant I. N. Brown, of the navy, to superintend the work and to assume command. When Lieutenant Brown arrived in Yazoo City he found the "Arkansas" without any iron on her, her ports not cut, and in fact quite a lot of work to be done by carpenters and machinists. The barge which had brought down the iron for the shield or covering for the casemate had been carelessly sunken in the Yazoo river. Lieutenant Brown was untiring in his efforts to complete his vessel. He took some stringent measures; imprisoned several people who were disposed to trifle with him; he allowed no one under his command to be idle; he issued orders to press all the blacksmiths and mechanics in the country for a hundred miles around; the barge of iron was raised; officers were dispatched with all haste to hurry forward guns, carriages, ammunition, etc., and all workmen were obliged to live on board a transport steamer alongside the "Arkansas"; work was continued day and night; the sound of the artisan's hammer did not cease until the ship was ready for battle.

A few days after Lieutenant Brown took charge of the "Arkansas" I arrived in Yazoo City and reported to him for duty. He directed me to load a steamer with cotton and go down to Liverpool landing and protect the gun-boats "Polk" and "Livingston" with cotton bales, to moor their head down stream, to keep steam up, and be prepared to ram any boats of the enemy that might venture up. Lieutenant Brown went down with me, but when we got there Commander Pinkney informed us that he had changed his mind, and would not leave until the arrival of Commodore Lynch, who was on his way to the command of all the naval forces of the West. Having placed the cotton as directed, I returned with Captain Brown to Yazoo City. A day or two afterwards Commodore Lynch arrived. Captain Brown had orders to obey all orders from General Van Dorn, and to make no move without the sanction of that officer. Commodore Lynch, having inspected the "Arkansas," ordered me to Jackson, Mississippi, to telegraph the Secretary of War as follows: "The "Arkansas" is very inferior to the "Merrimac" in every particular; the iron with which she is covered is worn and indifferent, taken from a railroad track, and is poorly secured to the vessel; boiler-iron on stern and counter; her smoke-stack is sheet-iron." When I returned to Yazoo City the "Arkansas" was ready for service. Her battery consisted of ten guns—viz: two 8-inch columbiads in the two forward or bow ports, two 9-inch Dahlgren shell guns, two 6-inch rifles, and two 32-pounders smooth bores in broadside, and two 6-inch rifles astern. Her engines were new, having been built at Memphis, and on the trial trip worked well. As the ship had two propellers and separate engines, she could be worked or handled conveniently. The boilers were in the hold and below

the water line. The speed was fair—say nine knots. We had a full complement of officers and about two hundred men. All were anxious for the time to come when we could show the enemy that he could not lay idly in our waters. We started down the river the day the work was finished. On our way down we received intelligence that a small steamer of the enemy was some miles below the rafts and batteries. So we hurried on down, firing a gun now and then to let Pinkney and the batteries know we were coming. On rounding the point above the obstructions or rafts, we could see the men at the guns on the bluffs, but as they had not fired we were satisfied that the enemy was not yet in range. Our attention was soon attracted to the gun-boats "Polk" and "Livingston," moored just below the obstructions. Smoke was seen issuing from their cabins and hatches. Captain Brown promptly ordered all our small boats manned, and sent them to extinguish the fire; but they got alongside the boats too late, as Pinkney had done his cowardly work too well. We soon, ascertained that a small stern-wheel, high-pressure, river steamboat, protected with hay, had approached nearly as far as Sartarsia, or about five miles off the batteries, when, perceiving our fortifications, had quickly retreated. The two gun-boats fired and abandoned by Pinkney, being full of cotton, burned rapidly; and the lines by which they had been fastened to the banks being consumed, the boats drifted down the river. One of them getting foul of the iron-clad ram "Van Dorn" set her on fire, and she too was added to the loss of the "Polk" and "Livingston."

The following day I was sent with one of the pilots to sound the bar at Sartarsia. We found plenty of water for the "Arkansas," but the pilot stated that if the river continued to fall as it had been doing for several days, that in five more days there would not be enough water for the "Arkansas" to get down. The man who had placed the rafts said they could not be moved inside of a week. Captain Brown instructed Lieutenants Grimball, Gift and myself to examine the obstructions, and report if it was practicable to remove them, so as to allow the "Arkansas" to pass through and if so, in what time the work could be done. We visited the rafts, and after a careful examination reported that they could be removed in less than half an hour.

A short time before this the large up-river fleet of the enemy (now under command of Commodore Davis, United States navy), which had fought its way from Columbus, Kentucky, had arrived above Vicksburg, and had been joined by the victorious fleet of sea-going ships under the indomitable Farragut. The mortar fleets above and below Vicksburg were thundering away at that stronghold, and a large land force were ready to act in concert with the enemy's overwhelming armada.

Captain Brown, the commander of the "Arkansas," while being very anxious to comply with the unanimous wish of his officers and men—to attack the enemy—was of the opinion that the ship should remain above the obstruction strictly on the defensive. He said that there were a large number of fine steamers in the Yazoo, and the valley of that river was capable of furnishing an immense amount



of supplies to our armies, and that the river and valley could be held by the "Arkansas" and proper batteries; that if the "Arkansas" went down and attacked the combined fleets of the enemy, it would be impossible to destroy them or even to cripple them seriously. But if the Government or General Van Dorn desired it, he (Captain Brown) would willingly go down and do his best. Captain Brown decided therefore to consult with General Van Dorn without delay; so I was directed to go to Vicksburg and explain our position and Captain Brown's views, and ask for instructions. I was also to reconnoiter the position of the enemy's fleets above Vicksburg. About sunset, July, 1862, I left Liverpool landing, and set out on my mission, riding all night—some fifty miles. I was in Vicksburg about eight o'clock next morning. On entering the town I was fortunate enough to come upon the headquarters of Colonel Withers, of the artillery, where I was hospitably received, had a good breakfast, and went with the Colonel to call on General Van Dorn. The General thoroughly appreciated the importance of holding the Yazoo river, but he thought that as the "Arkansas" could only be used during the high-water season, that she could not materially assist in defending the river. He thought that the "Arkansas" could run by the gun-boats above Vicksburg and attack the "Brooklyn" and mortar-schooners below town, or run by everything about Vicksburg and destroy the small gunboats scattered along the lower river in detail, pass out of the Mississippi river and go to Mobile. He therefore ordered Captain Brown to move at once with his steamer, and act as his judgment should dictate.

After leaving General Van Dorn's headquarters I proceeded, in company with one of Colonel Withers' officers, up the bank of the river to reconnoiter. It was late in the afternoon before we got up abreast with the fleets. The woods were so dense and entangled with vines and briars that we were obliged to dismount and grope our way through the best we could. I had a good field-glass, and watched the vessels carefully some time. Farragut's fleet consisted of thirteen heavy sloops-of-war, mounting tremendous batteries, and were anchored in line ahead near the east bank. I was satisfied that none of them had steam up. The fleet of Commodore Davis numbered over thirty iron-clads and six or eight rams. They were moored to the west bank, nearly opposite Farragut's fleet. Below Davis' fleet were about thirty mortar-boats. Davis' vessels appeared to have steam up. While we were making our observations a man-of-war cutter landed near us, but the crew did not suspect our presence. About dark that night I left Vicksburg and rode until two o'clock next morning, when, feeling much fatigued, I stopped at a planter's house and rested until daylight. The following day I arrived at Liverpool landing. The next morning a passage was made in the obstruction. The "Arkansas" dropped through and below the bar at Sartarsia. Commodore Lynch now arrived from Yazoo City and proposed to go down with us. When he informed Captain Brown of his intentions, Brown remarked, "Well, Commodore, I will be glad if you go down with us, but as this vessel is too small for two captains, if you go I will take charge of a gun and attend to that." Commodore Lynch replied, "Very well, Captain, you may go; I will stay. May God bless you!"

The good old Commodore then called all the officers around him, and said he knew they would do their duty; and he hoped they would all go through the fight safely, and live to see our country free from her invaders. He then bade us all good-bye and returned to the city.

The next morning, July 14th, 1862, the "Arkansas" started down the river, and arrived at Hames' Bluff just after dark, where we anchored until 2 A. M. next day, when getting under way the ship was cleared for battle, and we steamed slowly down. Daylight found us seven or eight miles above the mouth of the river. The morning was warm and perfectly calm; the dense volume of black smoke which issued from our funnel, rose high above the trees, and we knew that the enemy would soon be on the lookout for us. Pretty soon we discovered smoke above the trees below, winding along the course of the crooked Yazoo. The men of the "Arkansas" were now all at their stations, the guns were loaded and cast loose, their tackles in the hands of willing seamen ready to train; primers in the vents; locks thrown back and the lanyards in the hands of the gun captains; the decks sprinkled with sand and tourniquets and bandages at hand; tubs filled with fresh water were between the guns, and down in the berth deck were the surgeons with their bright instruments, stimulants and lint, while along the passage-ways stood rows of men to pass powder, shell and shot, and all was quiet save the dull thump, thump, of the propellers. Steadily the little ship moved onward towards her enemies, but she had not gone far, when about a mile below, a large iron-clad mounting 13 heavy guns steamed slowly around a bend, and was no doubt terribly astonished to see the "Arkansas" making for him, for he turned around as quickly as he could and started down the river. Our two forward guns opened on him with solid shot. He replied with his three stern guns, his shot passing over us, or striking harmlessly on our shield forward. Two wooden gun-boats soon came up, and passing their fleeing consort advanced boldly to meet us, but a few well directed shot made them turn tail and again pass their friend, who knew what a tartar they had caught! Slowly but surely we gained on the iron-clad, our shot raking him and making dreadful havoc on his crowded decks. The wooden vessels ahead of her kept up a brisk fire with their rifle guns. One of their shot striking our pilot house, drove in some fragments of iron, which mortally wounded both the Yazoo river pilots, and slightly wounded Captain Brown in the head. As one of the pilots was being taken below, he said "keep in the middle of the river." We had decreased our distance from the iron-clad rapidly, and were only a hundred yards astern, our shot still raking him, when he ceased firing and sheered into the bank; our engines were stopped, and ranging up alongside, with the muzzles of our guns touching him, we poured in a broadside of solid shot, when his colors came down. As we had no pilot, Captain Brown considered it unsafe to stop. So on we pushed, driving the two fleeing boats ahead of us, our speed decreasing all the time, owing to shot holes in the smoke stack; but in a few minutes the "Arkansas" glided out into the broad Mississippi, right into the midst of the hostile fleet. The Yankee tars were soon at their guns, and shot and shell came quick and fast upon our single little ship. Enemies being on all sides

of us, our guns were blazing destruction and defiance in every direction. Soon three large rams were seen rushing down the river towards us. The "Arkansas" turned and steamed up to meet them; the leading ram had got within a hundred yards of us, when a well aimed shot, fired by the cool and intrepid Lieutenant Gift, from one of the bow guns, struck the ram's boiler and blew him up. The other two rams, fearing a similar fate, turned and fled. Our steam was now so low that we could manoeuvre with difficulty. Turning head down stream we made for Farragut's fleet, and gave them the best we had at close quarters; they replied briskly and seldom missed us; two of their eleven-inch solid shot crushed through our sides, doing fearful execution amongst our men. Slowly we went, fighting our way right and left, until presently we had passed our enemies, and were received with loud hurrahs from the Confederate soldiers on the heights of Vicksburg.

With much difficulty the "Arkansas" was rounded to and secured to the bank in front of the city. The iron on her port side, though pierced but twice, had been so often struck with heavy projectiles that it was very much loosened. A few more shots would have caused nearly all of it to have fallen from the vessel. Our dead were sent on shore to be buried; the sick and wounded carried to the hospital; the decks were washed down, and the crew went to breakfast. We were visited by Generals Van Dorn and Breckinridge, who complimented us highly and offered us any assistance we required.

Below Vicksburg there was only one sloop-of-war—the "Brooklyn"—and Porter's mortar-schooners and a number of steam-transports. As soon as the "Arkansas" had appeared in front of Vicksburg one of the schooners was set on fire, and it was apparent that the enemy was much alarmed. Had the "Arkansas" been in a condition to have manoeuvred she could easily have captured or destroyed that entire flotilla. Our engineers went to work at once to repair the smoke-stack, but it was late in the afternoon before it was in any kind of shape, and it was then considered too late to make a move. Had not our gun-boats in the Yazoo been uselessly destroyed by Pinkney, there can be no doubt that Captain Brown could, with their assistance, have injured the enemy far more than he did with the "Arkansas" alone. The "Polk" and the "Livingston" had been well protected with cotton; and the "Van Dorn" was an ironclad ram, had great speed, was easily handled, and had resisted shot that could penetrate the sides of the "Arkansas." Had those three steamers been with the "Arkansas," the enemy's fire would not have been concentrated as it was on that vessel, and she could have fought to more advantage.

Just before dark the enemy's gun-boats above Vicksburg were observed to be in motion, and we had no doubt that Farragut meant to fight. After dark we noticed a range light on the opposite bank abreast of us, evidently intended to point out our position. So we shifted our moorings a few hundred yards lower down. A severe thunder-storm now came on, accompanied by torrents of rain. Shortly rapid and heavy firing was heard at the upper batteries, and a signal came to us that the gun-boats were passing down. We went to our guns, and in a minute were ready

for battle. And we had not long to wait, for a large sloop-of-war was observed moving slowly down near the bank, until he was opposite the light on the other shore, when he delivered a broadside into the bank where the "Arkansas" had been laying before dark. As soon as he had fired, our two bow-guns told him where we were; and as he ranged up alongside of us our broadside guns rattled their heavy shells through him; and when he passed, our two stern-rifles turned him over to the lower batteries. Soon another vessel came on as the first had done, and was served the same way. Another and another came, until fourteen had passed. The "Arkansas" was struck only once, and that was a well-directed shot (11-inch) fired from the "Richmond." It struck near the water-line, passed through the port-side into the dispensary, on the berth-deck opposite the engine-room, mashed up all the drugs, etc., carried in an ugly lot of iron fragments and splinters, passed over the engine-room, grazed the steam-chimney, and lodged in the opposite side of the ship. Several of the firemen and one of the pilots were killed and an engineer wounded.

The next morning (July 16th) at nine o'clock the enemy opened on us from all their mortar-boats above and below town, throwing their huge 13-inch shells thick and fast around us. As the mortar-shells fell with terrible force almost perpendicularly, and as the "Arkansas" was unprotected on upper-decks, boilers amidship, a magazine and shell-room at each end, it was very evident that if she was struck by one of those heavy shells, it would be the last of her. Her moorings were changed frequently to impair the enemy's range; but the enterprising Yankees shelled us continually, their shell often exploding a few feet above decks and sending their fragments into the decks.

When the "Arkansas" started down the Yazoo her crew were seamen with the exception of about fifty soldiers—volunteers from a Mississippi regiment. The seamen had been on the Yazoo swamps some time, and in consequence were troubled with chills and fever. Many had been killed, a large number wounded, and a greater portion of the remainder sent to the hospital on our arrival at Vicksburg. The day after we reached the city the Missouri volunteers, who had agreed to serve only for the trip, went on shore and joined their commands; so we were now very short-handed. Captain Brown asked General Van Dorn to fill up our complement from the army, which he readily assented to do, provided the men would volunteer, and make application for transfer through proper channels. At first quite a number volunteered, but when they got on board and saw the shot-holes through the vessel's sides, and heard sailors' reports of the terrible effect of shell and splinters, and were made aware of the danger of the mortar-shell that fell continually around the ship, those volunteers found many pretexts to go back to their commands; many took the "shell fever" and went to the hospital. As a general thing, soldiers are not much use on board ship, particularly volunteers, who are not accustomed to the discipline and routine of a man-of-war. A scene that occurred on board the "Arkansas" one day at Vicksburg is illustrative. We were engaged hauling the ship into a position near one of our batteries; but having but few sailors to haul on the wharf we were progressing

slowly, when Lieutenant Stevens, the executive officer, came on deck, and perceiving a crowd of volunteers sitting on deck playing cards, he said, rather sharply, "Come, volunteers, that won't do; get up from there and give us a pull." One of the players looked up at Lieutenant Stevens and replied, "Oh! hell! we aint no deck hands;" and eyeing the man sitting opposite to him, was heard to say, "I go you two better!"

Both of our surgeons being sick, Captain Brown telegraphed out into the interior of Mississippi for medical volunteers. In a day or two a long, slim doctor came in from Clinton; and as he was well recommended, Captain Brown gave him an acting appointment as surgeon, and directed him to report to Lieutenant Stevens for duty. It was early in the morning when he arrived; the enemy had not commenced their daily pastime of shelling us; the ship's decks had been cleanly washed down, the awnings spread, and everything was neat and orderly. The doctor took breakfast in the ward-room, and seemed delighted with the vessel generally. Before the regular call to morning inspection the officer of the powder division started around below to show the new medical officer his station during action, and the arrangement for disposing of the wounded, etc., etc. In going along the berth-deck the officer remarked to the doctor that in a battle there was plenty to do, as the wounded came down in a steady stream. The "medico" looked a little incredulous; but a few minutes afterwards, when he perceived the road through which an 11-inch shell had come, his face lengthened perceptibly; and after awhile, when the big shell began to fall around the vessel, he became rather nervous. He would stand on the companion-ladder and watch the smoke rise from the mortar-vessels, and would wait until he heard the whizzing of the shell through the air, when he would make a dive for his state-room. As soon as the shell fell he would go up and watch out for another. Occasionally, when a shell would explode close to us, or fall with a heavy splash alongside, he would be heard to groan, "Oh! Louisa and the babes!"

At daylight on the 22d of July, 1862, the iron-clad fleet above Vicksburg dropped down and commenced firing rapidly at our upper batteries. Farragut's fleet engaged the lower batteries, and the mortar fleets opened upon the city and forts. The "Arkansas" was cleared for battle, but when the crew were mustered only 41 men answered to their names on the gun-deck. The cannonading was tremendous, and fairly shook the earth. In about half an hour after the firing had begun, a large iron-clad, the "Essex," emerged from the smoke above and made directly for the "Arkansas". When he was fifty yards from us our two bow guns were discharged at him, but on he came, and running against us fired a ten-inch solid shot into our larboard forward port; the shot ranging aft, swept 20 men, more than half the force on the gun-deck. The iron-clad swung alongside of us, when we gave him our port broadside with guns depressed—which apparently disabled him, for he ceased firing and drifted down the river. We had not reloaded our guns when a large ram was discovered steaming at full speed for us. The "Arkansas" was headed for him, and the vessels collided with an awful crash, broadside to broadside. The ram passed around the stern of the

"Arkansas" and ran into the bank under the batteries. Had our stern guns been loaded then we could have destroyed the ram, as his bows were entirely out of the water, and he was but a short distance from us. The ram kept backing hard, and soon got afloat. Another ram now came down, but a broadside from the Arkansas disabled him, and his consort took him in tow, and succeeded in getting him up the river out of the range. The gun-boats then withdrew from action, and the firing ceased on both sides.

On the afternoon of July 24th, 1862, all of the enemy's vessels, above and below, were seen to be under way. We got ready, expecting a general attack; but were agreeably disappointed, for they all steamed away and abandoned the seige.

Though a great many shell had been thrown into Vicksburg, very little damage had been done. The citizens began to return, and business to some extent was resumed.

A number of Mechanics came from Jackson and Mobile and went to work repairing the injuries the "Arkansas" had received. The old pilot-house was taken off, and a new one was to be made. Captain Brown being in bad health, took a few days leave of absence, leaving Lieutenant Stevens in command.

Major-General John C. Breckinridge now proposed an expedition, and wished the "Arkansas" to co-operate. It was known that the enemy had several thousand men at Baton Rouge, and that the iron-clad "Essex" and a small wooden gun-boat was all the force afloat. It was proposed that General Breckinridge should move with his division by rail to Tangipahoa, a station on the New Orleans and Jackson railroad, thirty miles from Baton Rouge, and make a forced night march to that place, which he would attack at daylight. The "Arkansas" was to attack the gun-boats simultaneously. Lieutenant Stevens did not like to move with the "Arkansas" while Captain Brown was absent, and he preferred that General Breckinridge would wait until the repairs were completed and until Captain Brown should return. But General Breckinridge was anxious for the vessel to go without delay. As no Confederate could refuse to comply with the wish of one so universally loved and respected as General Breckinridge, Lieutenant Stevens consented to go, and at once began getting the ship ready. A full complement of men was obtained and organized, and at two A. M., August 4th, we started down the river. The "Arkansas" behaved well, and made with the current about fifteen miles an hour. We steamed on down during all the next day, passing many signs of the wanton and barbarous destruction of property by the enemy. The people on the river banks gathered around the burnt and charred remains of their once happy homes, and hailed with exclamations of delight the sight of their country's flag, and the gallant little "Arkansas" moving down to chastise the savage foe.

The next morning at one o'clock, being about fifteen miles below Port Hudson, the engines suddenly stopped. I was officer of the deck at the time, and learning from the engineer that he could not go ahead for some time, I rounded the vessel to, and let go the anchor. All of the engineers were called and started to work to

get the machinery in order. Each engineer had a different idea of what should be done. On the Yazoo, and until the "Arkansas" arrived at Vicksburg, we had a chief engineer who was a thorough mechanic and engineer, but at Vicksburg he was taken with the fever, and was at the hospital unable for duty when the steamer started for Baton Rouge. All of the other engineers were incompetent to run such engines as those of the "Arkansas," but they were the only ones to be had there at that time. They were mostly engineers who had served their time with the simple high-pressure engines of the Mississippi river boats; a few were navy engineers who had been in the service but a year or two, and had no practical experience. But they were all true, good men, and no doubt did their best. At daylight we were under way again, and proceeded on our way down. We could hear the guns of Breckinridge, and we had hopes of being able to reach Baton Rouge in time to be of service. As we were steaming rapidly down the river, around the point above Baton Rouge, our crew at quarters, and the sound of the conflict on shore cheering our anxious men, the starboard engine stopped; the port engine continuing to go ahead at full speed, turned the vessel quickly towards the bank, when, an eddy catching her bow and the swift current sweeping her stern down stream, she was irresistibly shoved ashore, where she wedged herself amongst the cypress stumps hard and fast. The engineers went to work to repair damages. An anchor was run out into the stream, and every exertion made to get the vessel afloat. In the afternoon a messenger arrived on board from General Breckinridge, saying that the enemy had been driven through the town, and that they were on the river bank protected by the gun-boats; that if we could get down by next morning at daylight, General Breckinridge would attack again, and would probably bag the whole party of Yankees. About sunset the "Arkansas" was afloat and the engines reported in order. Lieutenant Stevens decided to go up about two miles and take in coal, until it was time to start down.

In going into the landing at the coal pile, one of the engines gave way again and the vessel grounded, but was soon got afloat, and in an hour or two was again reported all right. At 3 A. M. next day we got under way and proceeded down the river, and arriving near the point, something broke about the machinery, and we were obliged to stop. The steamer was secured to the bank. Lieutenant Stevens now thought that the engines could not be depended upon, and determined to get the vessel in a good position for defence, and to hold on as long as possible, or until good engineers could be obtained, and the engines put in proper order. Accordingly the vessel was hauled, stern in, to a gap in the bank and secured. She thus presented her strongest points to the river.

About seven o'clock that morning, several gun-boats were seen coming up from Baton Rouge, but they approached the "Arkansas" cautiously, for though they were aware of her being disabled, they knew how hard she could hit. The iron-clad "Essex" came up within a quarter of a mile of us, and opened fire with his three bow guns. The senior engineer now came on deck, and reported in a loud voice: "The engines are in good order, sir." The crew cheered; Lieut. Stevens gave the order to let go the lines; the engines started ahead slow, and the little

ship moved out into the stream. The bell was struck to go ahead at "full speed," when the port engine went ahead fast and the starboard engine stopped. The vessel went into the bank on top of the stumps, with her stern towards the enemy. The stern guns being in my division, I opened as soon as they bore, and had fired a few rounds, when I was ordered by Lieut. Stevens to take my men on shore with their small arms. The steamer was set on fire, and soon blew up. The stern of the Arkansas had only boiler iron to protect it, and as any shot striking there could not fail to penetrate the magazines or boilers, Mr. Stevens thought it useless to run the risk of having his entire crew blown up. A truer friend to the South, a cooler or braver man than Lieutenant Stevens never lived, though there were not wanting newspaper editors and other bomb-proof critics to defame him as a coward and traitor.

The crew of the Arkansas proceeded to Jackson, Mississippi, where we were soon joined by our men who had recovered from the swamp fever and slight wounds, so that we then mustered 400 strong. Captain Brown having returned from leave, took command of us, and shortly afterwards we were ordered to Port Hudson.

When we arrived at that place, we found four twenty-four pound seige guns (rifled), and one 42-pounder, smooth bore. We manned those guns and kept a sharp lookout for our old friend, the Essex, and a small gun-boat that had gone on a pirating expedition up the river.

On the night of September 7th, our lookout signaled that the "Essex" was coming down. We waited quietly at quarters until the Essex and her consort alongside of her got close under the battery, when we opened fire; our men worked lively and we pounded away in fine style. The "Essex," after getting at "long tow," fired a few wild shots and passed on down.

Large working parties soon arrived at Port Hudson, and commenced to throw up batteries all along the bluffs, and to construct field works in the rear. Some cavalry, light artillery, and a regiment of heavy artillerymen, arrived under command of General Beal, who took charge of us all.

About a week afterwards I was ordered by General Beal to proceed to Atlanta, Georgia, and attend to forwarding ordnance stores. When I had got as far as Jackson, Mississippi, I was taken with the fever, and had to lay by. I telegraphed my orders to Lieutenant McCorkle, and then went out to Raymond to get well. In a few days I received a letter from Captain Brown, saying that his command had been ordered to Yazoo City, and for me to join him there as soon as I was able to travel. On my way to take the train, I received a dispatch from Lieutenant Commanding John N. Maffitt, at Mobile, stating that I had been ordered to the steamer Florida, and to hurry on and join her. Being perfectly delighted with the prospect of getting to sea, I lost no time in reporting on board that ship.

C. W. Read,

*New Orleans, Louisiana.*



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