



"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."

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MISSISSIPPI FLOTILLA.

A Nondescript Navy Which Speedily Becomes a Power.

THE SUMMER OF 1862.

Fighting the Batteries and Boats Around Vicksburg.

GRANT AND PORTER.

Brilliant Work Done at Arkansas Post.

BY W. H. MICHAEL, LATE OF THE NAVY.



ARRAGUT dragged his fleet of 17 vessels, carrying 154 guns, through the mud at the Delta into the Mississippi River, in April, 1862. All of these vessels were built for ships of war, and were hence ill adapted for river service. In addition to these vessels he had five armed steamers, hastily equipped for the service, and a number of mortar-schooners. With this force, by the most skillful and gallant fighting, Forts St. Philip and Jackson were speedily reduced and the enemy's defense fleet wholly captured or destroyed. Forts Pike and Macomb, guarding the approaches to New Orleans by way of Lake Pontchartrain, Fort Livingston, at Barataria Bay and Fort Berwick, at Berwick Bay, were hastily abandoned, thus opening undisputed way to that city. All the guns the enemy could remove from the latter forts were taken to Vicksburg. New Orleans was surrendered. Without taking time to repair his vessels, the energetic Admiral dispatched seven of them, under Capt. Craven, up the river to take possession of Baton Rouge and Natchez, and to destroy such boats and property of the enemy as they might find. The fleet met with no opposition until it reached Vicksburg. The civil and military authorities of this city replied to the demands for surrender.

MISSISSIPPIANS KNOW NOT HOW TO SURRENDER. No wonder they felt defiant in their natural stronghold; for, indeed, the rugged hills above, below and in the rear, with their frowning tops standing in defiance, were enough to make their possessors bold and haughty and to deter a foe, without the miles of intrenchments bristling with cannon that afterward defied for months the combined genius and energy of our army and navy. The fleet under Craven arrived before Vicksburg the 22d of May, 1862. With a land force of 20,000 men to co-operate with the navy at this time, it can hardly be doubted that the city might have been taken and held. As it was the vessels were powerless to do more than silence the river batteries temporarily, and then remain idle spectators while the fortifications were extended and strengthened. This was the condition of affairs when Farragut arrived, a short while after, with several other war vessels and the mortar-schooners under David D. Porter. Though the damaged condition of the boats, the low stage of the river, and the absence of a land force were against him, Farragut determined to attack the place.

THE RIVER BATTERIES AT THIS TIME. The enemy had at this time in position to resist attack from the river, 26 guns. One 9-inch, three 8-inch and one 18-pounder rifle were placed on the highest point on the



GEN. GRANT AND COMMODORE PORTER. bluffs above the city in the bend, where they had a raking fire on the vessels, and were as little exposed as possible; just above them were works containing 24-pounders; a half mile above the city, 50 feet above the water, was a battery containing six 32-pounders and four 42-pounders, commanded by Capt. Todd, a brother-in-law of President Lincoln. The other 11 guns were scattered along the ridge in the most advantageous positions for a mile or more. It will be seen by this that the rebel batteries at this time extended over a distance of three miles, and would have our vessels to range for at least three-fourths of an hour. The fleet got under way June 28, and after a well-ensued fight, lasting several hours, the enemy's guns were silenced and the boats came to anchor above the city, having

lost 15 killed and 30 wounded. The vessels were repeatedly struck, but none disabled. After the passage of the fleet Farragut wrote to the Secretary of the Navy that his "vessels had run" by the batteries and could do it repeatedly, but that the enemy's guns could be silenced temporarily, but to accomplish more than that a sufficient land force was necessary.

Orders were received directing Porter to proceed at once with his mortar-schooners to Hampton Roads, whither he started July 2. DAVIS WITH HIS FLOTILLA and Farragut with his fleet were at anchor below the mouth of the Yazoo, with no special work to do. The one had fought his way up the river to the point where they were lying. All the fortified points on the river had been wrested from the enemy, with the exception of Vicksburg and Port Hudson. It had been demonstrated that these strongholds could not be taken by the navy alone. While the Government was extremely anxious to capture Vicksburg, an army could not be spared at this time to co-operate with the navy in its reduction.

THE REBEL RAM ARKANSAS MAKES A BOLD DASH. It was rumored that the rebels were building a powerful ironclad ram at Yazoo City, and that she would swoop down on the Yankee gunboats as soon as she was ready to move. After waiting a few days in vain for her to put in an appearance, the Tyler, Carondelet and ram Queen of the West were sent up the Yazoo to look for her. They started on the 15th of July, and had not ascended the river many miles when they suddenly found what they were looking for. A running fight followed, in which the rebel ram proved herself a match for all three of her antagonists. She was heavily plated with railroad iron and was provided with an iron prow. The shells from our guns glanced off her armor, doing little damage. One or two shells entered her portholes, and it was thought a shot penetrated her hull, as she was observed pumping a constant stream of water. She fought her way out of the Yazoo and headed for Vicksburg, notwithstanding this would take her through both fleets. Fortunately for her every vessel had steam down except the Essex, and her Captain waited for orders.

Farragut, in referring to the failure of the Captain of the Bragg to avail himself of so unique a chance, said: "Every man has his chance; the Captain of the Bragg had his and missed it." The ram Lancaster had but little steam up, yet she made a move toward the bold enemy and received a shot through her main-deck, which ended her performance. The ram, which proved to be the Arkansas, received a terrible hammering from our guns; but she was so heavily armored that only one shot crushed through her. She soon passed out of range of our vessels and tied up at the wharf in front of Vicksburg. Had our vessels been ready for her she would undoubtedly have been destroyed.

Farragut and Davis were both chagrined at the bold and successful achievement of the Arkansas, and determined to attack her under the batteries where she lay. The Essex and Queen of the West were detailed for this hazardous duty. The Queen succeeded in ramming her and the Essex raked her at short range with 11-inch shot, killing many of her crew, but they failed to sink her, as they had hoped to do. The Essex went on down and the Queen returned, neither having sustained serious injury, although struck many times.

THE RECOLL FROM VICKSBURG. The hot season was at hand, and the crews were rapidly yielding to the ill-effects of the climate and vicious water. Forty-five per cent. of the men and officers were on the sick list and unfit for duty. Under the circumstances it seemed the imperative duty of the commanders of both fleets to take their vessels away from the sickly locality. Farragut determined to go down the river immediately, while Davis concluded to stay as long as Gen. Williams, with his small command, remained. But Williams wisely determined to go along with Farragut, and Davis moved his base of operations to Helena. Here he reorganized his crews, and filled the places of several hundred men whose terms of shipment had expired.

The iron-clad Essex and ram Sumter remained between Vicksburg and Baton Rouge, their nearest support being the Kincaid and Katahdin, at the latter place. On the 15th of August Gen. Breckinridge attacked Gen. Williams with a superior force at Baton Rouge. Although our little force fought desperately, it was gradually driven back to the river. When the gunboats could do so without endangering our men, they opened on the enemy with shrapnel and shell, and in a short time drove him back. Gen. Williams was killed and his command badly cut up, but the loss of the enemy, owing to the destructiveness of the heavy shells and shrapnel from the boats, was much larger.

THE RAM ARKANSAS DESTROYED. It was intended that the ram Arkansas should support Breckinridge in his attack on Williams, but she failed to put in an appearance. The Essex lost no time in going up the river to ascertain why she had thus failed. The ram was sighted not many miles above, lying against the Louisiana shore, apparently engaged in repairing her machinery. The Essex made for her at once. Without showing any resistance, the ram's crew set her on fire and escaped to the shore. Before the Essex could send a force to extinguish the flames, they had reached the magazine and the famous vessel blew up. Thus ended the career of the most formidable ram the rebels had yet built for service on the river. The Union force at Baton Rouge was withdrawn to New Orleans, and the river between Vicksburg and Port Hudson was left in undisturbed possession of the enemy for over three months. This recoil from Vicksburg was not brought about by the enemy, but was solely the result of the army not being ready to co-operate with

THE RIP VAN WINKLE OF THE PENSION COMMITTEE.



WILL HE EVER AWAKEN?

the navy in a final attack on the Sebastopol of the South. But this period of comparative inactivity—from July to November—"was the calm before the storm." Yet it must not be understood that the navy was idle during this interim. An expedition was sent up the Yazoo in August, which spread terror and destruction along that stream as far as the Big Sunflower. Many valuable steamers were captured and burned, and Confederate property valued at a half million dollars destroyed. The vessels stationed along the Mississippi and in the Tennessee and Cumberland were constantly on the move in keeping those rivers open for army communication, in conveying transports, in supporting weak points and chasing the irrepensible guerrilla.



THE RAM ARKANSAS.

On the 15th of November, 1862, Commander David D. Porter, holding the local rank of Acting Rear-Admiral, assumed command of the squadron. Davis had already built several tin-clads, a class of vessels found to be necessary in low stages of water and in operating on the tributaries to the Mississippi. Porter increased their number as rapidly as possible. These vessels were light draft stern and side-wheel steamboats, with half-inch iron bulkheads built up all around as high as the boiler-deck. The pilot-house was lowered to the hurricane deck, and plated with inch iron. Additional protection was built around the boilers and steam-pipes. The cabins and state-rooms were altered very little. On the whole they were comfortable vessels for the crews and officers. They were armed with 12 and 24-pounder brass howitzers, mounted on friction carriages. Later in the war were armed with the stronger vessels of this class were armed with 32-pounder Parrots.

A more pretentious class of vessels was added to the squadron, such as the Tuscomb, Lafayette, Indianola, Choctaw, and Chillicothe. These vessels were heavily plated and armed with 100-pounder rifles and 11-inch guns, and had they been deliberately built would have been equal to any emergency on the river. The old ram Sampson was converted into a floating blacksmith and machine-shop for the use of the squadron, and the Red Rover was altered into a hospital ship of the most convenient and comfortable character. Thus equipped, Porter was impatient for work.

GRANT AND PORTER MEET. His wish was realized in November, 1862. Capt. McAllester, Quartermaster at Cairo, gave a supper to army and naval officers aboard his steamer one evening. When the guests were about to sit down to supper, a small, travel-worn man in citizen's clothes was ushered in and introduced as Gen. Grant. He and Porter were soon engaged in conversation alone. After a few preliminary remarks Grant asked: "When can you move with your gunboats?" Porter replied that he could "move within 24 hours with all the old gunboats and five or six new ones, together with the Tyler, Lexington and Conestoga."

"Very well, then," quickly replied Grant; "I will leave you now, and write at once to Sherman to have 30,000 infantry and artillery ready to start for Vicksburg the mo-

ment you get to Memphis. I will return to Holly Springs to-night, and will start with a large force for Grenada as soon as possible. I will draw Pemberton, with the larger part of his army, out of Vicksburg, and in his absence you and Sherman will be able to take it."

Without partaking of any supper, the quiet, unpretentious man took his departure and rode in the saddle most of the way back to Holly Springs. This brief interview between these two great men was the first practical step toward the capture of Vicksburg. Grant drew Pemberton out of his stronghold according to the plan, and Sherman made his attack; but the unexpected strength of the enemy's works, the heavy rains that came on, and the sudden return of Pemberton's army were obstacles that Sherman was not prepared to overcome, and he withdrew his army to the transports and re-embarked.

NAVY PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS LOOKED UPON the work done here by the gunboats with no small degree of pride. The enemy was protected by a strongly-built fort, casemated with railroad iron. His guns were of heavy caliber and his range perfect. In the face of this opposition the ironclads laid head-on and continued their deliberate and destructive fire till every gun in the fort was either dismounted or rendered unfit for use. As at Fort Henry, the elevation was just right for the boats, and their iron plating forward afforded ample protection. Yet they sustained some damage and lost several men killed by the enemy's shots entering the portholes. The De Kalb and Louisville lost six killed and 25 wounded. The Cincinnati, though struck often fairly and squarely, sustained no losses.

DECORATION DAY. [Respectfully dedicated to Lyon Post, No. 11, and kindred Posts in the State of Nebraska.]

BY CHAR. RIEP. The morning dawns and leaps from night; Aurora's golden fingers light; Eubronius, while the "morning" plays, Our prairie-homes in southern rays; The daisy-don'ts pass sweetly by; Dissolving in the azure sky; And snowdrops from on high appear, Portending peace and cheer. Out of the slow-increasing hum The bugle sounds, with muffled drum, "March! march! in line," "You veterans here! Commemorate the soldier dead; Join with us through this "Thirtieth May," Nebraska's Decoration Day.

Whist! dainty zephyrs sing and spread The requiem of our silent dead; Let us now love's command obey, Our hearts a home and rest-day pay. Here sleep those known of battle fame, Let garlands green entwine their name; They stood like comrades side by side, Fought bravely and put to flight The Nation's foes on land and main, Our glorious Union to maintain; Crown all the graves and shady seats With flowers pure and scented wreaths, Rest, conquerors over death and time, In tents of joy, in camps sublime.

Very Like Logic. [Judge.] Professor—Mr. Eubronius, you may demonstrate to the class that smoking cigars is not injurious. Mr. Eubronius—Smoking cigars kills; those who smoke them are no earthly use and ought to be killed; the good or bad anything does must be judged from the effect it has on the greatest number; therefore, since cigars kill the community at large of those who are useless to it, smoking them is not only not injurious but beneficial.

A Boy Spy in Dixie.

Service Under the Shadow of the Hangman's Noose.

WITH PLEASANTON.

Scenes About the Headquarters of the Cavalry.

"A DIVERSION."

Terrible Sacrifice of Men that Might Have Been Avoided.

(Copyright, 1887.)

DO not remember the exact location of headquarters after our return from the raid, during which I was engaged in this telegraph duty. We, the telegraphers, were quartered in an old house somewhere convenient to the railroad and telegraph wires. It was probably close by the Sixth Corps' position, as Gen. Sedgwick occupied the same house with his staff, and as their horses were tied about the fences. It is not a matter of importance, except that my statements in regard to the telegraphing may be called in question, and I desire to fortify myself with witnesses who were "thar or tharabouts."

One little incident will serve to locate me. Gen. Pleasanton was then the Chief of Cavalry, to whose general staff I was afterward attached. He also occupied rooms in this same building. Late one night a message was brought in to me to deliver to the General. The building we were in had been apparently deserted by the family. I was told by some of the officers that I'd find Gen. Pleasanton in his room up stairs. I went tramping up the uncarpeted steps, with my big cavalry boots and spurs rattling and resounding through the great empty hall in the "wee sma' hours," so that I awakened Col. Blake, who was sleeping wrapped up in his blanket. The old Colonel gave me a terrific blast from his bugle mouth, which awakened every officer in the house. Some one crawling from under another blanket pointed to Gen. Pleasanton's room, which I entered unceremoniously, glad enough to get any place out of sound of the old Colonel's voice.

I found Gen. Pleasanton by the aid of the commissary candle I carried for a lantern, lying asleep in his elegant apartment on an ambulance stretcher. The head of his couch was an empty cracker-box, on which was the remnant of his student lamp—about an inch of candle—alongside of which were two derringer pistols.

Probably because I was nervous or rattled by the fuss I had raised in the hall outside, I abruptly awakened the General, at the same moment stooping down to light his candle with mine. The old man must have been having a nightmare, as the moment I spoke he started up, grabbed for his pistols, and scared me so badly that I dropped the candle on the floor, leaving us in the dark, retreating to the door as I said: "Don't shoot; it's me." After another "blessing" for my midnight endeavor to deliver a message I got the matter straightened out.

I was telling Gen. Pleasanton of this incident some time ago, which he recalled in his usual pensive manner, though he insists that he never carried a pistol during the entire war.

GEN. PLEASANTON was certainly one of the most courteous, gentlemanly General officers in the Army of the Potomac.

It was my privilege and pleasure to be near his person a great deal up to Gettysburg, and I cannot recall a single instance of his using harsh or ungentlemanly language toward his associates. Indeed, the

General had more the appearance and manner of a Presbyterian minister than of a dashing cavalryman. During the war he wore his full beard closely trimmed, going about the camps in his quiet, easy way like a Chaplain. It was Custer and Kilpatrick and Gregg who possessed the dashing, dare-devil style. Buford, like Pleasanton, was an old Regular, and went about amongst his troops as if the

war was a business that could not be hurried.

I saw Gen. Pleasanton angry one day at a matter that seemed so trifling that all the staff enjoyed the affair. His servant, or hostler, who took care of his blooded riding horse, had been regularly supplied by the General with a little cash to be used in



THE DEAD ENGINEER.

keeping a supply of loaf or lump sugar on hand. It was the General's habit before mounting to receive from his hostler a lump of the sugar, which he fed himself to his horse. It is said, you know, that the feeding of a lump of sugar to a horse regularly has an effect similar to love powder, and creates a peculiar

ATTACHMENT OF THE HORSE TO THE FEEDER OF THE SUGAR. On this occasion either the contraband had spent the sugar allowance for "commissary" or some one desired to play a trick on the General by substituting some lumps of hard salt for the sugar. The horse found out the deceit and kicked on too much salt, and investigation showed the General that he had been trifled with, and he was very mad about it.

It is probably true that Gen. Pleasanton, as the Chief of Cavalry, will be held responsible for not having obtained information of Gen. Lee's escape from Fredericksburg. I have talked with Gen. Pleasanton as recently as the Summer of 1887 on this subject, but his explanation would make an interesting chapter in itself, and does not pertain to this narrative of facts.

It is sufficient to say that, personally, I attribute the failure entirely to Gen. Hooker's indifference to the value of cavalry and scouts. He was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Potomac. If he had ordered Gen. Pleasanton to look after Gen. Lee's rear or flank, it would have been done. But what is the use in reflecting on any one man? It was better that Lee should have been defeated as an invader at Gettysburg than as a defender at Manassas.

I hope it may not be considered egotistical in me to observe here that I, as a scout and



A STRATEGIC DIVERSION.

spy at headquarters, was in no way responsible for the lack of information of Lee's departure. I was not Chief of the Secret Service.

I was busy every day and hour on this telegraph duty, and was not thought of in connection with scouting. I cannot resist the temptation to say right here, in connection with my proposed

SERVICES WITH BURNSIDE, that if he had remained in command I would have been doing signal duty from Gen. O'Connell's house in Fredericksburg, or from some point in the enemy's lines.

If I had gone over the river as proposed, and had mixed with the Confederates as a spy, I certainly would have secured information of the movement of two of Lee's corps. I should most assuredly have been able to have signalled this information over the river, and then and there Gen. Hooker would have received the credit for having "so wonderfully divined the enemy's movements and thwarted his purposes." The poor, despised spy would probably have been hanged, and his services never been heard of.

I hovered about that ill-fated Fredericksburg during all of that winter, and until the movement to Gettysburg, without once having an opportunity to get into the town. I was willing, perfectly willing, to go over as a spy at the imminent risk of my life, that I might be near Gen. For some unfathomable reason, the fates were against me every time.

I shall never do this subject justice until I write a dime novel, giving the entire story. I have not done so in this narrative of facts, because, you know, I am a family man, and a too literal confession might react upon my gray head.

Fredericksburg during all of these days had, of course, a gloomy, deserted appearance. There were always a few Confederate sentries on duty, which we could plainly see on the streets. At the river crossing, or ferry, an occasional flag-of-truce boat would be rowed over, but on these occasions the Gen-



WAKING THE GENERAL.