

# ONLY CONFEDERATE CRUISE ON INLAND SEAS

(Continued from Eighth Page.)

they knew the crisis of their desperate undertaking had arrived. All eyes turned toward the part of the vessel where the signal was to be displayed. It was not there.

Startled and disgusted by the turn affairs had taken, the Southerners steamed a little farther away from the war vessel and began to cruise slowly about, awaiting the moment for the signal to appear.

An hour passed, and then another. Still the light did not appear to tell them that their opportunity had come. Slowly but surely the night wore away, until the faint gray streaks in the eastern sky told of the approach of day. It was then the Confederates realized that their plot had failed, and that their dreams of a vast and powerful Southern navy on the Great Lakes had been rudely awakened.

### The Steamer Scuttled.

Sorely disappointed, they turned the little steamer toward the Canadian shore, and near the mouth of the Detroit river scuttled her and allowed her to sink. They one and all reached their homes in safety. Even the Confederate spy, Major Cois, was afterward allowed to escape, through the strong influence brought to bear in his case by officers high in authority.

Long afterward John Y. Beall was captured, tried, and hung on Governor's Island, in New York Harbor. Some of those who witnessed his execution have many times spoken of the sturdy and manly bearing of the unfortunate man during his imprisonment and the supreme moment on the scaffold. Major Clarence A. Dix, the officer in charge, asked Beall what he had to say as he stood on the gallows. The reply was: "Gentlemen, this is a judicial murder. I die in the service and defense of my country."

Col. Bennett G. Burleigh, who was Beall's right hand man in the capture of the Philo Parsons, and who was one of the prime factors in the entire movement, is still living and sits as a member of the Parliament of Great Britain. His career has been full of all sorts of experiences and adventures.



BARRY BULKLEY, Secretary Citizens Executive Committee for the G. A. R.

tempt that was made to establish a Confederate navy on the Great Lakes. There was a number of attempts even before the episode of the Philo Parsons, but none of them came so near to attaining success as did that single bold stroke of Beall, Burleigh and their followers.

upon plans of the Southern officials, never known by the Federals. The first plan for a Confederate cruise on the Great Lakes originated in the fertile brain of Lieut. William H. Murdaugh, an able Confederate naval officer, who had served on the Merrimac. His original plan was more daring than any of those subsequently adopted, and appeared to give more promise of success. He formulated his plan late in 1862 and submitted it to Secretary Mallory of the Confederate Navy Department in February, 1863. It is preserved in the Confederate naval records and reads as follows:

"The party to leave the Confederacy at the earliest possible day, to be ready for commencing operations with the opening of navigation, which will be probably about the middle of April. The commanding officer to be furnished with a letter of credit for \$100,000, although it is not presumed that more than half this amount will be expended.

### On Lake Superior.

"After reaching Canada to purchase, through the agency of some reliable merchant, a small steamer, say one of 200 tons, that can pass through the Welland Canal. If practicable, to let the agent equip and victual the vessel and collect a crew of fifty men, ostensibly with a view to mining operations on Lake Superior. If this is not practicable the officers will separate and collect each a party and join the vessel at some point on Lake Erie. The object of the expedition not to be made known to the men until the vessel is clear of the Canadian coast, when strong inducements in the way of pay, etc., must be held out to them for making the attempt and still stronger ones for its successful accomplishment. Those not willing to make the attempt to be returned to the Canadian shore; those who are willing to be shipped into the Confederate service. In collecting men, much judgment must be exercised in the selections. The crew will be armed with cutlasses and revolvers. The vessel will be provided with a number of small iron buoys to be used as torpedoes, and also the powder, fuses, etc., to charge and fire them. These are to be used in the destruction of canal locks. She must also have on board plenty of spirits of turpentine and incendiary composition for rapid work in starting fires.

"The first point to be aimed at is Erie, Pa., the arrival there to be so timed as to make it about 1 a. m. The steamer to be laid alongside the United States steamer Michigan, and that vessel to be

carried with as little noise as possible. If there is a reasonable hope that the vessel has been carried without its being known beyond the vessels engaged, both vessels will leave the harbor and proceed toward the Welland Canal, with a view to getting the small steamer through into Lake Ontario before the news of the capture should have reached the Canadians, who might interpose objections to her doing so, should the object of her voyage be apparent. But if the capture is not made secretly then the work of burning every particle of Federal property afloat will be immediately commenced. Even in this latter contingency, the attempt will still be made to get the small steamer into Lake Ontario, when she, under the command of the second officer of the expedition, would have a fine field, but the most important part of her work would be to destroy the aqueduct of the Erie Canal, which crosses the Genesee River at Rochester, seven miles from the lake, and the locks of a branch of this canal at Oswego. If a passage through the Welland Canal for the small steamer should be refused by the Canadians, both vessels would operate in Lakes Erie, Huron, and Michigan. In Lake Erie, after leaving the town of Erie, Buffalo would be the first point to be visited, the feet of trading vessels in its harbor and the locks of the great Erie Canal to be destroyed. The next place would be Tonawanda, distant about thirty miles from Buffalo, where there is also an entrance into the Erie Canal, which would be destroyed. Then, coasting along the southern shore of the lake, destroy the locks of the canals leading to the Ohio River, four in number, and burn the vessels fallen in with. Then pass Detroit in the night, and if possible without notice, pass through Lake Huron and into Lake Michigan, and make for the great city of Chicago. At Chicago burn the shipping and destroy the locks of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, connecting Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. Then turn northward, and, touching at Milwaukee and other place, but working rapidly, pass again into Lake Huron, go to the Sault Ste. Marie, and destroy the lock of the canal of that name. Then the vessel could be run into Georgian Bay, at the bottom of which is a railway connecting with the main Canadian lines, and be run ashore and destroyed."

### Mallory Gave Approval.

Mallory approved the plan, and consented to provide \$25,000 for the enterprise. Jefferson Davis at first approved it, but afterward decided that any Confederate operations on the lakes would too greatly embarrass the relations of the Confederacy with England. Murdaugh and most of those he had interested in the proposed raid were ordered abroad. And so, as afterward reported, "the inviting and brilliant scheme" was rejected. He always blamed the ultimate failure of the several Confederate enterprises against Great Lake cities to the changes made in his original plan. "Months of precious time had passed away," to quote the Confederate reports, when in August, 1864, Secretary Mallory authorized Lieuts. John Wilkinson and R. D. Minor (the latter formerly Murdaugh's ward-room messmate on the Merrimac) to organize an expedition against the Michigan and lake commerce. President Davis had now veered around and said, "It is better to fail than not to make the attempt, as it has already been vaguely talked of in Montreal." The expedition was to be on different lines than that proposed by Murdaugh, and was better equipped with "the needful." The party was provided with \$35,000 in gold, and also authorized to use the proceeds of a cargo of cotton, afterward sold in Halifax for \$111,000—a total of \$146,000.

The raiding party was originally composed of John Wilkinson, R. D. Minor, R. P. Loyall, and three other Confederate lieutenants, several acting masters, and other persons, twenty-two in all. They ran the Wilmington blockade under a heavy fire October 7, 1865, and reached Halifax. There it was ostentatiously given out that the party was en route to England. Soon, however, they divided, and proceeding by different routes across New Brunswick and Quebec, arrived, under assumed names, at Montreal October 21.

### The Second Raiding Project.

Here the second raiding project was carefully matured. The plan was for the party to take passage on a lake steamer at Windsor (opposite Detroit)



L. P. SHOEMAKER, Vice Chairman Citizens' Executive Committee.

and then as soon as they were outside of British waters rise on the officers and crew and then run the steamer to the island. The details were arranged with much more thoroughness than were those for the abortive effort actually made a year later. Lieutenant Williamson sent a reliable man to Sandusky and learned that the Michigan was at anchor 200 yards from the island, with six guns bearing on the prison; that there were only 400 soldiers on the island, and that the only guns were two howitzers, one on the ferryboat plying between Sandusky city and the island.

Lieutenant Minor, who appears to have been the executive officer of this expedition, managed to secure a considerable quantity of warlike stores, although the work had to be done with great caution. His subsequent report to the Confederate Navy Department shows that they secured two 9-pound cannon, 100 navy revolvers, pistol ammunition, powder and bullets in large quantities. They did not dare to invest in cannon balls and cutlasses, for fear of arousing British suspicion, but they showed their grim determination by buying a large quantity of dumbbells for cannon balls and butcher knives for cutlasses.

The original party of twenty-one was joined at Toronto by thirty-two ex-rebels, officers and privates, who had escaped to Canada from Northern prisons. Arrangements were made to board a screw steamer plying between Ogdensburg and Chicago, as laborers bound to the latter city to be employed on the city waterworks. A man named Connelly was sent to Ogdensburg, and paid for twenty-five passages for a party at St. Catherine's on the Welland Canal. He secured the privilege of adding as many additional "laborers" as he could secure by the time the vessel reached St. Catherine's.

### Assembled at St. Catherine's.

No suspicion had been aroused, and the party assembled safely at St. Catherine's, with the Confederate guns, powder, pistols, dumbbells, and butcher knives safely boxed as machinery.

The plan of this expedition was "when clear of British jurisdiction to rise and overpower the officers and crew, seize the steamer, secure the prisoners, mount the guns, arm the men; and proceed to Sandusky." It was hoped to reach the Michigan by daylight, "collide with her as if by accident, and board and carry her with cutlass and pistol." There her guns, loaded with grape and canister, were to be turned on the headquarters



MR. CHAPIN BROWN, Chairman Committee on Legislation.

at Johnson's Island, and a boat sent ashore to demand an immediate surrender of the Confederate prisoners, and all guns and material of war. This was figured as easy, and probably would have

been used to transfer the Union prisoners later to Canada, forty miles distant. Then, the six captured ships were all to be manned with the most daring of the liberated Confederate prisoners. "Then," reported Lieutenant Minor, "we would have the lake shore at our mercy, and all the vast commerce of Lake Erie as our just and lawful prey."

The above innocent notice appeared in the personal column of the "New York Herald" in October, 1863. It was the prearranged notice to the Confederate prisoners that the date of the effort to liberate them was at hand.

But while the little band of determined Confederates was confidently awaiting the coming of the Ogdensburg packet up the canal something happened. Secretary Welles telegraphed all lake mayors to be on the lookout, and the awakened British authorities ordered the arrest of any vessel passing the upper terminus of the canal with any suspicious number of passengers on board. The Confederate officers always believed themselves to have been betrayed to the British authorities by a Canadian named McCaig, whom they thought was the actual source of Welles' information is not known to this day.

The betrayal of the plan necessitated the prompt scattering of the members of the expedition. The principal officers proceeded to Montreal and from there made their way in open wagons and buggies in bitterly cold weather through the wilds of lower Canada and New Brunswick. "We often looked," says Lieutenant Minor, "into the houses on the Maine side of the river with a desire to go to them as their people do to ours." They shipped again at Halifax and succeeded in again running the Wilmington blockade. By February 4, 1864, the leaders were back at Richmond, and Minor completed his report of the fiasco with the statement: "But

been if the plan had succeeded thus far, for but ineffectual resistance could have been offered. The next move was to be the capture of six steamers known to be at the Sandusky wharf. These would

for treachery, which no one can guard against, our enterprise would have been the feature of the war and our little navy have won another laurel wreath of glorious renown."



WILLIAM S. ODELL, Chairman of Shields' Division Association.

The good old gunboat Michigan is still in the service, flying the Stars and Stripes, and is now, as then, the only warship on the inland seas. But this was by no means the only at-

navy, which are preserved at the Navy Department here, show with what persistence and determination the Richmond government kept at work on this line. They also give much information

# PIRATICAL SEIZURE OF THE STEAMER GEORGE POST BY THE REBELS

A SMALL iron cannon, recently added to the extensive collection of war relics in the possession of Mr. Frank Hume, a well-known resident of Washington, D. C., is associated with an interesting incident of the civil war, the piratical seizure of the steamer George Post, in the Potomac River by adventurous secessionists.

In ante-bellum days this cannon formed the armament of a sloop in the service of the State of Virginia, which was employed principally with the recapture of escaped slaves. The northern boundary of Virginia was the first objective point of the runaway black on his way to the free States. Once beyond he was certain of such assistance as he required. Sympathizers would furnish food and clothing and would direct him on his journey along the chain of the "underground railway," which led to Canada and liberty. To prevent this was the mission of the sloop's service, and she patrolled the waters forming the boundary between Maryland and Virginia, as far up the Potomac as was navigable for a vessel of her draft. Constantly on the alert, she was often called upon to use the cannon with which she was armed for halting such vessels as were suspected of harboring black fugitives.

When Virginia seceded from the Union in April, 1861, was a time of general unrest. Sumter had fallen, and at Baltimore demonstrations had been made by

secession sympathizers against the Federal volunteers en route for Washington. Hostilities in the field had not commenced, but both the Unionists and Confederates were preparing for strife, and were tensely braced for the approaching conflict. Virginia initiated her withdrawal from the Union by the confiscation of such property—Federal or private—as she required for defense in the struggle which must inevitably ensue. Arms and munitions of war, available water craft, fortifications, public buildings—everything of possible utility was seized.

Prior to this steamboat lines plying between Baltimore and Washington transacted the necessary business of carrying passengers and freight, and made scheduled stops at various wharfs between the two terminals. Owing, in some instances, to the seizure of the steamers engaged in this traffic, and in other cases to an anticipation of such a result, this business was suspended. The George Post was one of the last steamers to make this trip. On Saturday, April 20, 1861, she started from her wharf at Washington loaded as usual with freight and passengers. The George Post never reached her destination. Rumors were published in the local papers on the following Monday that she had been seized by the Virginia authorities at Alexandria, and later it was circulated that she had been struck or sunk by a cannon shot, in at-

tempting to pass Fort Washington, while on her way to Aquia Creek in the Confederate service. Nothing definite, however, was known for some time of the particulars. She carried on this trip, leaving Washington, among others, five passengers costumed in female attire, who in engaging passage had represented themselves as school teachers. These women were of a large stalwart type with men more suggestive of the sterner sex than of that to which they were supposed to

## SOME HUMOROUS STORIES OF TRAGIC TIMES

ONE of the Pennsylvania old-time fighters says that when the State was greatly excited over the threatened invasion of the rebels, everybody shouldered arms and was ready to rush into the battlefield. When the enthusiasm was at its height, General McClellan had driven the enemy off, and Governor Curtin recalled the troops. A young man who was deeply imbued with the spirit of patriotism and religion, was describing his own feelings during this period. He was slow in coming to his decision, but said "I sought the direction of Heaven, and I heard a voice saying unto me, 'Go,' and I was on the point of going when Governor Curtin countermanded the order."

The following is told by a New York man, who wears a Grand Army badge: "The boys of the One Hundred and Seventh supported Cothran's Battery at Antietam. At about the hottest of the fight the enemy massed themselves opposite our front for an assault on Cothran's position. The battery was short of ammunition, and so reserved their fire, while throughout the whole field there was a lull in the tumult. The rebels advanced in a solid mass, with a precision of movement perfectly beautiful. It was a moment which tried the nerves of the bravest. In the meantime, one of our lads, becoming quite interested in the affair, climbed a high rock, where he could view the whole scene. He occupied his place unmindful of the bullets which were buzzing like bees around us. The rebels came on until we could see their faces, and then Cothran

mainly quality of decision demanded in the execution of a design. One of these individuals found the way to the pilot house, and opened conversation with the captain who was there guiding the vessel through the narrow river channel. To his surprise his visitor suggested an ability to act as pilot, and insisted upon taking the wheel for that purpose. Thoroughly astonished at such a demand from such a source the captain turned around in order to observe the person who ventured it. A transformation had taken place. The advancing column was literally torn to pieces by them. Our friend on the rock became frantic in his demonstrations of delight, and as one of the battery section sent shrapnel, which mowed down a long row of Johnnies, he swung his cap, and shouting so that the flying rebels could hear him, sang out: "Hull-ee-ee! Set 'em up on the other alley!"

commander of the ship found himself confronted by a man who undoubtedly proposed that the suggestion offered by the school teacher should be followed, and he seconded his persistence with a revolver. The movement of the captain to summon assistance was quietly prevented. The persuasion in the way it was offered, was unanswerable and effective. The wheel and the vessel changed hands without further disturbance or resistance. The four companions in this piratical adventure having dispersed with their disguises as school teachers, had with similar persuasion suppressed any hostility from the engineer. The complement of the ship's manifest were likewise convinced that resistance was useless.

These five men formed part of the crew of the sailboat which had been quietly, by tacks, following after the George Post. This was the sloop used for the capture of runaway blacks, and disguised as an innocent pleasure craft. The engine of the George Post was stopped and the sloop, when signaled, came alongside. The cannon was raised to the deck of the steamboat, and then mounted forward. The George Post was now a vessel of war in the service of the State of Virginia. This seizure was, of course, denounced by the Federal Government as an act of piracy. The course of the steamer was now directed toward Alexandria. Here she was unloaded and her freight consigned. She was hurriedly prepared for

the needs of the Confederate authorities. This done she was directed to proceed at once to Aquia Creek, whence cars had been sent to Richmond to obtain men and ammunition. The steamer started for this destination, and in passing Fort Washington she was fired upon. Although struck she was not disabled, and succeeded in making Aquia Creek. In the meanwhile a Federal revenue cutter had been sent after her, and soon after she left Aquia Creek on her return journey fell in with her.

With all steam on, the George Post endeavored to evade the Union boat and escape. The cutter gave pursuit, firing at frequent intervals a shell from a small gun which she carried. Although a fleet boat, the George Post was unable to dodge the fire of the enemy. It was a stern chase, and the flying boat was unable to use her cannon which was forward. Her case was absolutely hopeless, escape was impossible. She had been struck in vital places and was fast sinking. It was determined to beach the boat, and having been set on fire the ill-fated vessel was turned toward the shore. At the moment of beaching she exploded, but her crew, taking to water, escaped to land, and found their way to their command. The bulk of the vessel was permitted to remain at the scene of her final mishap through the period of the war and until she fell to pieces. The cannon was recently recovered by persons in the locality, and eventually found its way into the possession of Mr. Hume.