

Confederate Veteran.

COMMANDERS OF THE CONFEDERATE
NAVY.

CHARLES READ OF MISSISSIPPI.

BY JULIA PORCHER WICKHAM.

It is only by a strong effort of the imagination that we can picture to ourselves the conditions under which the Confederate government first began to function. Carried away by their determination to maintain their rights as sovereign States, the people of the South followed the line of least resistance and seceded. Having taken this most revolutionary step, they suddenly found themselves in a state of war, to their own great surprise and secret dismay; but, like a deep-sea swimmer, who knows it is either death or bold striking out for safety, the South caught its breath and went on. We are a friendly, sociable people, and we like to like and be liked. It is a well-known fact that General Beauregard had difficulty in convincing the Charleston people that they must not send supplies over to Anderson and his men on Fort Sumter, and Anderson was equally surprised and hurt in his feelings when he found his supplies stopped. He liked the Charlestonians, naturally enough, and they liked him.

It is amazing in what a short time, however, order was brought out of chaos. A government was arranged out of almost nothing. It was not perfect, but it functioned for four long years, after some sort of fashion.

The Secretary of the Treasury, C. G. Memminger, declared after the war was over that no taxes had ever been raised by the Confederate government for the carrying on of the war, and, instead of abusing its officials for imperfect management, the marvel was that they could do anything! "Sell cotton"? said Mr. Memminger, after a fierce attack upon him in the papers by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston. "There was no cotton to sell. There were no resources of any kind available for the support of the troops in the field."

This, of course, explains the great suffering among our men. In fact, it is pitiful to see how little our own people knew what they were going in for when that terrible war began. It was forced upon them largely by Lincoln's untruthfulness and utter duplicity, but, as we see now, we also entered into it too rashly, and without any proper preparation.

The navy, like everything else, as far as ships and materials went, had to be organized out of almost nothing; but not so with the men.

The "Old Navy," as it came to be called—that trained by the Federal government on many a distant sea—furnished, almost at once, the best of material in the way of officers and men, who, with comparatively few exceptions, offered their services at once to the Confederate government.

Among the least well known of these, and yet most worthy of fame, was Capt. Charles Read, of Yazoo City, Miss. Unfortunately, his spectacular raids against Northern shipping took place at the same time as the Gettysburg campaign, and, being overshadowed by the great events on land, were soon forgotten. It is one of those cases where the most worthy get the least notice, but, nevertheless, even in his short career, he gained the name of the Paul Jones of the Confederacy.

An account of him was published several years ago in *Munsey's Magazine* by a man named Walter Scott Meriwether, which account was kindly lent me by a friend. It is not every day that one discovers some one who is to all intents and purposes a brand new hero, and as such I want to introduce him to the readers of the CONFEDERATE VETERAN.

When the war broke out, Read promptly reported to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy in Richmond, Mr. Mallory, and was assigned to duty with the Mississippi flotilla. Having distinguished himself there, he joined the Confederate commerce destroyer, Florida, under Capt. J. Newland Maffitt, and, with him, escaped out into the open seas by running the blockade. It was on May 6, 1863, when off the coast of South America, that the Florida pursued and captured the brig Clarence. This ship had such a wide spread of canvas, and such graceful and beautiful lines, that a brilliant idea came suddenly into the head of the young adventurer. What if he could be given the command of that beautiful ship, which he had fallen in love with at first sight? Perfectly preposterous idea, of course. He couldn't sail a ship all by himself, could he? Captain Maffitt had very little to spare, and where could he get enough men, food, and ammunition? Still, the thought would not down he was simply crazy to get hold of that boat. Well, he could go talk it over with the captain anyhow; there would be no harm in that. "Nothing venture, nothing have" was a good saying to remember.

Going to the captain, he made the audacious request that the brig should be turned over to him as the commanded of another raider, and a few supplies and men be given him. Of course

many objections were raised, but Read managed to overcome them all. Four officers and eighteen seamen volunteered to join the adventure, wild as it was. The only gun Maffitt felt he could spare was a small boat howitzer, which was like the tiny brass cannon which modern yachts carry for saluting purposes, and which threw a shot about the size of a baseball. They carried some small arms as well, in case of a close fight, but Read relied more on his wits, apparently, than anything else. Besides the howitzer, Read fashioned a half dozen "Quaker guns" (make-believe cannon), which he fastened on the deck and covered with canvas, and which gave his little brig quite the air of being heavily armed. It seems an absurd equipment, but it was marvelous what he did with it. Finally, Read transferred his scanty crew, his one gun, and a small supply of provisions and ammunition to the Clarence, and hoisted the Confederate flag to her gaff. The Florida signaled "Good Luck," and they were off on their own. Captain Read was twenty-four years old when this event took place.

The raids made by Semmes in the Sumter and the Alabama are popularly regarded as the most notable in history, but Read, with his small equipment, far excelled them. All the seaports of the Confederacy were then closely blockaded by the Northern fleets, and it was his intention to prey on the vessels which thought themselves safe outside that iron band. He first captured, with extraordinary ease, the brig Whistling Wind (what an excellent name for a boat that is), bound for New Orleans, with coal for Farragut's fleet, then operating on the Mississippi River. Taking the crew on board his boat and all the stores he could utilize (and he needed almost everything), he set fire to the prize, and stood away for another sail which the "look out" had already sighted. This also was soon captured. It was a schooner laden with arms and clothing, and the captain gave a bond that they should all be delivered to the Confederate government, and so they were allowed to go on their way. And so it went on. He not only captured twenty-two vessels in fifty-two days, but included in his prizes an armed ship which had been specially fitted out to capture him. There were other "high lights" in his career which are not found in that of Admiral Semmes—such as his use of the, supposedly, modern edge of camouflage. He was distinctly a young man who used his brain to help out his powder. In the morning of June 12, he captured the

schooner Schindler, and a few hours later the Kate Stewart came idling along and was made a prize also. This made a most inconvenient number of prisoners on board his ship; and, when the bark Tacony hove in sight and was captured like the rest, Read realized that he must transfer some of his prisoners to one of his prizes. This he quickly did and sent her on her way back to the United States. He knew, of course, that would bring a fleet of vessels in search of him, so, as soon as the boat with the prisoners on it was out of sight, he burned the second vessel and then, though very reluctantly, he transferred himself, his gun and all, to the ugly, black Tacony and burned the beautiful little Clarence, knowing he never would be recognized in this new rig. The escaped prisoners quickly spread the news of this terrible raider, and at one time there were said to have been thirty-odd ships hunting for the white Clarence, which, of course, they did not find. Meanwhile, there was a panic in the seaboard cities of the North over the terrible destruction of their shipping; for, you remember, many New Englanders made their living almost entirely by the sea. Their boats meant their lives to them. One night, after Read had been sailing for a short time in the Tacony, a strange vessel suddenly appeared out of the darkness. Difficult as it was to see her, he quickly discerned her character, and all hands were at once busy about the deck of the Tacony, hustling the "Quaker guns" and the little howitzer out of sight. Presently, out of the darkness, roared a hail: "This is the United States ship Saratoga. What ship is that?" "This is the American ship Mary Jane, bound from Boston to New Orleans with stores for the blockading fleet," was the quick answer from the Tacony's captain. From the warship was roared an order to heave to and receive a boat.

Read had captured a boat called the Mary Jane only a short time before, brought her crew and her papers on board his own vessel, and then scuttled her; and now his plan was to masquerade under her name and so escape capture by this big Yankee war vessel. He detailed the first officer to quickly bring her log up to date while waiting for the boat to arrive. This was very hurriedly done, but sufficiently so for the deception. Read, dressed in oilskins to cover his Confederate uniform, received the officer and escorted him to his cabin, where he produced the ship's papers. To his delight they passed muster. The Northerner glanced over them, apologized for delaying the vessel, ac-

cepted a glass of sherry, and departed. "And," said Read to one of his prisoners to whom he was telling the story, "that man graduated from the Naval Academy fully twenty numbers ahead of me!" (It was said that Read was not much on book work. He was always called "Savez Read," because that was the only French word he could ever remember, and it was also said that, after four years of hard study, he managed to graduate brilliantly at the foot of his class. But he knew how to use his mind, all the same.)

Knowing that black-hulled barks were now resting under suspicion, Captain Read decided to make another change, so, when fortune favored him by sending the schooner Archer in his way, he transferred all hands to her and scuttled the Tacony. In this new disguise, he proceeded up the coast. There he picked up two fishermen, and learned from them that the revenue cutter, Caleb Cushing, was in port, being fitted up to go out and capture the Tacony, he, of course immediately got the idea into his head that it would be nice to go in and capture the capturer. Using the fishermen as his pilots (they had not the slightest idea of who he was, of course), he entered the harbor in broad daylight and anchored near the Cushing. At midnight he boarded her and, in a short time, he was in command of the ship. But right there his luck deserted him. He was too late for the outgoing tide and had great difficulty in getting his prize out of the harbor. He was soon discovered and closely pursued by both troops and citizens, for, when the news had spread of this audacious capture of a ship in their own harbor, there was the wildest excitement in Portland. The wind had died down just at the critical moment, and as Captain Merriman, who had been sent to command the Cushing on her expedition against Read and the Tacony, came into the harbor on a Boston steamer, he was surprised to see the cutter which he had been ordered to command, at the mouth of the harbor and under sail. At Fort Preble, under whose very guns Read had towed his prize, there was quartered a detachment of regular infantry under the command of Major Andrews. Word was hurried to that officer, and, at the same time, everything in the place which could be considered military hastened to join the expedition against the enemy. Meanwhile, Read and his exhausted crew, who had been working all night, had managed to get the becalmed cutter well out of range of the guns of Fort Preble. Seeing three vessels hurrying toward him, he cleared his decks for ac-

tion. Even then he might have gotten away, but at this critical moment came the frightful discovery that the ship's magazine could not be found anywhere. No ammunition was there for either of the two guns on board, except two rounds, which he discharged against his fast-moving enemies, while frantic but futile search went on for the rest. The prisoners on board were questioned, but loyally refused to give them any information. The one shot which Read had fired himself fell near enough to one of the pursuing boats to splash water over her decks, which Captain Merriman and his men declared they did not mind in the least, but the volunteer citizens on board said it was a foolhardy expedition anyhow, and begged to be taken back home. The naval officers objected to this, and it was decided to attack the Cushing again. Seeing at last that the game was up, Read deliberately began his preparations for destroying his prize. First, he set his prisoners free and sent them off in a boat; then, launching the two remaining boats, he set fire to the cutter in a dozen places before he left her. The Federal flotilla lay off until the Cushing blew up, then rowed in and took Read and his men prisoners. Major Andrews, seeing the great excitement in Portland, immediately advised the War Department to send the prisoners away as quietly and as expeditiously as possible. "I do not think it is safe," he said, "for them to be left in the custody of the citizens." Read was accordingly transferred to Fort Warren, in Boston Harbor. He had as a fellow prisoner, Lieutenant Alexander, of Virginia. After months of toil in the hard masonry of their cell, the two Southerners managed to make an opening sufficiently large for them to pass through. The following midnight found them crouched on the parapet, waiting for the guard to complete his round before they could descend by a rope made out of blankets. The night was dark and misty, and the sentry ran his hand along his bayonet to find it so wet that he plunged it into the dunnage by his side. With the weight of the heavy Springfield rifle behind it, the weapon went deep into Read's thigh—but never a muscle did he move nor let the slightest cry escape him! The moment the sentry had gone, the prisoners quickly put their blanket rope in place and descended. Even though bleeding profusely, Read did not tell his companion that he was wounded until they made their way to a small sloop, which seems to have been waiting for them, when the poor young man fainted from loss of blood. Before night-

fall he was in a high fever and delirious and his companion had all he could do to prevent his plunging overboard. Outworn by hunger, thirst, and the long vigil, Lieutenant Alexander was roused from a fitful sleep to find a man-of-war's cutter alongside. The slacking sail of the unguided boat had attracted the attention of a Federal cruiser and a boat had been sent to investigate. The two Confederates were put on board the cruiser and taken back to Boston, but not until their arrival there did the officers know who they were.

To guard against further efforts to escape, Read was put in close confinement, and was kept under heavy guard until almost the end of the war. Jefferson Davis, from whom he had secured his appointment to the Naval Academy, then managed to effect an exchange for his protégé.

During the last days of the war, Read managed to reach Richmond, and went on working for the Confederacy in ways that I cannot go into here, finally returning to Louisiana, where he again attempted to run the blockade, but was unsuccessful. He set fire to his craft, and, with his crew, sought refuge in the woods. With this last dash—undertaken two weeks after Lee's surrender at Appomattox—Read's career as a Confederate officer came to an end. Subsequently, his restless spirit took him to South America, but, eventually, he returned to Louisiana.

In succeeding years, few captains, making for New Orleans, ever recognized, in the quiet-spoken pilot who took their vessels up the river, the man who, according to one of his classmates and former enemies, embodied the most dashing type of naval officer that the nation has produced since Decatur.

It was as a Mississippi pilot that Read died in 1890. Captain Read was survived by several children, having married twice. As far as this scribe knows, the only child now living is Miss May Read, of California.

A CONFEDERATE SOLDIER FROM ARKANSAS.

(In the effort to secure definite information on the war service of Father Ryan, poet-priest of the Confederate South, here and there is found where his life touched others in the association of war days. Mrs. Charles R. Hyde, of Chattanooga, Tenn., writes of having known a Father Lucey during her residence in Arkansas many years ago, and had heard him speak of having

known Father Ryan during the war. By her request, he wrote an article on Father Ryan, which was published in the *Southern Guardian*, and by Mrs. Hyde placed in the Confederate Museum at Richmond, Va. In that article he brings out that "Father Ryan studied theology at the Seminary of Our Lady of the Angels at Niagara Falls, and was ordained. He was doing missionary work in Virginia when the Civil War broke out. He went at once as a chaplain in the Confederate army and served through the war, the greater part of the time with the 8th Tennessee Regiment."

The war record of Father Lucey was that of a gallant soldier of the Confederacy, and a sketch of his life in the *Southern Guardian* is here reproduced in large part.)

Monsignor Lucey died at Santa Rosa Hospital, San Antonio, Tex., on Saturday morning, June 20, 1914, after having completed a most exemplary life in the priesthood. The grief at his death was universal, regardless of creed or color. As evidence of the general respect this priest-soldier commanded, during the hour of the removal of his body from station to church in Pine Bluff, where the services were held, virtually every business house in the city was closed.

He was a serious man, deeply in earnest about his work, whether on the battle field, in the pulpit, at the altar, on the street, or in his study, and yet there was in him a very fine sense of humor which always made good impressions when reduced to words, spoken or written.

He was a man of rare accomplishments, and many of the best and richest people of the State were his warmest friends. He was a scholar and a gentleman. He was a student and a writer. Many of his literary productions will live while the years roll on, and those who have not fully appreciated what he did for the Church and State will one day realize that Monsignor Lucey has left behind him in the form of his writings much that is rare and valuable.

Monsignor Lucey was prominent in the affairs of Arkansas for fifty years, having a most honorable and distinguished Confederate record as well as a high place among the workers for the material advancement of his native State. He was one of the detail that raised the first Confederate flag at Fort Smith in 1861.

The father and mother of Monsignor Lucey were born in Ireland, but were married September 19, 1839, in Troy, N. Y., where their four