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Charles H. Baxter reminiscence

Title: Charles H. Baxter reminiscence

Collection No: MSS.19

Creator: Charles H. Baxter (1835-1917)

Extent: 0.25 cubic feet

Inclusive Dates: 1881

Abstract: The collection consists of a notebook which contains a handwritten account of the Civil War experiences of United States Navy officer Charles H. Baxter (1835-1917) in Mississippi and Alabama in 1863 and 1864.

Provenance: Purchased from F.M. Hill, Tennessee, 1967.

Processed by: Darrell B. Uselton, 1994; Gerald Chaudron, 2014.

Access: Open to all researchers.

Language: English

Preferred Citation: Charles H. Baxter reminiscence, Special Collections Department, University Libraries, University of Memphis.

Publication date: February 2014

Biographical information

Charles H. Baxter was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1835, was educated there and also in Calcutta, India. He joined the East India Company as an officer of engineers, and served in the Crimean War and Indian mutiny. In 1857 he fought in the second Anglo-Chinese War as a lieutenant of engineers. He served in Madagascar, worked for the Portuguese government, then worked in Uruguay and participated in a rebellion in Argentina, before working as a surveyor in Mexico in 1859. Returning to the United States, Baxter bought land in the Bronx, New York, but then went back to Mexico and built barracks in Vera Cruz. In 1861 he joined the United States Navy and was sent to Cairo, Illinois, where he joined the Mississippi fleet.

Baxter is mentioned in the *Official Record of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of Rebellion* as an ensign assigned to the Union gunboat “Genesee” under Commander William Macomb. In a report, Macomb refers to acting Ensign Baxter and commends him “for celerity and attention to supplying powder” during the Battle of Port Hudson on March 14, 1863. On March 29, 1864 he was promoted to acting master of the “Genesee” and in that capacity commanded his ship as part of Admiral Farragut’s fleet at the Battle of Mobile Bay in October 1864, and was honorably discharged with that rank on September 16, 1865. He returned to New York and was involved in numerous Bronx and veterans’ organizations. Baxter died in New York on January 18, 1917.

Source: *Official Record of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of Rebellion* (Series I, Vol. 19, pp.678-679) <http://www.mocavo.com/Official-Records-of-the-Union-and-Confederate-Navies-in-the-War-of-the-Rebellion-Volume-19/112212/711>

Daily Argus, Mt. Vernon, New York, 1917 January 19, p. 14

<http://fultonhistory.com/Newspaper%2018/Mount%20Vernon%20NY%20Daily%20Argus/Mount%20Vernon%20NY%20Daily%20Argus%201917/Mount%20Vernon%20NY%20Daily%20Argus%201917%20-%2000195.pdf>

Scope and contents

The collection consists of a notebook which contains a handwritten account of the Civil War experiences of United States Navy officer Charles H. Baxter in Mississippi and Alabama. It details Baxter’s involvement in the Port Hudson campaign during March 1863 and the Battle of Mobile Bay in October 1864, as well as various small raiding parties along the Mississippi River and the Gulf Coast. The first page features an ink drawing of Admiral Farragut tied to the rigging of his ship during the Battle of Mobile Bay.

The manuscript appears to have been written in New York in 1881 and the chronology suggests that originally there may have been two parts to the manuscript and this notebook is volume two.

Provenance

Purchased in 1967 from F.M. Hill, Tennessee, who obtained it from the collection of Reid Fulton, Max Meadows, Virginia. Fulton purchased it from the John Davidson library, circa 1917.

Subject terms

Baxter, Charles H., 1835-1917.

Mobile Bay, Battle of, Ala., 1864.

Port Hudson (La.)--History--Siege, 1863.

United States—History--Civil War, 1861-1865-- Naval operations.

Inventory

Box 1

Folder

- 1 Original 34 page manuscript.
- 2 Photocopy of manuscript.

Transcription

[page 1] After the passage of the fort and batteries below New Orleans, and the subsequent repulse at Vicksburg, and the withdrawal of the fleet to the mouth of the river for repairs, the Rebels commenced to rectify previous blunders and fortified Grand Gulf, Thompson's Point, Port Hudson, Donaldsonville, and all other important places on the Mississippi, - special attention being paid to Port Hudson which was the strongest point, in a geographical sense, on the river.

The latter was from one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet high over the water, extending on a level at that height, about two miles north and about two miles due west, forming a sharp angle which no vessel could pass, without facing guns from all quarters, and having to pass these guns within a range of three hundred yards.

This place was fortified with two or three hundred heavy guns; and it was thought at that time that no man [page 2] would be daring enough to attempt the passage of such formidable works.

After the fleet had been put in condition, all vessels were ordered to rendezvous at Baton Rouge.

On the evening of March 12th 1863, the Old Admiral paid a special visit to each vessel,

making a careful inspection of all points.

The following morning the mortar-fleet, consisting of seven schooners, was placed in position below Port Hudson, protected by what Admiral Farragut called "The Old Iron Coffin", the iron-clad "Essex".

During the day of March 13th the fleet steamed up and came to anchor outside of Winters Plantation.

In the afternoon Admiral Farragut paid another visit and gave his final orders to all commanders. He said his intentions were to pass Port Hudson, and again open the Mississippi; that he expected all to do their duty; and he [page 3] gave the final order, "When I hoist the red flag follow me; those who can go past with me, will go past; those who can not, will fall back and protect the disabled, and fight like the devil. "

He then proceeded to the "Hartford", the flag-ship, and chose for his partner in the conflict the small steamer "Albatross" which was made fast to the port quarter of the "Hartford".

Next in line was the "Richmond", commanded by James Alden, known as "Fighting Jim", the only high commander who protected himself by standing on the leeward side of two hard-pressed cotton-bales, during that battle.

With the "Richmond" came the "Genesee", commanded by the heroic William H. Macomb, brother-in-law of Phil. Kearney.

Next came the "Monongahela", commanded by Captain MacKenzie [James P. McKinstry], grim and stubborn. With him came another double-ender; and bringing up the rear [page 4] came the grand old fregatte, "Mississippi", commanded by Melancthon [Melancton] Smith.

About nine-o'clock, or somewhat after, orders came to prepare for action. Anchors were lifted, and the vessels were backing and filling. The mortar-fleet commenced throwing shell into the fort.

Suddenly the fire of mortars ceased, and the red-light was hoisted on the "Hartford".

The night was dark, and nothing could be seen on either side. Slowly the fleet steamed up, and with caution.

Not a sound to be heard! and it appeared as if the rebels were about to let us proceed up the river, without being in any way molested

Still, however, we all knew the object of all this silence. We knew that all they wanted was to get us within close range, and then open their whole artillery upon us.

We had attempted to keep the [page 5] west bank of the river clear, so as to take the fire only from one side; but somehow, a rocket-battery had been located on that side by the rebels, ready to give the signal to fire, when our fleet would be in the proper position to take it as it came.

On nearing Thompsons Point, although no one could see it, a rocket was whizzed going up the river, and another one straight up in the air.

The Old Admiral, alongside the pilot, standing exposed on the bridge, said "Pilot; slow up". The object of slowing was soon apparent.

Suddenly one would imagine that hell was let loose upon us.

Tongues of fire were seen from all parts of the compass, and the roar of the guns was like the roar of thunder. Shells, shot, pieces of railroad-iron, and every conceivable missile which could be rammed into a gun, were fired [page 6] at the approaching fleet.

The Admiral kept going ahead slowly. We received fire after fire, and no fire from us yet. Suddenly the "Hartford" let fly her broadside, putting the vessel in such a smoke that she was invisible; and while thus invisible, the Admiral said to the pilot, "Go ahead fast."

The rebels kept blazing away at the smoke, naturally supposing the "Hartford" to be there, whereas the Admiral was at that time about a quarter of a mile further ahead. That was well enough for the "Hartford", but it did not answer as well for the one that came behind the "Hartford".

Just about the time when the shot struck the position where the "Hartford" was supposed to be, the unfortunate "Richmond" happened to be right there, and had to take it all. Getting nearer and nearer to Thompsons Point, and [page 7] within hailing distance of the rebel batteries, a shot entered the machinery-room of the "Richmond" and destroyed the steam-valve. The engineer, for reasons best known to himself, let all the steam escape from all the boilers, and Captain Alden calls to old Macomb, "Hang on to me; save me; tow me back again."

The answer that came back from old Macomb was, "Captain, let me cut loose and follow the Admiral; the tide will take you back, again. I don't want to be left behind, as I am not disabled, and there is plenty of fight in this vessel yet."

But no - Alden, being the superior officer, by seniority, commanded Macomb to save the "Richmond" which required very little saving; and with tears in his eyes, old Macomb was compelled to turn around and take the "Richmond" back. But as the vessels were being turned, a shell entered the "Genesee", just at the water-line, and struck seven shells, just above the shell-rooms and the magazine, containing fourteen tons of powder, exploded the seven shells, [page 8] and although the Powder Division, consisting of sixteen men and the commander of the division, stood within eight feet from the exploded shells, not one was killed.

As the "Richmond" and the "Genesee" were slowly retreating, the "Monongahela", in sheering clear of these vessels, ran ashore, with her nose fairly into a rebel battery. Her decks were being swept with shot and shell, - not one place of safety to be found. The fire was such that the officers had to lie down and some go below deck.

The old hero, Mackenzie [McKinstry], standing on the bridge, and calling to his men to go to their guns, met with a serious accident. A shot struck the bridge between his feet, twisted both his feet entirely around, broke the bridge, and the old gentleman found himself sitting down, about ten feet from where he had stood, and right in the midst of a hail-storm of shot and shell. There he was stuck aground as fast as he could be, using language not very proper, and [page 9] saying that if it was good enough for him to be sitting there it was good enough for them to be there too.

Finally, the "Genesee", having cut loose from the "Richmond", and begun steaming up the river, seeing the position of the "Monongahela", Macomb sent the writer on board to Captain MacKenzie [McKinstry], with the offer to tow him off, - a rather risky undertaking. Captain MacKenzie, [McKinstry] seeing a strange officer, said "How dare you come on board my ship when all my own officers are hidden somewhere?"

With as much speed as possible a hawser was made fast, and the "Monongahela" towed out; and from that day the writer and old Captain Mackenzie [McKinstry] were steadfast friends.

After the "Monongahela" came the "Mississippi", all alone, steaming up the river in grand style, going toward her doom. In the darkness, the pilot could not see Thompsons Point plainly, the smoke being so dense [page 10] that it was impossible to distinguish anything. The

result was that the fregatte ran aground on the Point.

The rebels, seeing that she was fast, opened up on her in fine style At least one hundred guns were brought to bear on the unfortunate fregatte.

Captain Smith - now Admiral Smith - ordered all the turpentine to be brought on deck and had the deck saturated with it from one end to the other. He then ordered his men on shore; then striking a match and lighting his segar, right in the thickest of the shot and shell, he set fire to the grand old fregatte and left her.

The writer of this was again ordered by the gallant Macomb to take as many men as were necessary, land on the west bank, and protect the crew of the "Mississippi". The force, consisting of about sixteen men, happened to land right at the rocket-battery which had given the signal that the fleet was approaching. In a very little while the battery, [page 11] and everything belonging to it was in the possession of the sixteen men.

Some of the "Mississippi's crew had gone, in the confusion, to the north and had been captured; but the small force, sent on shore by Macomb, came just in the nick of time between the "Mississippi" crew and a small band of rebels, and thus they were all saved except a few who had been captured before.

When all hands had left the "Mississippi", the ship, being thus lightened, floated off and came down the river grandly, all afire from one end to the other.

The "Genesee", with some of the "Mississippi's" crew on board, was steaming up still nearer to the batteries as far as she could, and seeking what she could do for the protection of the others, & came in a line between the rebel batteries, on one side, and the floating "Mississippi" on the other. The guns of the latter, being all shotted at point blank, as soon as the fire from the burning ship reached them, poured forth their shot and shell. Thus the "Genesee" happened to be [page 12] between two fires, being fired upon from one side by the rebels and from the other by the fregatte.

Down the river went the "Mississippi", until she had gone some five or six miles; and it was just about half past four in the morning, when the grandest spectacle ever witnessed was seen. The fire had reached the magazine, and the old fregatte went up in the air; two thousand shells exploded at the time, and thirty four tons of powder. The sound of it was heard for thirty miles. They heard it away below Baton Rouge; and for miles splinters and pieces of iron from her were picked up, three or four miles in shore. The old fregatte was nowhere.

Thus commenced the battle of Port Hudson.

The next morning nothing was to be seen of the great Old Admiral or his ship, the "Hartford". We did not know where she was; she might be at the bottom of the Mississippi, or she might be safe.

A little island, called "Prophet Island", just below Port Hudson, was used as a burial [page 13] ground. Those killed during the battle were buried there. Bodies so mutilated that they could not be recognized were carefully put together, - a leg here, an arm there, a head somewhere else, were gathered together in baskets.

The fleet, or what was left of it, was again put under repairs; and we might say that from that time until the seventh day of July the battle of Port Hudson was continued.

A force of sailors were doing shore duty on the west bank, and the bank was patrolled. Daily battles were fought with bushwhackers, guerillas and stray raiding parties; and finally communication was opened across the peninsula, so that the upper fleet could be communicated

with.

It was there where the writer first met General Sage of New York. A force of two thousand men had been sent by General Banks to open this very communication. They were commanded by a Colonel Sage, or somebody of that kind. The force marched five or six miles and came to a small pond, on the other side of which were [page 14] seen about a dozen men on horseback; and the brave colonel imagined at once that the rebel army was there, and he fell back under the protection of the gun-boats.

When the soldiers came back, the writer said to one of the officers, "what did you come back for?" "The rebels are there on the other side of the lake", was the reply of the officer. "What lake", asked the other. "Why! there's a lake five or six miles up there," said the former. "That's only a pond. I have been there myself", said the writer; "well, your commanding general, whoever he may be, must be a damned coward. I will guarantee that I will take twenty-five of my men and open communication across the peninsula in twenty-four hours, and bring my men back without a scratch."

This conversation was reported to the commanding general, and a provost-guard was sent to arrest the offending officer who refused to give up his sword.

Finally, by persuasion of friends, he allowed his sword to be taken from him, and [page 15] in charge of the provost-guard the prisoner was brought before William H. Macomb, the writer's greatest friend. Macomb looked at the sword, and the owner's name on its hilt. Says he, "is that your sword?" "Yes sir," was the answer. "What have you got to do with it," says the captain to the provost-marshal.

The provost-marshal explained the offense and demanded the arrest and punishment of the officer, when Old Macomb replied with a chuckle, "Well, I guess you are more fit to carry the sword than anybody else among these gentlemen; take it and keep it. Gentlemen, go ashore; I don't want you here."

The two thousand men retreated across to the other bank of the Mississippi.

The offending officer kept his promise, and with twenty-five men opened communication, brought in all the horseback-riders who proved to be rebel planters, out hunting for run-away negroes, and none of them armed with anything more formidable than a cotton umbrella.

[page 16] For months it was adventure after adventure, battle after battle.

The mortar-fleet kept bombarding Port Hudson which still kept her flag flying, until the third day of July, when it was decided to undermine the citadel of Port Hudson, and blow the place up.

The "Genesee" was dispatched down the river to New Orleans, and on its way up on the fifth day of July, carrying a hose which was to be used for the purpose of exploding the magazine under the citadel, the news came that Vicksburg was captured. All flags were hoisted on board the "Genesee", as she came up the river; but she sighted another steamer coming down with the flag at half-mast. The steamer was commanded by one whom Admiral Farragut used to call "the flower of that section," Captain Abner Reed.

Reed had encountered a flying-battery and engaged in battle with the same; but while standing on the bridge, commanding his men, a shot came and took off his [page 17] left leg at the knee. Still the commander kept his place, standing on his right leg. Another shot came, struck him in the stomach and sent him to the deck.

Captain Reed was carried to Baton Rouge, and sent to the military hospital where he died the following morning, - his last words being most remarkable. He lay unconscious for a time, while around the bed sat the ship doctor and the executive officer. Reed suddenly looked up and said to the executive officer, "any papers for me to sign?"

"No, Captain," was the reply. Then he used the old phrase that was always used by an officer, when leaving a ship, to the officer of the deck, to wit,- with your permission I will shove off. That was the expression Abner Reed made use of, to his executive. He said, "Sir, with your permission I will shove off," and turned around and died.

On the evening of the sixth of July we were prepared to blow up Port Hudson, when a flag-of-truce was sent out from the [page 18] fort asking terms. The Old Admiral's terms were 'unconditional surrender', - giving them two hours time to make up their minds. A little after midnight the answer came that they were ready to surrender unconditionally.

At day-light the army and naval forces marched into Port Hudson. The rebels were all standing in line on each side of the road, with their arms stacked which were taken in charge by us, while behind our forces came loads upon loads of provisions, already cooked, with plenty of coffee, smoking hot, and in a little while you could not tell who was a rebel or who a union man, all being so thoroughly intermingled. The "rebs" then enjoyed the first breakfast they had had, as they said, for months.

Thus the Mississippi was again opened, and permanently opened, - the only important battle after that being that of Donaldsonville, when we found it necessary to destroy that handsome city.

The fleet had a little time for recruiting and repairs.

[page 19] At Ship Island headquarters were established for operations against the enemy. From there expeditions were sent out, destroying all the salt-works, and otherwise annoying the rebels, and gradually approaching nearer and nearer of the entrance of Mobile Bay.

Mississippi City was captured by a force of fifteen men, commanded by the writer, against a force of two regiments, without any bloodshed and without anyone being hurt.

Its capture came about in this way. The writer, enjoying the friendship of the Old Admiral, and having the honor to lead nearly all the small and secret expeditions, was sent for one afternoon, and was instructed by the admiral to land and destroy all salt-works, from the entrance to Lake Pontchartrain up to Mississippi, and after destroying the salt-works to return to the "Genesee."

The boat started at about eight o'clock, and before leaving the vessel, the commander of the small force promised his brother officers that he would bring them the following day a treat of [page 20] 'Scuppernong' grapes, and it was well known that the grape only grew on a plantation of that name - The Scuppernong Plantation - on the Mississippi.

Several salt-works were destroyed by the little force, - four men being left in the boat to pull it along, while the commander with the rest marched along the beach.

About one o'clock that night, a party of seven rebels were found asleep under a tree, with their horses tied to another tree. The men were disarmed, the horses stampeded and the captured arms and accoutrements taken to the boat; but no prisoners were taken. The commander made them take the oath of allegiance, - a manufactured oath of his own.

At just about three o'clock in the morning, all the salt-works being destroyed - fourteen in all - the whole force entered the boat, having previously captured and executed a beef which they

quartered, without the usual skinning process, and placed in the bottom of the boat.

[page 21] The morning was rather hazy, and as the boat was going along the shore, suddenly something appeared ahead which proved to be the end of the Mississippi City wharf, - the wharf extending about a mile out into the Mississippi Sound, with a wooden boat-house on the end.

The boat was made fast, so as not to be seen from the shore. It was then found that somebody had removed the wharf, all but one single plank. Therefore, in single file, the little force had to march toward the town.

On nearing the town, a rebel sentinel was seen sitting on a stone fence asleep, his musket resting on his knees.

The question now was, - what was to be done? Evidently there were rebels there.

The small force, marching thus in single file, if they retreated, would have to do so in the same manner, and should the sentry wake up and give a signal, they would be taken at a great disadvantage.

Finally it was decided to march [page 22] right on shore. The sentry woke up, raised his gun, ready to give the signal, but suddenly thirteen small rifles were brought to bear on him, and he wisely laid down his arms.

The little force landed, took the sentry, tied him to a tree so that he could not get away, and asked him for information. He pointed out a long barn, with a big gate at each end. Says he, "in that barn are about six hundred of an Alabama regiment, and about a thousand conscripts, that have just been got here." "Oh well," says the commander of the little squad, "who cares for conscripts?"

A little consultation of war was held, and it was decided to storm the barn before the occupants had an opportunity to wake up and get their arms.

Each one of the little squad of men presented the appearance of a walking arsenal. Each man carried two navy revolvers, a sharp cutlass, and a small, short Minie rifle; and all were picked men. With one yell, [page 23] all went for the barn. The yell from the throats of these men was as loud as one from the throats of a small regiment of ordinary men.

The rebels inside the barn evidently imagined that an army was approaching, rushed through the other end towards the woods, as fast as they could go, and left behind them their clothing and arms which were instantly taken possession of by our party.

Near by this barn was the public square, with a flag-staff. The little force always carried a Union flag. This flag was run up.

Wherever they came from was a mystery; but within ten minutes time there must have been three or four hundred negroes. These, with the couple of hundred conscripts who declared themselves willing, were instantly armed, and the place was taken possession of, in the name of the United States.

The little force proceeded then to fulfill the promise of its commander and went to a hotel in front of the grape plantation, and knocked at the door. The proprietor [page 24] came down, opened the door slightly and asked who was there. "Open the door wider and you will see", was the answer. "What do you wish, gentlemen", said he, opening [sic] the door a little wider. "Some breakfast", we said.

"Which side are you on, gentlemen", he asked the party being so dusty that it was impossible to distinguish their uniforms. "We belong to the union forces," we answered.

Instantly he held out his hand, - he was 'so very glad' to see us, although he didn't mean a word of it. He called to his wife, "Margaret, bring down my boots". Margaret, in her hurry to look beautiful in the presence of the new-comers, had left the mark of her five fingers on the fleshy part of her cheek. She brought the boots, and then the demand for the grapes was made.

The commander of the little force, knowing well that it would not be safe to stay so long away from the men, caused some bags to be procured, and a force sent to the rear. As they reached the rear of the hotel, [page 25] a fine looking fellow was seen coming down a rope from the third-story window. He was instantly required to come down a little faster; and he proved to be Brigadier General Adams, of the rebel army, and was made prisoner.

The grapes having been procured, the force returned to the wharf, with their prisoners, and bade farewell to every one; and told them that if that flag was hauled down, the city would be bombarded.

Thus their mission was ended, the salt-works destroyed, the city captured, and the promise kept, so far as the grapes were concerned

The writer afterward destroyed the Wharf of Pascagoula, and burned up a rebel steamer.

The Battle of Mobile Bay was fought on the morning of August 5th 1864.

It had been decided to begin the battle at the break of day. By the request of numerous friends, Admiral Farragut had granted [page 26] the honor of leading the fleet to James Alden, then commanding the "Brooklyn".

The "Genesee" was sent on a very hazardous duty, - to approach the rear of Fort Morgan and draw the fire on herself.

The fleet, as usual with Farragut, was ordered to proceed in the order of two by two.

The morning was calm, - not a cloud to be seen. On the fleet everything was ready, and every man to his post.

About half-past four - between that and five - the vessels were brought in line of battle, and the movement commenced, headed by the "Brooklyn."

The fleet presented a magnificent appearance. Slowly they steamed in, - not a shot was passed from the fleet, not a shot from the fort; everything quiet.

The storm, however, was brewing. All hands stood to their guns; the guns were shotted and run out, ready to deal death from all sides.

Nearer and nearer the fleet approached [page 26] Fort Morgan. Plainly the gunners were seen on the fort, ready to open on the approaching fleet.

Not far from the "Brooklyn, to the rear, came the "Hartford", with the Old Admiral.

The old story about Farragut being lashed to the rigging is simply ridiculous. No man of ordinary common sense would, under any circumstances, allow himself to be lashed to anything. First, it would be unnecessarily placing himself in a dangerous position; and second, - he would in fact make himself useless, as it was necessary for the admiral to keep moving. His object was, when the firing commenced, to go up the rigging gradually and keep over the smoke, so as to be able to see. While doing so, he carried his marine glasses with him. One of the sailors, an old quartermaster, kept following him, ready to make fast, as we call it, the life-line which is a piece of rope going around the waist, so as to enable the admiral to use both hands to his marine [page 27] glasses. The line is simply made fast to two shrouds. Then the admiral could lean against this life-line, while holding on to his glasses.

He kept going up, up, until he came to the main-top, where he stood alongside the pilot, and from which place, to the bridge and the officer of the deck, was a speaking tube, through which orders were sent to the man at the wheel and others. In the main-top the life-line was thrown around the rigging so as again to enable the admiral to lean against the life-line and use his marine glasses.

As the fleet approached nearer and nearer, the fighting began by Fort Morgan opening its batteries on the fleet.

On the starboard bow, way ahead of the "Brooklyn", the little Monitor, "Tecumseh", was gradually nearing the fort, and was then at a very close range, when suddenly a torpedo exploded under the doomed Monitor. She was seen to rise above the water, and go down, never to be seen again, [page 28] and out of her crew of one hundred and twenty three in all, only four men were saved.

This incident struck terror to the heart of Captain Alden. Instantly stopping the ship, he signaled to the admiral, "torpedos ahead."

By this action of Alden the fleet was nearly thrown out of line of battle. The admiral signaled, "go ahead". No movement on the part of the "Brooklyn", and she still lay there quiet, until they were within hailing distance, and the words were sent to the admiral, "torpedos ahead; the 'Tecumseh' sunk".

"Damn the torpedos", cries the old admiral, "go ahead". Turning to the pilot, the admiral says, "can I go ahead of that ship without running ashore?" "Yes", said the pilot. "Ring four bells" to go ahead full speed; and he went close past the "Brooklyn" which vessel instead of being the leader of the battle, nearly brought up the rear.

[page 29] In a very little while the batteries from the fort were silenced, and the fleet came to anchor, at just about breakfast time, in Mobile Bay.

A flag-of-truce was sent out to take the wounded to the Pensacola Hospital.

Just about breakfast time, the rebel ram, "Tennessee", considered the most formidable iron-clad, ever constructed, and commanded by Admiral Buchanan, was seen steaming from Fort Morgan toward the fleet, making straight for the "Hartford."

Admiral Farragut came on deck, and seeing the ram approaching, says, - "why, that is fair play, admiral to admiral, I am satisfied."

All the vessels were ordered to prepare for action, and slip anchors.

The ram approached, with the intention of sinking the "Hartford ". She struck the "Hartford" on the bow, glanced off, bending one of the heavy anchors nearly double; and going right at the bow of the "Hartford" [page 30] again, she attempted to fire her guns right on a rake; but the old caps refused to act.

Then the little Monitor, "Mississippi", built simply for the Mississippi business, engaged the enormous ram in action, at close quarters, and kept steaming around and around her, peppering her here and there, and in all directions.

Finally a rather novel notion took possession of Admiral Farragut. He ordered all the wooden vessels to ram into the iron ram.

Admiral Buchanan, seeing that he had made a mistake, attempted to retreat toward Fort Morgan, when along came the "Hartford" and struck her on the bow and thereby twisted her half way around. Just about the time she got straightened up, and again headed for the fort, along came another vessel and hitting her on the port quarter, twisted her the other way, and so the ball

was kept moving, until there wasn't one vessel in the whole fleet with a sound stem or a complete bow.

In the confusion and smoke the "Lackawana", mistaking the "Hartford", ran into [page 31] her, cutting her to the water's edge; and the "Hartford" had to be listed over some twenty points to keep her from sinking.

Smoke everywhere. Each vessel which approached the formidable ram, delivered a broadside right at her, and caused such confusion on board of her, as afterwards stated by their men, (for every broadside made the old ram keel over to one side,) that they could not manage their own battery.

Finally a shot from the little Monitor of ours struck the steering apparatus of the ram, and she became unmanageable. The admiral, Buchanan, came on deck to see if the damage could be remedied, and while out from the bomb-proof, a shell exploded close by, taking a bit of flesh from his leg, near the knee.

Then up went the white flag, and the great ram, at that time supposed to be the greatest vessel ever constructed, and entirely impregnable, was taken possession of by our force.

Another little instance of fool- [page 32] hardiness occurred about half a mile away. Another rebel vessel, the name of which I can not now remember, approached the "Metacomet", commanded by Commander McCann. The rebel vessel was commanded by Commander Patrick Murphy, formerly of the United States Navy. [Some of Baxter's details of this incident are incorrect. The U.S.S. *Metacomet* was commanded by Lt. Commander James E. Jouett. Lt. Commander William P. McCann commanded the U.S.S. *Kennebec*. The rebel vessel was the gunboat C.S.S. *Selma* commanded by 1st Lieutenant Peter U. Murphey, known as "Captain Pat".]

McCann and Murphy had been class-mates at Annapolis. They now came so close together that they were shaking their fists at one another.

Murphy demanded the surrender of the "Metacomet", or else he would 'blow the thing out of the water', as he said.

Says the brave McCann, "now Pat! be aisy, me bye; don't ye attempt to fire any of your little guns at me, 'cause if I should blaze away at ye wance, there'll be no more Pat Murphy nor any part of yer vessel to be seen above water. I want ye to surrender, Pat; I don't want to kill ye".

The object of all these remarks had started running up the bay, and commenced firing at the "Metacomet."

[page 33] When McCann was compelled to open his batteries, his first broadside sent the poor rebel craft to the bottom, and all hands on board were saved by the "Metacomet's" crew.

In the afternoon of the second day after entering Mobile Bay, the general commanding Fort Anderson Gaines ["Gaines" is written in pencil above "Anderson"] surrendered the fort, and the following day Fort Morgan was surrendered.

The writer of this was sent to the hospital at Pensacola, with a cut sixteen inches long across his stomach.

Of all the battles fought by Admiral Farragut, that of Port Hudson was the fiercest, where only seven vessels engaged the greatest fortification ever erected

Charles Baxter

New York Aug. 27. 1861