

# PRINCE AND BOATSWAIN

Sea tales from the recollection of

**Rear-Admiral Charles E. Clark**

as related to

JAMES MORRIS MORGAN

and

JOHN PHILIP MARQUAND

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## INTRODUCTION

ONTARIO APARTMENTS, WASHINGTON, D. C.

May 5, 1914.

Dear Jimmy:

What genuine pleasure the sketches you published, and those you intend to, have given me, but I want to put in my oar about the latter, feeling that I have the right in memory of the days "befor de wah" when we were midshipmen on board *Old Ironsides*. What a dear little rebel you were at fourteen, too small to tackle me, or for me to thrash fairly, so we used to quarrel and make up, with the shadow of the cruel war impending, about whether Fort Sumter could be taken, or whether the crack New York Seventh regiment would start out to put down the rebels or the Yankees, and as to whether the "Plug Uglies" would stop any abolitionists who might want to go through Baltimore to invade the South.

When I tell you that Admiral Farragut once ran me out of his cabin; that Prince Pierre d'Orleans bribed me, and that the only "P. J." lied to me (he was the boatswain when I was the executive of the old *Hartford*), that Cushing was my guest, and that Jones, who followed him as courageously and more intelligently than Porthos did d'Artignan, was my shipmate; you may

J. M. Morgan  
June 16. 21 g-

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The foregoing letter is responsible for the publication of this little volume of sketches of naval heroes we personally knew, and sea stories we heard in our youth, especially the nautical fables of that inimitable spinner of yarns, "Boatswain P. J. Miller," whose ability as a seaman was only equaled by his wild exaggerations. Rear Admiral Clark, Commander of the *Oregon*, and I entered the U. S. Naval Academy at the same time in 1860. The class was at once placed on board of the *Old Ironsides* where its members received their first nautical training; afterwards it was known as the

allow that I have had some experiences to tell of as well as yourself. One of my auditors long ago was little Margaret Fuller, not the gifted Margaret, Marchioness d'Ossoli, but her niece and namesake. Now her son, John P. Marquand, has been taking down some of my yarns and I hope taking off some of the rough edges at the same time. Now it seems to me you and he could combine or collaborate and get out an interesting volume. You served with "Savez" Read, and fought in several battles with him, so you could write him up from personal knowledge. He would make a good running mate in print for Cushing, for while not so fortunate as the latter, Read was as wonderfully daring.

Shall I write to Marquand and have you get together?

Always your attached friend,

C. E. CLARK.

## "SAVEZ" READ

JAMES MORRIS MORGAN

LIEUTENANT CHARLES W. READ, of the Confederate navy, had such an adventurous career that anyone reading an account of it would be justified in thinking that he was a creature of the imagination who had stepped bodily out of the pages of one of Dumas' novels. He was born in Yazoo county, in the state of Mississippi, in 1840. His parents were not in affluent circumstances, and all the education he received before entering the Naval Academy at Annapolis was obtained in what was then called the "Free school." At the age of fourteen he entered a printer's establishment in Jackson, Miss., and learned to set type. When sixteen he received an appointment as an "Acting Midshipman" and commenced his studies at Annapolis. He was a protégé of Mr. Jefferson Davis, afterwards President of the Southern Confederacy.

The dashing and gallant Lieutenant Cushing, of the U. S. Navy, who destroyed the Confederate ironclad *Albatross*, was at Annapolis with Read. Cushing did what midshipmen called "bilged" (failed to pass his examination), and a distinguished naval hero once described Read's scholastic triumphs by saying: "After a magnificent struggle extending over four years 'Savez' Read triumphantly graduated at the foot of his class!"

In a four years' course at the Naval Academy he managed to acquire one solitary French word, which was "Savez"; he repeated this word until it became a fixed habit with him and he contrived to ring it in at the end of almost every sentence he uttered. Hence

his soubriquet of "Savez" Read, a nickname, he was, one day, to make famous on land and sea. "Savez" graduated in 1860, and was at once ordered to the *Powhatan* frigate, aboard which vessel he was shipmate with Admiral George Dewey. He had scarcely been in her a year when the state of Mississippi seceded, and of course "Savez" resigned and entered the Confederate navy as a midshipman.

During the first few months of the war the Confederate government fitted out two small steamers at New Orleans to cruise against northern commerce. The famous *Sumter* was one, and the *Marquis de la Habana*\* whose name was changed to *McRae* (after

\* In 1860, the U. S. sailing sloop-of-war *Saratoga* was lying in the harbor of Vera Cruz, Mexico, when two steamers appeared in the offing. They would not show their colors, and the Commander of the *Saratoga* determined to make them do so. There being no wind, he employed two little tugboats to tow his ship out to them. They fled to an island near Sacrificious, to the southward of Vera Cruz. The *Saratoga* followed them, and found them at anchor. Putting some marines on the tugs, he ordered them to board the strangers and demand to see their papers and their flag. On the approach of the tugs the two vessels opened fire on them, and in fifteen minutes some twenty-two men were killed and wounded. But a breeze springing up the *Saratoga* brought her broadside to bear and in a few seconds compelled the supposed pirates to surrender. They proved to be the *Marquis de la Habana* and the *General Miramon*, recently purchased in England for the purpose of assisting in a revolutionary movement inaugurated by General Miramon. Lieutenant R. T. Chapman was placed in command of the *Marquis de la Habana* as prize master with orders to take her to New Orleans and turn her over to the Admiralty Court and prefer the charge against her "that she belonged to an unrecognized

Fort McRae), was the other. "Savez" Read was ordered to duty as sailing master on board the *McRae*. It was on the *McRae* that I first met "Savez," and I must confess he was not much to look at. He was about five feet six inches in height and delicate in appearance. His face was not at all a distinguished one. His manner was deferential and gentle, as was his voice, which was also somewhat effeminate. Although he lived in the ward-room with the lieutenants, he never put on airs with the other midshipmen on account of his being the "Acting sailing master."

I soon became very intimate and chummy with Read, who, because I was not only very young, but also small for my age, made a great pet of me. I very soon got to calling him "Savez" when off duty, as the older midshipmen, who had been with him at Annapolis, did. Here commenced an intimacy which lasted many years. Little did I dream in those days that I was skylarking with a real hero—the idea would have seemed absurd.

When ready, the *McRae* dropped down the river to the Head of the Passes to await a chance to run the blockade. The opportunity fortunately never occurred, for the *McRae* would not have lasted a week as a commerce destroyer. At her top speed she could not make

revolutionary government, and that she was a pirate on the high seas." Within a few months after making this charge, Chapman was a Lieutenant on board the Confederate cruiser *Sunster*, formally called the *Habana*, belonging to an unrecognized revolutionary government, and branded by the United States government as a *pirate on the high seas*.

The *Habana* and the *Marquis de la Habana* were fitted out as cruisers at the same time, the former having been bought and the latter seized by the Confederate government at the outbreak of the war.

over seven knots, and her coal supply was very limited; worse than this, her engine broke down every time she was forced. But despite these drawbacks, "Savez" was very enthusiastic, and in the privacy of the steerage he used to tell us what he would do were he captain. It was true, he said, that the *McRae* drew thirteen feet of water, but if she could not run out of the "Pass-a-l'outré" or the Southwest pass on account of the heavy ships of the blockade lying in the channels, why could we not run out of the south pass where there were no blockaders? He did not believe that there was not a sufficient depth of water, the pilot's opinion to the contrary notwithstanding. Anyhow the mud bottom was soft and oozy. Read inwardly fussed and fumed at his disappointment, but nevertheless the *McRae* never got to sea. The idea was given up, and we returned to New Orleans, where old Commodore Hollins, who had been a midshipman in the frigate *President* when she was captured by the British fleet in the war of 1812, made her his flagship as he was to command a squadron of gunboats on the river.

I saw Read the first time he was ever under fire. This was on the night of October 12, 1861. The United States fleet had crossed the bar at the mouth of the Mississippi and taken up a position at the Head of the Passes, making it impossible for even blockaders of the lightest draught to elude their vigilance. Commodore Hollins determined to drive them away. Accompanied by the little ram *Manassas*, a tugboat covered with railroad iron, the paddlewheel towboat *Ivy*, carrying two little guns, the river tug *Tuscarora*, with two small guns, and two fire rafts, the Confederate States fleet (?) proceeded to the attack in the dead of night. The United States fleet consisted of the flag-



ship *Richmond*, twenty-six heavy guns, the sailing sloops-of-war *Preble* and *Vincennes*, one carrying eighteen and the other twenty-two guns, and the steam gunboat *Water Witch*, of five guns. These vessels were lying at anchor. The *Manassas* rammed the *Richmond*, but, owing to the fact that the latter had a coaling schooner alongside, she wrecked, not the *Richmond*, but herself, as the hawser from the schooner tore away her funnels and smoked her crew out from below. She had torn only a few planks from the *Richmond's* bow, and then floated with the stream against the river bank where she lay in the mud, helpless. The Federal vessels at once opened fire with their broadsides, tearing innumerable holes through the darkness while we *Rebs*, safely out of range, wondered what they were shooting at. We then cut loose our fire rafts. The spectacle was magnificent, but that was all, as they floated harmlessly down the stream without doing any damage. The fires burned out, and all was darkness and silence again. When daylight came, to our amazement, we found that the object of our attack had been attained, for there in full sight was the Federal fleet fleeing down the Southwest Pass, and making all speed for the Gulf of Mexico! Of course we pursued them. No little fice dog can resist the temptation of chasing a mastiff if he sees the big dog put his tail between his legs and run.

In crossing the bar the *Water Witch* and *Preble* passed out to sea safely, but the *Vincennes* and *Richmond* with their great draught were not so fortunate. The former grounded with her stern pointing up stream and the latter broadside on. The *McRae*, which carried only seven guns, engaged the *Richmond* at long range, our Commodore knowing full well that the

latter vessel alone could whip the Gulf of Mexico full of such craft as we had.

The little *Ivy* ran up to the stern of the *Vincennes*, where the latter could not bring a gun to bear, and tossed shells into the cabin windows until the crew of the *Vincennes* abandoned her and sought safety aboard the *Richmond*. During the action, the *McRae* being under steam, with sails furled, "Savez," as Sailing Master, had little to do, and I, as the Commodore's aide, had less. I went over to where Read was standing on the poop deck, languidly gazing on the fray, as though he was not an interested party in what was going on. In a low tone of voice, so as not to be heard by the Commodore, or our Captain, he expressed the opinion that we ought at least to run alongside of the *Vincennes* and destroy her, and also spoke contemptuously of the dreaded broadsides of the *Richmond* which protected her. He did not seem to mind the shells that were exploding over and around us, any more than if they had been mosquitoes singing in the air.

After this action all idea of the *McRae* going to sea as a cruiser was abandoned and she became the flagship of the small squadron of gunboats which were to do duty on the river. With the exception of the Captain, Read, another midshipman, and myself, all the officers were detached. Lieutenant Warley, who had been our executive officer, was a stern disciplinarian. Everybody feared him and consequently walked a chalk line, but the gentle Read who succeeded him as "first Luff" was very young, and the crew at once determined to take chances and try him out at the first opportunity. They had not long to wait. Read at first restricted his punishments to delinquents to mild

reprimands which only convinced them that he was an easy mark.

The Captain and watch officers, who were unacclimated, were soon stricken with fever and the doctor sent them ashore. Only the two little midshipmen besides Read were left aboard to handle the crew, which was fast becoming unruly, and the crew numbered some ninety men.

Late one afternoon the ship's company returned aboard having been ashore on liberty. They were noisy and seemed in an ugly humor. For a time Mr. Read ignored their conduct and passed it over in silence until some of the half-intoxicated ones said that they wanted more liquor and that they meant to have it, and proposed to lower a boat and return ashore. When this threat was reported to Read he quietly said to one of the midshipmen: "Go below and put on your side arms and return to me." When the middy reappeared on deck, Read said to him with that peculiar drawl of his and without the slightest excitement: "Shoot down the first man who touches a boat-fall without my orders." The men who heard the order looked astounded, and did not seem to be able to comprehend the change which had suddenly come over the placid youth whom they had sized up as a weak and slack disciplinarian. They moved away from the boats and gathered together in twos and threes and were evidently somewhat worried, Mr. Read meanwhile, languidly strolling around the quarter deck, listlessly looking toward the city where the evening lights were commencing to twinkle. His mutinous crew did not appear to interest him in the least.

I happened to have the first watch that night. As I have said before I was only fifteen years of age, and

very small for that age. At seven bells there was a disturbance on the berth deck and I went to the forward hatchway and commanded; "Silence! fore and aft!"—and to my consternation a voice answered: "Ah, sonny, go and tell your mammy she wants you," at which witty retort there was a roar of laughter from the men who should have been in their hammocks. Again I commanded silence, and again the sailors jeered me. I looked down the hatchway and saw that not only had they not turned in according to orders, but they had lighted candles, card playing was going on, and worst of all, they were drinking. It was afterwards discovered that they had located a barrel of whiskey in the spirit room and had bored a hole through the bulkhead of a coal bunker and through the head of the barrel; with the assistance of a piece of lead pipe they had drawn off all the whiskey they wanted.

Not being able to enforce my orders I went to Mr. Read's stateroom, and after awakening him told him what was going on on the berth deck. He leaped from his bunk, hustled on his uniform, buckled his sword belt around him and was off on a run, with little me following him. He fairly plunged down the hatchway when he got to it, and the next thing I heard was the ring of his sword blade as it came in contact with the heads of the mutineers. I also heard yells of pain and savage oaths, these latter followed by pleadings for mercy, and then I saw a stream of men scrambling up the hatchway, helter-skelter, in a mad rush to avoid Read who was bringing up the rear, his sword working like a flail as it came down on the heads of the laggards. I expected to see much bloodshed, but he was only striking them with the flat of his blade. The men had discovered that the gentle Read

had been metamorphosed into an infuriated demon, and that he could make his soft voice roar like a "bull of Bashan." "Aloft! every mother's son of you!" he fairly yelled. Some seemed disposed to hesitate until they saw him draw his pistol and then they too scampered up the rigging. Some of the men showed an inclination to stop in the lower shrouds, but the angry officer urged them to climb higher and higher until some of them had reached the royalmast rigging, from which lofty altitude they commenced to complain piteously that there was no room for more men. "Then lay out on the yards!" commanded the supposed *easy mark*. When the whole crew was safely roosted aloft, Read who had recovered his equanimity and his natural tone of voice simultaneously, drawled out: "The first man who steps down a rattling, I will shoot the feet off of him!" And there they perched through the weary hours of the night like so many crows roosting on the limbs and vines which hung from dead trees. Daylight came to their relief at last and the Boatswain's whistle commenced to pipe. Read ordered them down from aloft, and the daily routine of the ship commenced by washing the decks. No further punishments were inflicted and no reference was again made as to the misunderstanding, now cleared up, as to who was the first "Luff" of that ship, and it was not very long before these same men fairly idolized their young executive officer.

Union ironclad gunboats were being built at St. Louis and on the Ohio river. They were nearing completion, and the Confederates had fortified "Island No. Ten," and New Madrid, Mo., a few miles below. The Confederate flotilla consisting of four river steamboats which had been converted into gunboats by pro-

tecting their boilers with railroad iron, and the placing of guns on their decks, and the *McRae*, now with her topmasts and top hamper removed, as the flagship, were hurriedly sent up the river to reinforce the land defences. The *McRae's* draught was more than thirteen feet, and the voyage up the river was a long and perilous one for her. Few of the natives had ever seen a sea-going ship before and the inhabitants of the towns turned out to gape open-mouthed at her. A boat propelled by a screw was a mystery to them, and wherever we stopped we were asked where we kept our paddle wheels. The first heavy fog that settled down on the river was taken advantage of by the ship to get us into trouble. She rammed the levee, and with the whole state of Mississippi to choose from, she selected the plantation of Mr. Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, to cut a large slice of real estate out of.

After many weary days and nights, and many groundings, we arrived at New Madrid, and then our troubles commenced in earnest. General Pope's army had crossed what was supposed to be an impassable swamp, made a detour, and taken New Madrid in the rear. The place was defended by some thirty-five hundred raw recruits and two small forts which had been built with regard to defending it from gunboats on the river front. General Pope with his thirty thousand men, instead of walking into the town and taking possession, laid siege to it, and it was evident that he proposed to capture it by regular approaches. The fighting was lively and continuous. Our gunboats lay in line of battle in front of the town, the line extending from the upper to the lower forts, the *McRae* in the center, at the head of the main street. The stage of the river

was such that despite our great draught, we laid alongside the levee, the muzzles of our guns being just above the river bank, and thus we had the whole state of Missouri for a breastwork. Our low-lying makeshift gunboats, without a sign of bulwarks, were not so fortunate, they had to stay out in the middle of the stream so as to bring their guns to bear, whereupon the enemy's sharpshooters amused themselves by picking the men off their exposed decks. It was on account of this sniping that Commodore Hollins ordered the town to be destroyed by fire.

As Pope approached nearer and nearer, our green volunteers became panic-stricken and wanted to quit, and they put no trust in "Savez" Read's assurance that in the position in which the *McRae* was "we could hold the place until the day of judgment."

During the siege Pope's artillery built batteries on the river below us, thus cutting off our transports, and supplies. It was our business to drive away or silence these guns. It was heart-breaking work because they would not stay silenced. We would drive them away from one spot and the next day go down again to see that the way was clear for our boats, when suddenly a harmless looking row of young cottonwood trees would gracefully bow to us and fall crashing into the river, the splash being instantaneously followed by the roaring of guns as a deadly fire was poured into us. At other times an innocent pile of cord wood would suddenly tumble down and the guns behind it would pour shot into us until we drove them away.

One morning while lying in line on the east side of the river, in fancied security, we went to breakfast, but we did not eat it, for just at that moment the trees on the opposite side of the river fell into the

stream and a hot fire was poured into us. This was a stronger battery than we had yet fought, and they had thrown up formidable earthworks. Soon the gunboat *Polk* received shots between wind and water which put her *hors de combat* and the other boats were much cut up, one mischievous shell exploding in the pantry of the *Livingston*, smashing every piece of crockery in it. Never before was ever seen such a complete wreck as that room was—and crockery was scarce too in the Confederacy.

As soon as we could get under way we fought the battery from a position in the middle of the river. I heard Read say to the Captain, "If we stuck her nose into the mud in front of that battery we could drive those fellows out with canister," and the Captain replied, "Yes, Mr. Read, but they have canister as well as ourselves." "Yes, Captain," said Read; "but this canister game is one which always makes somebody tired and want to quit. Those soldiers in the Battery can leave whenever they want to, but with as little power as this ship has, we would have to stay there until a towboat came and pulled us out of the mud—*Savez?*"

On another occasion he begged the Captain to lay the *McRae* alongside the bank and let him carry a battery by "boarding," assuring the Captain that the crew would follow him anywhere. But the Captain would not see any advantage in the plan.

The *McRae* was under continuous fire for three weeks at New Madrid, and then news came that one of the heavy Federal ironclads had run the gauntlet at "Island No. Ten." New Madrid was doomed, and it was decided to evacuate the place at once.

After the evacuation of New Madrid and "Island



No. Ten," the *McRae* was hurried down to New Orleans, which city was in great danger from Admiral Farragut's fleet.

Commodore Hollins was relieved from the command of the Mississippi river flotilla, and the *McRae* was rushed down to Forts Jackson and St. Philip to assist in preventing the Union fleet from ascending the stream. The tale is an old one and has often been told. On the night of the 24th of April, 1862, Admiral Farragut's fleet cut through the raft of logs that extended across the river, and his heavy sea-going ships-of-war, under a terrific fire, ran the gauntlet of the two powerful forts. Above the forts the only vessels commanded by Confederate naval officers were the ironclad *Louisiana*, the ram *Manassas*, the *Governor Moore*, and the *McRae*. There were also some fifteen powerful towboats, commanded by river men, each carrying one or two guns. It was expected that these boats would be very effective, acting as rams. At the first crash of the great guns, with one notable exception, these boats were rushed ashore and set fire to by their crews. The little *McRae* wandered about in the midst of Farragut's fleet, first receiving the broadside of one heavy sloop-of-war, and then another, until her decks resembled shambles. Her guns were knocked off their carriages and rolled along the deck, crushing the dead and wounded alike. Her Commander, Lieutenant Huger, was struck in the groin by a grapeshot, but insisted on remaining in command, and for a few more moments directed the movements of his ship until a canister bullet cut a gash in his temple, knocking both him, and the seaman who was supporting him, to the deck. Read now insisted that the Captain be taken below and into his cabin where, although he was exposed to the enemy's

fire, still there were comforts for a dying man which of course could not be had on deck. Captain Huger, gasping for breath, feebly protested against being carried below, and when, despite his entreaties, Mr. Read ordered the men to lift him up, he piteously begged Read not to surrender his ship, saying: "I always promised myself I would fight her until she was under the water!" Read promised the Captain he would fight her as long as she floated, and, much comforted, the gallant man was carried below to die.

The guns of the *McRae* were all soon dismounted and all the riddled ship could do was to lie in the storm of shot and shell for the rest of the night during which she was on fire half a dozen times. Of the *McRae's* officers only Read and one little midshipman were left.

When day broke the *McRae* was the only vessel left with the Confederate flag flying. The Union fleet was above the forts, and New Orleans was at its mercy.

Admiral Farragut with his flagship, the *Hartford*, was lying at the Quarantine station, four miles above the forts. Read sent his only small boat, that was not too badly riddled to float, over to the *Hartford* with the request that the *McRae* be allowed to pass up the river to New Orleans to seek medical assistance for the Captain and the great number of wounded men on board.

Admiral Farragut asked "why Mr. Read did not haul that flag down;" and when informed of Read's promise to Captain Huger before the latter lapsed into unconsciousness, he said: "Tell Mr. Read to bring the *McRae* alongside the *Hartford*, and if she will float I will allow her to proceed and will decide what I will do with her when I arrive at New Orleans."

The *McRae* slowly made her way up to the city; anchored off what was known at that day as the "slaughter house" point at Algiers, on the opposite side of the river from New Orleans. The ship by this time was rapidly filling with water and the men at the pumps were exhausted. The wounded were hastily carried ashore, and as the last boat left the side Read cut the sea-pipes to hasten her sinking. He then jumped overboard—swam to the shore—and made the best of his way to "Camp Moore" where he joined the Confederate troops which had evacuated the city.

As the *McRae* was about to disappear beneath the muddy waters of the Mississippi the Confederate flag was still flying from her peak, but when it was only a few feet above the surface a boat from one of the Federal men-of-war, which by this time had arrived in front of New Orleans, dashed up to the sinking ship and hauled it down. But she came within a very few inches of going to the bottom with her colors flying, as Read had intended she should. Admiral Farragut regarded the *McRae* as a prize, and he and his officers severely criticised Read for having cut the sea-pipes, but we must remember that Read was very young and inexperienced at the time for such a responsible position, and we will have to leave to the future unbiased historian, and officers who are learned in naval ethics, to pass on the propriety of his conduct on that occasion.

With the remnant of the *McRae's* crew, Read went from Camp Moore to Port Hudson on the Mississippi, where strong batteries were being erected with the object of staying Admiral Farragut's triumphal progress on the river. Read was given the command of one of these batteries and always claimed that in the fight with the fleet, shots from his guns destroyed the

sidewheel frigate *Mississippi*, of which Admiral Dewey was then the executive officer. "Savez" had been at Annapolis at the same time Admiral Dewey was there.

From Port Hudson Read was ordered to join a peculiarly constructed ironclad ram which had been built in a corn field. Her engines were of the usual weak-powered makeshift variety in common use in the Confederate navy. The name of the ram was *Arkansas* and Read was one of her lieutenants. Her crew was also a makeshift one, composed as it was of soldiers who had never been aboard a boat before and a few sailor men.

The *Arkansas* went down the Yazoo river and soon encountered a squadron of Federal ironclad gunboats, running through them under a terrific fire. She then ran through Admiral Farragut's fleet of wooden sea-going sloops of war, in all seventeen vessels, exchanging broadsides with them as she passed, and, wonderful to relate, she arrived at Vicksburg. Officers and men were loud in their praises of the coolness Read had displayed while under the terrific broadsides of the Federal men-of-war and the confidence his example had instilled into the crew. Vicksburg was being besieged at the time and was also being bombarded from every direction. After putting her killed and wounded ashore, and receiving some much needed repairs, for the *Arkansas* had been badly cut up in her passage through the fleets, she proceeded down the river with the object of getting to Baton Rouge in time to assist the Confederate army which was advancing to the attack on that place, but unfortunately for her, while being pursued by the Federal ironclad *Essex*, her machinery broke down a few miles above Baton Rouge, and she was run ashore and destroyed

by her own crew who escaped in their fighting togs, which were not much to speak of.

On the levee, not very far from where the *Arkansas* blew up while her loaded guns were exploding from the heat of the fire raging inside of her, a number of young girls who had taken refuge from Baton Rouge at Doctor Nolan's plantation, were standing, among them were two of my sisters. The crew of the *Arkansas* had to pass by them, and "Savez" Read afterwards told me that he never realized before how thin his gauze summer undershirt was. "Savez" was not only a very modest young fellow, but where ladies were concerned he was at that time very bashful. He told me that he never had been so scared in his life as he was when those young ladies came forward and offered him hospitality. (See Naval War Records, "A Confederate Girl's Diary," &c.)

And now commenced the most romantic and thrilling part of "Savez" Read's interesting naval career.

The Confederate cruiser *Florida*, commanded by Lieutenant Maffitt, had just made a most sensational dash through the blockading squadron at Mobile, and was being fitted out in that port for the purpose of destroying American merchant ships on the high seas. Maffitt requested that Read should be ordered to his vessel as one of her lieutenants.

When ready for sea the *Florida* lay in Mobile Bay for some time awaiting a favorable opportunity to run through the blockading fleet which had now been largely increased to prevent her escape.

Captain Maffitt in his private journal, kept while lying in Mobile Bay, makes the following entry: November 4th, 1862, "Lieutenant C. W. Read, the last lieutenant I personally applied for, joined; this officer

accident, would collide with the selected gunboat, and with his crew he would jump aboard her and without making any noise capture her with the cutlasses, and then it would be easy to escape to sea. The *Clarence* he would set adrift and the enemy could have her in exchange. It would be a good bargain as the latter vessel had not cost Maffitt anything. Maffitt granted his request.

But "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang oft alee." Several neutral vessels spoke the *Clarence* and from them Read learned that the vessels in Hampton Roads were all on the lookout for the *Florida*, expecting her to attempt just such a trick as he proposed to carry out. With the enemy on the alert, wonderful to relate, "Savez" decided that it would not be prudent for him to enter Hampton Roads which was a favorite rendezvous for the North Atlantic squadron. Read then had his carpenter shape a couple of quaker guns out of a spare spar and these he mounted forward and aft so as to make his battery look more formidable when he wanted to intimidate a merchantman.

He made only two captures while in the *Clarence*, and these by accident. He saw them to leeward, and they not suspecting his true character, allowed him to drift down to them. The *Clarence*, although she was a trim-looking craft and had graceful lines, for some unknown reason was very sluggish in the water. "Savez" described her sailing qualities to me by saying, "that with all sail set, and half a gale of wind behind, it would take her all day to pass a bunch of seaweed."

One day he found himself in company with a smart-looking bark. She was clipper-built, and her long skysail poles stamped her as a New Englander. Read instantly decided that she was the craft he wanted.

acquired a reputation for gunnery, coolness, and determination at the battle of New Orleans. When his commander, T. B. Huger, was fatally wounded he continued to gallantly fight the *McRae* until she was riddled and unfit for service. . . ." Dec. 1st. ". . . Our tarry has far exceeded my expectations, and all hands are very restive. Lieutenant Read suffers particularly in this and has become somewhat bilious; every passing squall is to him a fine night for going out, even though it be of fifty minutes' duration only. The gentlemen knew nothing of my orders, nor that having formed plans with Admiral B. (Buchanan), who controls me, I shall abide by them, notwithstanding all their presumed superior judgment." (See Naval War Records.)

At last there was a favorable opportunity and one dark night the *Florida*, with half a gale of wind behind her, succeeded in running through the blockade. She was seen, however, and the U. S. S. *Oneida* and *Cuyler*, started in pursuit. The *Florida's* sails were of great help, and the *Oneida* was soon lost sight of, but the *Cuyler* held on for eighteen hours before she too was lost in the night.

The *Florida* then commenced her work of destruction, and one day when off the Windward Islands she captured a nice-looking little brig called the *Clarence*. Read made one of his modest proposals to Captain Maffitt, which was, to give him command of the brig and twenty picked men, and a twelve-pound howitzer, and with that force he would run into Hampton Roads where there were several gunboats. He would go in at night and the Federals would not suspect him of being anything else but a harmless merchant brig. He would so mismanage her, he said, that she, apparently by

But how was he to catch her? If he gave chase it would alarm her and she would have at once crowded on all sail in an effort to escape, and in that case the *Clarence* would have had about as much chance of overhauling her as a land tortoise would have of heading a frightened deer. But Read played a trick that made her speed of no avail. He played on her kindly feelings. He ran the stars and stripes up at half mast, with the Union down at that. The *Tacony*, for such she proved to be, ran down to the *Clarence* to find out what was wrong with her, and before the merchant skipper could catch his breath the *Clarence* had fouled his bark and "Savez" Read and his crew had possession of her. Under the command of Read, the *Tacony* became the terror of the New England coast, so much so, that to this day "Savez" is spoken of in those latitudes as "Tacony" Read.

The *Tacony* now left fire after fire to mark her wake. While chasing one prize she passed a man-of-war which was looking for Read but thought he was aboard a brig and let the harmless-looking bark pass without molestation. When Read captured the prize her Captain asked him if he had not seen the warship. "Yes," said Read, "but I was after you not him." The Captain then told Read that the man-of-war had boarded him an hour before and warned him that the "Pirate" Read was in those waters. He actually burned ships off the great port of New York, and played havoc up the New England coast. Several times he was in company with armed United States ships that were searching for the brig *Clarence* and her "pirate crew." He captured a large ship which had some nine hundred emigrants, so called, but Read found that most of them had signed agreements to



enlist in the Union army, doubtless as substitutes. This ship was a white elephant on his hands, as of course he could not burn her with all these people aboard, and he could not find any neutral vessel to transfer them to. After several hours he was compelled to bond her for \$150,000.

He went up as far as the Georges Bank where he fell in with some three hundred fishing schooners and amused himself by exploding a shell from his howitzer to see them scatter away like a flock of frightened seagulls. In relating the incident to me "Savez" said, "In this way I raised Cain—and the price of fish in Boston at the same time."

He captured another emigrant ship with seven hundred aboard and of course had to bond her. When his boat boarded one of the prizes the mate received them with the remark: "Well, I suppose you too are hunting for the pirate Read? I have been kept up all night by you gunboat men 'heaving us to' and asking if we were pirates. You are the fifth in eight hours. If we were the pirate you wouldn't dare come near us. Oh go on!" In less than fifteen minutes his ship was a blazing wreck.

It had become known by this time that it was the bark *Tacony* that was doing the damage, and Read knew that to escape capture he must change to another vessel. He captured the ninety-ton fishing schooner *Archer*, transferred his howitzer and crew to her, and burned the *Tacony*. He had not been in the *Archer* many hours when a man-of-war spoke him in the night and asked if he had seen the *Tacony*? Naturally the answer was "No," and the cruiser proceeded on her fruitless search.

Read now decided that he needed a steamer in his

business and the only way to get one was to go into Portland Harbor and help himself. He headed the *Archer* for the port and about four o'clock in the afternoon passed under the guns of Fort Preble and anchored among the shipping. The steamer he wanted was not there, but the Revenue cutter *Cushing* was anchored near by. The *Cushing* carried one thirty-two pounder pivot gun and a twenty-four pounder, and her crew was composed of forty men.

When night came the moon shone brightly and many light-hearted parties in tugs and rowboats, with laughter and music, were enjoying themselves on the water, while not far away the lights of the city, somewhat dimmed by the bright moon, twinkled.

At midnight when everything had quieted down, Read manned his two boats and going alongside the *Cushing* boarded her, taking her crew by complete surprise. So unexpected was the attack that the capture was effected without bloodshed. The crew of the *Cushing* was quickly confined between decks, and her anchor weighed. The wind having died away, Read had to man his boats and tow the cutter by the fort and to the entrance of the harbor before a light air came to their assistance. The boats were then recalled and hoisted to the davits. But the breeze was so light that they had made only some twelve or fifteen miles when day broke and they saw the Bangor steamer headed for Portland, and worse than this, on board of the steamer was the new Captain of the *Cushing*, who knew her well, and was on his way to assume command of her. On his arrival at Portland he informed the authorities that the cutter had been kidnapped. They were so surprised that they could hardly believe him. Guns, soldiers and some two or

three hundred civilian volunteers were hastily put on board of the Bangor steamer and accompanied by a number of tugs she went in pursuit of the *Cushing*. By this time the news had been telegraphed up and down the coast and steamers were hurrying to the fray from every direction. Five were already around the *Cushing* when the ball opened.

There were only six rounds of solid shot on the deck of the *Cushing*, and neither threats nor persuasion could induce Lieutenant Davenport, the prisoner commander of the cutter, to divulge where the key of the magazine could be found.

One of the steamers started for the *Cushing*, but "Savez" ricocheted a round shot over her and she hastily went back to her consorts. Then two of the steamers made a detour and came at him from seaward while several tugs did the same thing from the land side, evidently with the intention of ramming or boarding the cutter. By the time they were close aboard Read had expended all his ammunition, and putting his prisoners and crew into the boats set fire to the *Cushing* and rowed over to one of the vessels and surrendered. Of course when the fire reached the magazine of the *Cushing* she blew up with a tremendous explosion.

Read and his men were allowed to go on board the steamer only one at a time; the arms of each one of them were tied behind his back as he stepped on the deck. The civilians on board were in favor of hanging them at once, but the regular soldiers would not permit it.

Lieutenant Collins of the army, who was on board of the *Forest City*, the vessel to whom Read surrendered, in his official report of the affair says: ". . . nor did I fire on the boats, as it was impossible to distinguish

the rebels from the prisoners in their hands. They were all accordingly received as prisoners. . . ." (See Naval War Records.) \*

\* To those who are blessed with a humorous vein the following official communication from the Collector of Customs at the port of Portland will afford some amusement as showing the wonderful self-denial and generosity a man actuated by a sense of patriotism and unselfishness can be capable of when a great occasion calls for it.

Custom-House, Collector's Office,  
Portland, Me., July 7, 1863.

Sir: I herewith send you a copy of an alleged ransom bond given by the master of the ship *Shatemuc*, for the sum of \$150,000, and also a list of the vessel's papers, which, with the aforesaid bond, were found in the private carpetbag of Lieutenant Read, of the *Archer*.

The district attorney concurs with me in recommending that the vessel's papers be retained here for the present, until we can learn whether they will be required as evidence in certain proceedings which may grow out of the capture of these men.

The bond I hold, subject to your order, *waiving any personal claim* (the italics are mine—J. M. M.).

I am, very respectfully, your ob't servant,

Jedediah Jewett,  
Collector.

Hon. Salmon P. Chase,  
Secretary of the Treasury,  
Washington, D. C.

Wonderful must have been the workings of Jedediah's mind that he could have imagined he was entitled in any way to a share in Read's prize money, especially when we remember that it was the ransom bond of a ship owned by one of Jedediah's compatriots!

"Savez" Read's violent methods in taking possession of

Read was now taken ashore and imprisoned in Fort Preble. His proximity to the city of Portland, despite the fact that he was a close prisoner in a garrisoned fortress, must have made some people nervous, if we may judge from the following extract of the official report of Major Andrews, commanding the post:

". . . You can form but a faint idea of the excitement now existing among the people of Portland and vicinity. Rumor follows rumor in rapid succession, and just before daylight this morning some one from the vicinity of the post went to the city with a fresh rumor which set the whole city in a ferment. The bells were rung and men, women, and children soon filled the streets, and were rushing hither and thither in aimless fright.

"I would respectfully suggest that the prisoners be sent from here as quietly and expeditiously as possible, as I do not think it safe for them to be placed in the custody of the citizens, and while the present excitement continues, I feel obliged to mount so large a guard that one-half of my force are on duty every night. . . ." (See Naval War Records.)

other people's possessions was only equaled by the lavish prodigality with which Jedediah Jewett, in his mind, gave them away. In a further communication to the Secretary of the Treasury the Collector said: "The armament (of the *Archer*) is undoubtedly that which the *Tacony* received from the *Florida*, and I will take the liberty to recommend that you authorize me to present the howitzer to the city of Portland, and the guns, pistols, etc., to the officers and leading men who volunteered their services as a slight, but to them no doubt valued, token that the government appreciates their zeal and promptness in the capture. . . ." (See Naval War Records.)

Another interesting extract taken from the Naval War Records is found in an official report of the cruise of the gunboat *United States* which was also in search of the *Tacony*. It is made by Lieut. Commander Richard W. Meade, Jr., and dated "Off New York" July 1st, 1863. ". . . In conclusion, Admiral, although too late to participate in the affair off Portland, the cruise of this vessel has not, I think, been wholly barren of results. The bold attempt of this daring rebel had well-nigh succeeded. Had he escaped from Portland (which, I am inclined to think, he would have done had he found the ammunition in the cutter) he must have been overhauled by this vessel next day, as I cruised directly to the eastward of him, with the wind due west. I cannot help regretting that I did not fall in with him, as in that event Captain Read and the crew of *Florida No. 2* would scarcely be prisoners of war in Fort Preble. . . ."

It is well for the reputation of American civilization that Captain Meade did not capture "Savez" Read, for those who knew Meade best believed that had he done so he would have been rash enough to have carried out his hardly concealed threat that he would have hanged him, and Read was a protégé of and a great favorite with the President of the Confederacy.

A few years before the death of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, she told me while talking about "Savez" Read that when Mr. Davis heard the rumor that "Savez" was to be hung, he flew into a towering passion and swore that if a hair of Read's head was hurt, he, Mr. Davis, would hang the ten federal officers of the highest rank then held in Confederate prisons. And like Captain Meade, Mr. Davis would not have hesitated to carry out his threat.

Much to the relief of the terror-stricken citizens of Portland, Read was soon sent to Fort Warren, in Boston Harbor, where he found several of his brother naval officers, also incarcerated.

Read was not the sort of man who could calmly reconcile himself to the idea of patiently waiting in prison until by some good stroke of fortune he would be exchanged and sent back to the Confederacy. He had been but a short time in Fort Warren before he conceived a plan of escape which by all but one of his companions was regarded as a mad project.

In the casement where they were confined there was a chimney which once opened upon the parapet of the Fort, but it had been carefully stopped up with bricks and mortar, and was supposed to be absolutely secure. With pocket knives, which had been overlooked when they were searched, and an old rusty ice-pick, which had been found in a crevice in the stone wall of their temporary cell, Read commenced to dig his way through bricks and mortar, to liberty.

The débris was secreted in and under the bunks of the prisoners, and some of it was actually laid on the stone floor and covered with their garments, escaping detection because there were no pegs in the walls to hang their clothes on.

Night after night, "Savez" picked away, the other prisoners letting him stand on their shoulders until he had reached a sufficient height to quarry out for himself a foothold in the chimney.

While thus at work, Read got a quantity of lime in one of his eyes which caused him intense suffering, and of course he could not ask the army surgeon to give him relief as the lime would have exposed the whole plot, so in silence he suffered and pertinaciously

worked on, with the result that the sight of his right eye was permanently injured.

After many nights of painful toil, "Savez" found himself in the open air. Crouching behind the chimney top he waited for the appearance of his companions. Lieutenant Alexander, C. S. N., next made the attempt to follow him up the flue, but, being a larger man than Read, he got stuck, and for a time could neither go any further up, nor could he get down. In these desperate straits his fellow prisoners climbed on each others' shoulders and by main force pushed him through the narrow hole with the result that he left much skin and nearly all his clothes behind him. None of the other prisoners, after witnessing Alexander's predicament, could muster up sufficient nerve to attempt the feat.

Watching for a favorable moment, when the nearest sentry was walking away from their hiding-place, Read and Alexander crept down to the beach to a spot where some old sailcloth and other dunnage had been piled preparatory to its being carted away. Judging that it was near the time for the "grand rounds" to make its periodical tour, the two young officers hid under the dunnage.

Soon came the guard, and one of the soldiers stopped and asked what the object, indistinctly seen in the darkness was, at the same time thrusting his bayonet into it. The bayonet passed through Read's thigh but he never uttered a sound, and another soldier told the man with the bayonet that it was nothing but old dunnage, and that it was wet, and he would have a time cleaning the rust off his weapon in the morning. The soldier ran his fingers over the bayonet dripping with Read's blood, and coolly remarking, "It is wet," caught step, and marched on with the rest.



The officers of the garrison had a pleasure boat which they used for sailing parties and fishing excursions. She was anchored in front of the fort, and only a short distance from the shore. She was built on the same lines as the boats used by fishermen in that locality. Read and Alexander swam out to her, raised her small anchor, and put out to sea with the intention of making their way in that frail craft to Halifax, N. S., from which place they could go by steamer to Bermuda and from thence run the blockade into a southern port.

When day broke, by good luck, they found themselves in the midst of a fleet of several hundred fishing boats, all similar in appearance to the one they were in. Soon many warships appeared in search of the escaped prisoners, but Read felt convinced that they could not board and examine all those fishing vessels before night, and that if they did not overhaul his little craft before darkness set in he would be able to escape in the night. But unfortunately his wound was paining him very much and Alexander begged him to lie down in the bottom of the boat and to try to get some sleep. "Savez" impressed upon his companion the importance of not doing anything that might attract the attention of their pursuers, but to watch the other boats, and do exactly as they did. After a while, "Savez" seemed to be dozing. Something went wrong with the jibsheets, and Alexander, not wishing to disturb his sorely injured friend, thought that he would run forward, straighten out things, and get back to the helm before anything much could happen. But alas! he misjudged the quickness of his craft. She flew up into the wind and went about before he could get back to the tiller. The men-of-war instantly singled her out, and at once boarded and captured her.

It so happened that on board of the ship to which the prisoners were taken there was an officer who had known both of them when in the old service. He asked their names, and when told "Brown, and Jones" and that they "were poor harmless fishermen" he returned to Read and said: "I thought you were my old shipmate 'Savez' Read and I was going to treat you like an officer and a gentleman, but as you are only a common fisherman, into the 'Brig' you go, in double irons, until further orders!"

"Savez" told me that was too much for him, suffering as he was, so he simply replied: "Sam, you are not going to treat an old shipmate that way, and me badly hurt too?" He was at once sent below and confined in the "sick room" where his wound and his eye were attended to. And back to Fort Warren he went, never again to escape until he was exchanged.

The above is the story as it was told to me by Read one night on board of the C. S. S. *Patrick Henry* in the autumn of 1864, when that ship was doing duty on the James river, below Richmond, as guard ship, receiving ship, and school ship. All the cartels with prisoners when they came up from Harrison's landing, had to stop alongside the *Patrick Henry* and discharge their human freight. It so happened that I was on the deck when Read, emaciated and dishevelled, came across the gang plank from the cartel with a hundred or more other Confederate prisoners, and he remained aboard as the guest of the ward-room officers for several days. He was still limping from his bayonet wound, and was still much troubled by the condition of his eye. "Drury's Bluff," the main river defence of Richmond, was situated about seven miles below the city, and naval batteries, Wood, Brooke, and Semmes, were

still further down the river. These batteries were located on a tongue of land formed by the windings of the stream; Semmes, the farthest down, was just opposite where the Union troops were digging the "Dutch Gap" canal, and was completely enfiladed by the Federal batteries on the opposite side of the river. Gunboats were scarce in the Confederacy, and Read was sent to Battery Wood where they were only engaged occasionally at long range with the enemy. "Savez" was not a long range fighter, and soon grew restless. His ever busy mind soon concocted a scheme whereby he could get an independent command. He submitted a plan to the Secretary of the Navy in which he proposed to destroy the big double turret monitor *Onandaga* which was known to be at City Point, the headquarters of General Grant. Like all of Read's schemes it was very simple and principally consisted of action. He asked the Secretary for a wagon and mules, eight men, and a torpedo. Not a very unreasonable request when it is remembered that he proposed to attack one of the most powerful ironclads then in the United States navy. However, Read did not intend to capture her with the wagon. He knew where a river tug, which was used to tow the U. S. quartermaster's schooners, usually tied up alongside the river bank at night at a point supposed to be absolutely safe from attack.

Read was given the outfit he asked for and started with his little expedition, making a detour inland to escape observation from the river. On his way he cut a sapling for a torpedo pole and put it on the wagon. His outfit for fighting ironclads was nearly complete. He found the tug where he expected her to be, and of course jumped aboard in the night and took possession

of her without meeting with any resistance. He then fastened his torpedo to one end of the pole and the other end he made fast to the tug's bow, and here was a Confederate torpedo boat complete. With this equipment he started down the river. He had not proceeded very far when day broke, and turning a sharp bend in the stream he came suddenly upon three schooners loaded with hay for "Uncle Sam's" army. He now found himself in a quandary. If he passed the schooners and left them unmolested, they would give the alarm. He saw a steamer's smoke and concluded that she was a gunboat coming up the river. He instantly decided to burn the schooners and tug, and escape by the land route, if possible. Setting fire to his prizes, he ran the tug alongside the river bank and landed with his crew. He then applied the torch to the tug and sent her drifting down the stream, while with his men he sought the cover of the undergrowth. The territory in which he soon found himself was debatable ground. Would he escape? It depended entirely upon whose scouting parties would fall in with him first, Federal or Confederate.

The day after he landed from the tug, towards twilight, he heard the sounds of horses' hoofs and quickly concealed his men behind a rail fence alongside of which the bushes were growing quite thick. Along came the cavalry, evidently not suspecting that an enemy was near. One-half of the regiment had nearly passed by when an eagle-eyed scout detected the blue sailor shirts of Read's men, and the gleaming of their gun barrels resting on the top rails of the fence. Instantly he let out a yell. "We are ambushed, boys!" he cried; and others shouted: "Don't shoot, we surrender!" The commander of the cavalry dashed back

to where the commotion was greatest, while the advance of his regiment galloped off in a *saute qui peut* race. Read, who for convenience, was wearing a blue \* shirt like his men, stepped into the open and innocently asked the Colonel if he had any extra horses. The Colonel replied that he had a few which he had recently captured and that he supposed Read could have them, and everything else he chose to take, as he, the Colonel, was in a trap from which he could not hope to extricate himself without a useless sacrifice of life. The horses were brought, and the Colonel was astounded to see only eight men besides "Savez" come out of the bushes. It was not until his men were mounted that Read asked what regiment it was to whom he was indebted for such timely accommodation. He had known for some minutes that they were Confederates. The Colonel then asked Read who he was, and "Savez" gave him the shock of his life by saying in that low whiney voice of his, "I am Lieutenant Read of the Confederate navy. I only want to escape from the Yankees and get back to Richmond!"

This episode came near having a very serious ending. Read, chagrined at the futility of his expedition, wrote a report of it in which he tried to be facetious, saying: "Sir: In my recent expedition I captured three schooners loaded with hay, one tugboat, and a regiment of Confederate cavalry." The contents of the report became known and the indignant Colonel challenged Read. The latter, sore over his failure, wanted to visit his ill humor on somebody, so he eagerly accepted the challenge. Fortunately rumors of the impending duel reached the ears of higher officials who promptly put a stop to it.

\* The uniform of the U. S. sailor was blue.

In the winter of 1864-5, things were looking very black for the Confederate cause. It was felt by all that something must be done and done quickly if we were to stand any chance of succeeding. We had at that time three small ironclads, the *Virginia No. 2*, the *Richmond* and the *Fredericksburg*. It was decided to send these vessels down the James river and try to capture City Point, General Grant's headquarters. But the Union troops had put a boom across the river at Howlett's, below our last battery on the stream. "Savez" volunteered to go in a rowboat and cut this boom so that our ironclads could pass.

On the north side of the river the Union forces had a chain of fortifications, mounting very heavy guns, and supported by some thirty thousand troops. At the time of which I speak I was stationed at Battery Semmes, in front of Dutch Gap. One dark night, being on duty, I was standing near the river bank when a rowboat, propelled by muffled oars, suddenly shot her nose into the mud near my feet. So noiselessly had she approached that she was upon me before I was aware of her presence, and I must confess that I was somewhat startled when I heard Read ask who I was. I told him and he stepped ashore and informed me that he was on his way down to Howlett's to cut the boom, and that our ironclads would follow later, and then added: "Now remember, 'Youngster,' if they open on me you work those guns of yours so fast that they will have to turn their attention to you." Then he put his arms around me and added: "Good-bye, Jimmie, I only wish you could go with me."

Then he stepped into his boat and disappeared in the darkness.

It was a very quiet night, as quiet nights went at

Battery Semmes. There was only an occasional mortar shell bursting over the place, and after the sound of the explosion died away one could almost feel the stillness. Suddenly what appeared to be the light of a firefly flashed for an instant in the bushes on the other side of the river and I heard the crack of a musket, soon to be followed by another, and another, until the river bank seemed to be brilliantly illuminated by innumerable lightning bugs and the rattle of musketry became continuous. Poor "Savez!" I knew they had detected him, and I had little hope of ever seeing him again. But I had little time to spare in speculation as to the fate of my friend, for soon our ironclads like huge black ghosts glided by, and my turn had commenced. The Union "Bowler" battery opened first and was quickly followed in succession by "Signal Hill," the "Crow's Nest," and the "Dutch Gap" batteries. There was one prolonged roar of great guns, which on our side we added to by working our heavy pieces of artillery for all they were worth. For hours this was kept up and it was a great relief when towards morning the fire slackened and at last died away. What had become of our shipmates in the ironclads? Had they safely run the gauntlet, or had they been sunk? We did not know until late in the day, when we learned that Read had cut the boom, and the ironclads had passed the upper batteries safely, and that the *Fredericksburg*, the weakest of all of them, had passed through the obstructions, but that the *Virginia* and *Richmond* had been so unfortunate as to ground under the guns of the lower battery at Howlett's. The *Fredericksburg* was ordered to return, and then a U. S. Monitor *Onandaga* appeared and what she did not do to our helpless "tinclads" is not worth de-

scribing. That night they returned up the river subjected to the same fearful smashing they had experienced while going down the night before. The *Virginia No. 2* had her bow, broadside, and stern armor smashed in, and was almost a wreck. An officer who saw Read's small boat at Howlett's told me that one could not place his hand on a spot on her side which had not been perforated by a bullet. Read had lost several men in killed and wounded, but with his usual luck in battle had escaped unscathed.

The days of the Southern Confederacy were now numbered. Richmond was evacuated, and "Savez" Read disappeared as it were from the face of the earth. None of his former shipmates knew what had become of him. Lee surrendered, Johnson surrendered, Kirby Smith surrendered, and the United States government was congratulating itself upon having suppressed the rebellion, when lo, they were rudely awakened to the fact that they had not yet made terms with "Savez" Read.

When Richmond fell, "Savez" made his way to the Red river where he took possession of a very fast and powerful double walking-beam engined towboat carrying one gun. She was called the *Webb*. After protecting her exposed boilers with cotton bales, he intended to attempt to carry her to Cuba. This indeed was a desperate undertaking. It would be necessary to run through a squadron of Union ironclads at the mouth of the Red river, and for a distance of some three hundred miles from that point to New Orleans, at intervals there were gunboats and fortifications to be passed. At New Orleans was a fleet of sloops of war, and below that city were the two formidable forts of Jackson and St. Philip.



Nothing daunted by this prospect Read started. He got through the ironclads at the mouth of the Red river, and then cutting the telegraph wires, proceeded down the Mississippi; but before he could cut the telegraph below Donaldsonville, a message had been sent to New Orleans that he was coming. The sloops-of-war lying in front of that city honored the gallant "Savez" with salutes of broadsides as he passed them. The *Webb* had a pole torpedo on her bow, and Read determined suddenly to blow up at least one of his tormentors and turned the *Webb* athwart the stream for that purpose, when the speed of the *Webb* combined with the force of the current snapped the pole and the torpedo drifted alongside and lodged against the buckets of her wheel. Her engine had just been stopped in time to prevent her paddles from exploding it. Read jumped overboard himself and cleared the deadly weapon away from his vessel, climbed back aboard and went on down the river pursued by several ships of the Union fleet. He had several torpedoes, and at once fitted another one to his bow.

He wanted to time himself so that he would pass the big forts, Jackson and St. Philip at night, but as ill luck would have it, when some thirty miles below the city looking across the land in a bend on the river he descried the twenty-six gun sloop-of-war *Richmond* apparently coming up stream. Instantly "Savez" determined to torpedo her. But his pilot convinced him that to do so he would have to pass very close under her broadside and then come up stream, which manœuvre would necessitate the *Webb* being under fire for some time. Besides the *Richmond* would then be above him and would force him down to the forts in daylight and it would be impossible for the frail

towboat to survive that ordeal. "Savez" then ran the *Webb* ashore under the fire of the *Richmond*, and set fire to her. He did not know that the engines of the *Richmond* had broken down and that she was at anchor. But "Savez" said that he had been several times subjected to the fearful broadsides of that particular ship, and felt that the *Webb* could never survive one of them at close range. He escaped into the marsh where he was in danger of being eaten by alligators, and was in fact devoured by mosquitoes, only to be captured after all of his sufferings.

In the winter of 1865-6, "Savez" Read was in New Orleans and came to see me. He was very much down on his luck, and told me that it would be necessary for him to go to sea before the mast. I begged him not to think of doing such a thing, but he mentioned several other young officers who, like himself, had given up a life's career in the United States navy for the Southern Confederacy and had gone to sea as common sailors, and he thought what was good enough for them would be good enough for him. Talking further with him he unfolded a scheme he had by which he could make a lot of money if he only had a little capital. He knew of a small brig that was laid up at New Orleans, principally on account of her small carrying capacity. She looked like a smart craft, and he felt sure that her owners would like to get rid of her, and if he could only get hold of that brig, he knew of a small island in the West Indies which was not much frequented by ships, and where fruit could be bought for a mere song. He would turn the brig into a fruiterer, bring his fruit to New Orleans or other gulf ports and ship it north by steam, etc.

At the time I was one of the very few ex-officers of

the Confederate navy who had any money. I gave "Savez" the amount necessary and in less than a week he had his brig fitted out and had taken his departure.

Several months passed without my hearing anything from him, when to my surprise one day he walked into my office. I asked him how the fruit trade was getting on, but the question seemed to bore him. He simply said that "no man could make a living at it without going into *side lines*." I then asked him what had become of his brig, and he replied that he did not know. The Custom house officials had made life unbearable, they all seemed to have some personal grudge against him, and rather than be persecuted by them any longer he had just left the brig in their charge in a small gulf port, and that if they did not have any better luck than he had had with her, he was sorry for them. His peculiar smile spread in ripples over his mouth; his eyes twinkled; and he said it would be a great favor to him if I would not mention having seen him, as he was living in a secluded street in the French part of the city, and he did not want to cause any more excitement among the revenue officials, that they would cool off in a little while, and then he would be friendly with them again.

What "Savez" had done to incur the enmity of the Customs officials he never would tell me; but I had my suspicions that the business on the "*side*" lines meant a little harmless smuggling. At all events we never saw his brig nor my money again.

Shortly after this interview another Read ("E. G.") came on the scene. He was the man whom "Savez" beat for the honor of being foot of the class when they graduated at Annapolis. E. G. Read, like his namesake, had proved himself a splendid officer in the

Southern navy. His present mission was to find "Savez" Read. He told me that there was big money to be made if he could only find "Savez," that there was a war going on in the Republic of Colombia, and that one of the sides to it wanted to buy a gunboat and had the money to pay; that he knew where the boat was to be had that would suit them, but the only trouble was that time and dry rot had not treated her kindly, and the would-be purchasers insisted that she should be delivered in one of their ports; that a seaworthy certificate would be impossible to get, so she would have to slip out of the port of New York *à la* Confederate cruiser, without clearance papers; that the sea off Cape Hatteras could be very nasty at times, but nevertheless if he could only get hold of "Savez" Read he was sure the voyage could be negotiated successfully.

I piloted E. G. Read to "Savez's" retreat, and of course the latter jumped at the offer. That night they departed for New York.

They were lavish with bright paint on the ancient craft, and procuring two or three light guns they put them, and a lot of ammunition, down in the hold, and without troubling the Customs officials for a clearance, one night they put to sea, and what is more remarkable, they reached their destination, and turned the boat over to its new owners, receiving the stipulated price in exchange.

Instead of returning at once to the United States, Read remained in Porto Caballos for some time, and in that time he got into communication with the revolutionary leader. He represented to that worthy the hopelessness of his cause now that his opponent had such a splendid gunboat, and offered for a sum of money to capture the *fine man-of-war* and deliver it to him.

The offer was instantly accepted. Read then gathered together a baker's dozen of the waifs he found loafing around the dock, seized a shore boat, rowed out to the gunboat in the night, climbed on to her deck and carried her by boarding before the astounded and sleepy crew knew what was happening—and out to sea he carried her.

He delivered her safely to her new purchaser and then skipped for the British island of Trinidad which is very near the coast. From there he wrote a letter to the President of Colombia, who had originally bought the vessel, expressing deep regret that circumstances, "over which he had no control," had compelled him to carry off the Colombian navy, and at the same time, offered for the *same* consideration, to retake, and bring her back! "Savez" seemed to regard that old boat as an endless source of revenue to him, but the President awakened him from his dream of untold wealth by rudely intimating that he would hang him if he ever again put foot in the Republic of Colombia.

What became of the money Read earned in his peculiar ship brokerage business I could never get him to tell me. One thing certain is that within a very short time after his Colombia escapade he did not have a cent and was very glad to get a place as an apprentice pilot at the mouths of the Mississippi river.

In time he became a full branch pilot and the last time I saw him was in 1883, when I was a passenger in the steamer *City of Mexico* coming from Vera Cruz to New Orleans. The Captain of the *Mexico* was an old friend of mine, and when we arrived off the "Jetties" who should come on board as pilot but "Savez" Read. Naturally we fell into each other's arms and were delighted to meet again after many years. The Cap-

tain turned the ship over to Read, and as we were walking toward the bridge "Savez" nudged me and laughingly said, "Jimmie, wouldn't she make a bully blaze?"

Captain McIntosh instantly said: "I want you fellows to stop that kind of talk; I don't care if the war has been over for years; I don't feel safe with you two pirates aboard!"

Read had as kindly a heart and was as lovable a man as I ever knew, and he undoubtedly was the hero of the Confederate navy.

The hardships "Savez" Read had undergone proved too much for his constitution at last and his health failed him to such an extent that he was compelled to retire from the life of exposure to the elements necessary in a pilot's calling. He was made one of the Harbor Masters of the port of New Orleans and died in 1890.