THE OPERATIONS IN MOBILE BAY.

Admiral Farragut's Official Report.

How the Forts and the Ram "Tennessee" Were Captured—Farragut's Pilot—Interesting Particulars.

The official report of Admiral FARRAGUT of the operations in Mobile Bay is illustrated with very interesting diagrams, explanatory of the different portions of the fleet during the action. We copy the material parts of this interesting document:—

UNITED STATES FLAG-SHIP "HARTFORD," MOBILE BAY, August 12, 1864.—Sir:—I had the honor to forward the Department on the evening of the 5th inst. a report of my entrance to Mobile Bay on the morning of that day, and which, though brief, contained all the principal facts of the attack. Notwithstanding the loss of life, particularly on this ship, and the terrible disaster to the *Tecumseh*, the result of the fight was a glorious victory; and I have reason to feel proud of the officers, seamen and marines of the squadron under my command, for it has never fallen to the lot of an officer to be thus situated and thus sustained. Regular discipline will bring men to any amount of endurance, but there is a natural fear of hidden dangers, particularly when so awfully destructive of human life as the torpedo, which requires more than discipline to overcome.

Preliminary Plans.

Preliminary to a report of the action of the 5th, I desire to call the attention of the Department to the previous steps taken in consultation with Generals CANBY and GRANGER on the 8th of July. I had an interview with these officers on board the *Hartford*, on the subject of an attack upon Forts Morgan and Gaines, at which it was agreed that General CANBY would send all the troops he could spare to co-operate with the fleet. Circumstances soon obliged General CANBY to inform me that he could not despatch a sufficient number to invest both forts, and in reply I suggested that Gaines should be the first invested, engaging to have force in the Sound ready to protect the landing of the army on Dauphin Island in the rear of that fort, and I assigned Lieutenant-Commander DE KRAFFT, of the *Conemaugh*, to that duty.

On the 1st instant General GRANGER visited me again on the *Hartford*. In the mean time the *Tecumseh* had arrived at Pensacola, and Captain CRAVEN informed me that he would be ready in four days for any service. We, therefore, fixed upon the 4th of August as the day for the landing of the troops and my entrance into the bay but owing to delays mentioned in Captain JENKINS' communication to me, the *Tecumseh* was not ready. General GRANGER, however, to my mortification, was up to the time, and the troops actually landed on Dauphin Island.

As subsequent events proved, the delay turned to our advantage, as the Rebels were busily engaged during the 4th in throwing troops and supplies into Fort Gaines, all of which were captured a few days afterward. The *Tecumseh* arrived on the evening of the 4th, and everything being propitious, I proceeded to the attack on the following morning. As mentioned in my previous despatch, the vessels outside the bar, which were designed to participate in the engagement, were all under way by forty minutes past five in the morning, in the following order, two abreast and lashed together:—

Brooklyn, Captain James Alden, with the *Octorora*, Lieutenant-Commander C. H. Green, on the port side.

Hartford, Captain Percival Drayton, with the *Metacomet*, Lieutenant-Commander J. E. Jouett.

Richmond, Captain T. A. Jenkins, with the *Port Royal*, Lieutenant-Commander B. Gherardi.

Lackawanna, Captain J. B. Marchand, with the *Seminole*, Commander E. Donaldson.

Monongahela, Commander J. H. Strong, with the *Kennebec*, Lieutenant-Commander W. P. McCann.

Ossipee, Commander W. E. Le Roy, with the *Itasca*, Lieutenant-Commander George Brown.

Oneida, Commander J. R. M. Mullany, with the *Galena*, Lieutenant-Commander C. H. Wells.

The iron-clads *Tecumseh*, Commander T. A. M. CRAVEN, the *Manhattan*, Commander J. W. A. NICHOLSON, the *Winnebago*, Commander T. H. STEVENS, and the *Chickasaw*, Lieutenant-Commander T. H. PERKINS, were already ahead inside the bar, and had been ordered to take up their positions on the starboard side of the wooden ships, or between them and Fort Morgan, for the double purpose of keeping down the fire from the water battery and the parapet guns of the fort, as well as to attack the ram *Tennessee* as soon as the fort was passed.

It was only at the urgent request of the captains and commanding officers that I yielded to the *Brooklyn* being the leading ship of the line, as she had four chase guns and an ingenious arrangement for picking up torpedoes, and because in their judgment the flag-ship ought not to be too much exposed. This I believe to be an error; for apart from the fact that exposure is one of the penalties of rank in the navy, it will always be the aim of the enemy to destroy the flag-ship, and, as will appear in the sequel, such attempt was very persistently made, but Providence did not permit it to be be successful.

Passing the Forts.

The attacking fleet steamed steadily up the main ship channel, the *Tecumseh* firing the first shot at 6:47. At six minutes past 7 the fort opened upon us, and was replied to by a gun from the *Brooklyn*, and immediately after the action became general. It was soon apparent that there was some difficulty ahead. The *Brooklyn*, for some cause which I did not then clearly understand, but which has since been explained by Captain ALDEN in his report, arrested the advance of the whole fleet, while at the same time the guns of the whole fort were playing with great effect upon that vessel and the *Hartford*. A moment after I saw the *Tecumseh*, struck by a torpedo, disappear almost instantaneously beneath the waves, carrying with her her gallant commander and nearly all her crew.

I determined at once, as I had originally intended, to take the lead, and after ordering the *Metacomet* to send a boat to save, if possible, any of the perishing crew, I dashed ahead with the *Hartford*, and the ships followed on, their officers believing that they were going to a noble death with their Commander-in-Chief. I steamed through between the buoys where the torpedoes were supposed to have been sunk. These buoys had been previously examined by my Flag Lieutenant, J. CRITTENDEN WATSON, in several nightly reconnoissances. Though he had not been able to discover the sunken torpedoes, yet we had been assured by refugees, deserters, and others of their existence, but believing that from their having been sometime in the water they were probably innocuous, I determined to take the chance of their explosion.

How the "Tennessee" Was Captured.

From the moment I turned to the northwestward, to clear the middle ground, we were enabled to keep such a broadside fire upon the batteries of Fort Morgan that their guns did us comparatively little injury. Just after we passed the fort, which was about ten minutes before eight o'clock, the ram *Tennessee* dashed out at the ship, as had been expected, and in anticipation of which I had ordered the monitors on our starboard side. I took no further notice of her than to return her fire. The Rebel gun-boats *Morgan*, *Gaines* and *Selma* were ahead, and the latter particularly annoyed us with a raking fire, which our guns could not return.

At two minutes after eight o'clock I ordered the *Metacomet* to cast off and go in pursuit of the *Selma*. Captain JOUETT was after her in a moment, and in an hour's time he had her as a prize. She was commanded by P. N. MURPHY, formerly of the United States Navy. He was wounded in the wrist; his executive officer, Lieutenant COMSTOCK, and eight of the crew killed, and seven or eight wounded. Lieutenant-Commander JOUETT's conduct during the whole affair commands my warmest commendations. The *Morgan* and *Gaines* succeeded in escaping under the protection of the guns of Fort Morgan, which would have been prevented had the other gun-boats been as prompt in their movements as the *Metacomet*. The want of pilots, however, I believe, was the principal difficulty. The *Gaines* was so injured by our fire that she had to be run ashore, where she was subsequently destroyed, but the *Morgan* escaped to Mobile during the night, though she was chased and fired upon by our cruisers.

Having passed the forts and dispersed the enemy's gun-boats, I had ordered most of the vessels to anchor, when I perceived the ram *Tennessee* standing up for this ship; this was at forty-five minutes past eight. I was not long in comprehending his intentions to be the destruction of the flag-ship. The monitors and such of the wooden vessels as I thought best adapted for the purpose, were immediately ordered to attack the ram, not only with their guns but bows on at full speed. And then began one of the fiercest naval combats on record. The *Monongahela*, Commander STRONG, was the first vessel that struck her, and in doing so carried away his own iron prow, together with the cutwater, without apparently doing his adversary much injury.

The *Lackawanna*, Captain MARCHAND, was the next vessel to strike her, which she did at full speed, but though her stern was cut and crushed to the plank ends for the distance of three feet above the water's edge to five feet below, the only perceptible effect on the ram was to give her a heavy list. The *Hartford* was the third vessel which struck her, but as the *Tennessee* quickly shifted her helm, the blow was a glancing one, and as she rasped along our side we poured our whole port broadside of nine-inch solid [illegible] within ten feet of her casemate. The monitors worked slowly, but delivered their fire as opportunity offered. The *Chickasaw* succeeded in getting under her stern, and a fifteen-inch shot from the *Manhattan* broke through her iron plating and heavy wooden backing, though the missile itself did not enter the vessel.

Immediately after the collision with the flag-ship I directed Captain DRAYTON to bear down for the ram again. He was doing so at full speed, when, unfortunately, the *Lackawanna* ran into the *Hartford* just forward of the mizzenmast, cutting her down to within two feet of the water's edge. We soon got clear again, however, and were fast approaching our adversary, when she struck her colors and ran up the white flag. She was at this time sore beset; the *Chickasaw* was pounding away at her stern, the *Ossipee* was approaching her at full speed, and the *Monongahela*, *Lackawanna* and this ship were bearing down upon her, determined upon her destruction. Her smoke-stack had been shot away, her steering chains were gone, compelling a resort to her relieving tackles, and several of the port-shutters were jammed. Indeed, from the time the *Hartford* struck her until her surrender, she never fired a gun.

As the *Ossipee*, Commander LE ROY, was about to strike her she hoisted the white flag, and that vessel immediately stopped her engine, though not in time to avoid a glancing blow. During the contest with the Rebel gun-boats and the ram *Tennessee*, and which terminated by her surrender at ten o'clock, we lost many more men than from the fire of the batteries of Fort Morgan. Admiral BUCHANAN was wounded in the leg, two or three of his men were killed, and five or six wounded. Commander JOHNSTON, formerly of the United States Navy, was in command of the *Tennessee*, and came on board the flag-ship to surrender his sword and that of Admiral BUCHANAN. The Surgeon, Dr. CONRAD, came with him, stated the condition of the Admiral, and wished to know what was to be done with him.

Fleet Surgeon PALMER, who was on board the *Hartford* during the action, commiserating the sufferings of the wounded, suggested that those of both sides be sent to Pensacola, where they could be properly cared for. I therefore addressed a note to Brigadier-General R. L. PAGE, commanding Fort Morgan, informing him that Admiral BUCHANAN and others of the *Tennessee* had been wounded, and desiring to know whether he would permit one of our vessels under a flag of truce to convey them, with, or without, our men wounded to Pensacola, on the understanding that the vessel should take out none but the wounded, and bring nothing back that she did not take out. This was acceded to by General PAGE, and the *Metacomet* proceeded on this mission of humanity.

As I had an elevated position in the main rigging, near the top, I was able to overlook not only the deck of the *Hartford*, but the other vessels of the fleet. I witnessed the terrible effects of the enemy's shot and the good conduct of the men at their guns; and although no doubt their hearts sickened, as mine did, when their shipmates were struck down beside them, yet there was not a moment's hesitation to lay their comrades aside and spring again to their deadly work. Our little consort, the *Metacomet*, was also under my immediate eye during the whole action up to the moment I ordered her to cast off in pursuit of the *Selma*.

The coolness and promptness of Lieutenant-Commander JOUETT throughout merit high praise; his whole conduct was worthy of his reputation. In this connection, I must not omit to call the attention of the Department to the conduct of Acting Ensign HENRY C. NIELDS, of the *Metacomet*, who had charge of the boat sent from that vessel when the *Tecumseh* sunk. He took her in under one of the most galling fires I ever saw, and succeeded in rescuing from death ten of her crew, within six hundred yards of the fort. I would respectfully recommend his advancement. The commanding officers of all the vessels who took part in the action, deserve my warmest commendation, not only for the untiring zeal with which they had prepared their ships for the contest, but for their skill and daring in carrying out my orders during the engagement.

With the exception of the momentary arrest of the fleet when the *Hartford* passed ahead, and to which I have already adverted, the order of battle was preserved, and the ships followed each other in close order past the batteries of Fort Morgan, and in comparative safety, too, with the exception of the *Oneida*. Her boilers were penetrated by a shot from the fort, which completely disabled her, but her consort, the *Galena*, firmly fastened to her side, brought her safely through, showing clearly the wisdom of the precaution of carrying the vessels in two abreast. Commander MULLANY, who had solicited eagerly to take part in the action, was severely wounded, losing his left arm.

In the encounter with the ram the commanding officers obeyed with alacrity the order to run her down, and without hesitation exposed their ships to destruction to destroy the enemy. Our iron-clads, from their slow speed and bad steering, had some difficulty in getting into and maintaining their position in line as we passed the fort, and in the subsequent encounter with the *Tennessee*, from the same causes, were not so effective as would have been desired; but I cannot give too much praise to Lieutenant-Commander PERKINS, who, though he had orders from the Department to return North, volunteered to take command of the *Chickasaw*, and did his duty nobly.

The *Winnebago* was commanded by Commander T. H. Stevens, who volunteered for that position. His vessel steers very badly, and neither of his turrets will work, which compelled him to turn his vessel every time to get a shot, so that he could not fire very often, but he did the best under the circumstances.

The *Manhattan* appeared to work well, though she moved slowly. Commander NICHOLSON delivered his fire deliberately, and, as before stated, with one of his 15-inch shot broke through the armor of the *Tennessee*, with its wooden backing, though the shot itself did not enter the vessel. No other shot broke through her armor, though many of her plates were started, and several of her port-shutters jammed by the fire from the different ships.

The *Hartford*, my flag-ship, was commanded by Captain PERCIVAL DRAYTON, who exhibited throughout that coolness and ability for which he has been long known to his brother officers. But I must speak of that officer in a double capacity. He is the fleet captain of my squadron, and one of more determined energy, untiring devotion to duty, and zeal for the service, tempered by great calmness, I do not think adorns any navy. I desire to call your attention to this officer, though well aware that in thus speaking of his high qualities I am only communicating officially to the Department that which it knew full well before. To him, and to my staff in their respective positions, I am indebted for the detail of my fleet.

Lieutenant J. CRITTENDEN WATSON, my Flag Lieutenant, has been brought to your notice in former despatches. During the action he was on the poop attending to the signals, and performed his duties as might be expected—thoroughly. He is a scion worthy the noble stock he sprung from, and I commend him to your attention. My Secretary, Mr. MCKINLEY, and Acting Ensign L. H. BROWNELL were also on the poop, the latter taking notes of the action, a duty which he performed with coolness and accuracy.

Two other acting Ensigns of my staff (Mr. BOGART and Mr. HEGINBOTHAM) were on duty in the powder division, and, as the reports will show, exhibited zeal and ability. The latter, I regret to say, was severely wounded by a raking shot from the *Tennessee*, when we collided with that vessel, and died a few hours after. Mr. HEGINBOTHAM was a young married man, and has left a widow and one child, whom I commend to the kindness of the Department.

Lieutenant A. R. YATES, of the *Augusta*, acted as an additional aid to me on board the *Hartford*, and was very efficient in the transmission of orders.

Farragut's Pilot.

The last of my staff to whom I would call the notice of the Department, is not the least in importance. I mean Pilot MARTIN FREEMAN. He has been my great reliance in all difficulties in his line of duty. During the action he was in the main-top, piloting the ships into the bay. He was cool and brave throughout, never losing his self-possession. This man was captured early in the war in a fine fishing smack which he owned, and, though he protested that he had no interest in the war, and only asked for the privilege of fishing for the fleet, yet his services were too valuable to the captors as a pilot not to be secured. He was appointed a first-class pilot, and has served us with zeal and fidelity, and has lost his vessel, which went to pieces on Ship Island. I commend him to the Department.

Officers Praised.

It gives me pleasure to refer to several officers who volunteered to take any situation where they might be useful, some of whom were on their way North, either by orders of the Department, or condemned by medical survey. The reports of different commanders will show how they conducted themselves.

I have already mentioned Lieutenant-Commander PERKINS, of the *Chickasaw*, and Lieutenant YATES, of the *Augusta*. Acting Volunteer Lieutenant WILLIAM HAMILTON, late commanding officer of the *Augusta Dinsmore*, had been invalided by medical survey, but he eagerly offered his services on board the iron-clad *Chickasaw*, having had much experience in our monitors.

Acting Volunteer Lieutenant P. GIRAUD, another experienced officer in iron-clads, asked to go in one of these vessels, but as they were all well supplied with officers I permitted him to go on the *Ossipee*, under Commander LE ROY. After the action he was given temporary charge of the ram *Tennessee*.

Before closing this report there is one other officer of my squadron, of whom I feel bound to speak—Captain T. A. JENKINS, of the *Richmond*, who was formerly my chief of staff, not because of his having held that position, but because he never forgets to do his duty to the Government, and takes now the same interest in the fleet as when he stood in that relation to me. He is also the commanding officer of the second division of my squadron, and as such has shown ability and the most untiring zeal. He carries out the spirit of one of Lord COLLINGWOOD's best sayings—"Not to be afraid of doing too much; those who are, seldom do as much as they ought."

When in Pensacola he spent days on the bar, placing the buoys in the best positions; was always looking after the interests of the service, and keeping the vessels from being detained one moment longer in port than was necessary. The gallant CRAVEN told me only the night before the action in which he lost his life:—"I regret, Admiral, that I have detained you, but had it not been for Captain JENKINS, God knows when I should have been here. When your order came, I had not received an ounce of coal!"

I feel that I should not be doing my duty, did I not call the attention of the Department to an officer who has performed all his various duties with so much zeal and fidelity.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. G. FARRAGUT,

Rear Admiral, Commanding West Gulf Squadron.