

THE PAUL JONES of the CONFEDERACY

*The Brilliant but Forgotten Exploits of
Captain Charles W. Read of Mississippi*

by Walter Scott Meriwether

OUT of the great war has emerged nothing more spectacular than the raids of the German sea-rovers—the narrow-waisted Emden, and the wide swath she cut in the Eastern commerce of her foes; the Eitel Friedrich, with her wireless kites floated two thousand feet in air to catch word of enemy ships; the Kronprinz Wilhelm and her many prizes; and more recently the Appam and the mysterious Moewe, each in itself a romance of the sea.

And yet there was a young navy officer of this country, a daredevil stripling, who accomplished more in a shorter period than any of these. Moreover, his was a far inferior equipment, and the odds he faced were greater.

The raids made by Semmes in the Confederate commerce-destroyers Sumter and Alabama are popularly regarded as the most notable in history. Yet the Sumter, in a cruise which lasted six months, took but eighteen prizes; the Alabama, in her two years' career, added sixty-nine to the list. The expeditious youth with whom this narrative deals not only captured twenty-three vessels in fifty-two days, but included in his prizes an armed ship which was being specially fitted out to capture him.

When I write his name—Charles W. Read—you will pause, puzzled. No, you will say you never heard it before. Very few have. Yet, in the words of Admiral Dewey, Read's classmate at Annapolis, "America never produced a navy officer more worthy of a place in history." It may be added that our country never produced one more neglected by historians. The only explanation for this neglect which I have been able to find is that Read's

spectacular raid against Northern shipping took place during the days of the Gettysburg campaign, and was overshadowed by the great events on land and subsequently forgotten.

From sundry sources I have collected the "scraps of deeds and duds of daring" which marked Read's career, and have here linked them into a connected narrative, as dramatic as any in the pages of fiction.

Born in Yazoo County, Mississippi, and educated at Annapolis, Read was nineteen years of age when the Civil War broke out. He was then a midshipman, serving on the Powhatan, an old side-wheeler stationed at Vera Cruz. When news came that his State had seceded, he promptly resigned, but his resignation was not accepted until the vessel reached New York some months later.

His resignation having been accepted, he reported to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, and was assigned to duty with the Mississippi flotilla. Having distinguished himself there, he joined the Confederate commerce-destroyer Florida, at that time under the command of Captain J. Newland Maffitt, and blockaded in Mobile. History has told how on a January night in 1863 that enterprising officer ran the blockade.

READ GETS HIS FIRST SHIP

Sheering from that account, this narrative skips to May 6, 1863, when the raider, off the coast of South America, pursued and overtook the brig Clarence, coffee-laden and bound from Rio de Janeiro to Baltimore. The captured brig was finely modeled and had such a wide spread of canvas that it was only the triumph of

steam over the light breezes of that latitude which enabled the Florida to overhaul her.

Looking at her fine lines and ample display of canvas, Read went to his commander with a request that seemed an extravagant absurdity. It was that the brig should be fitted out as another raider and put under the young officer's command.

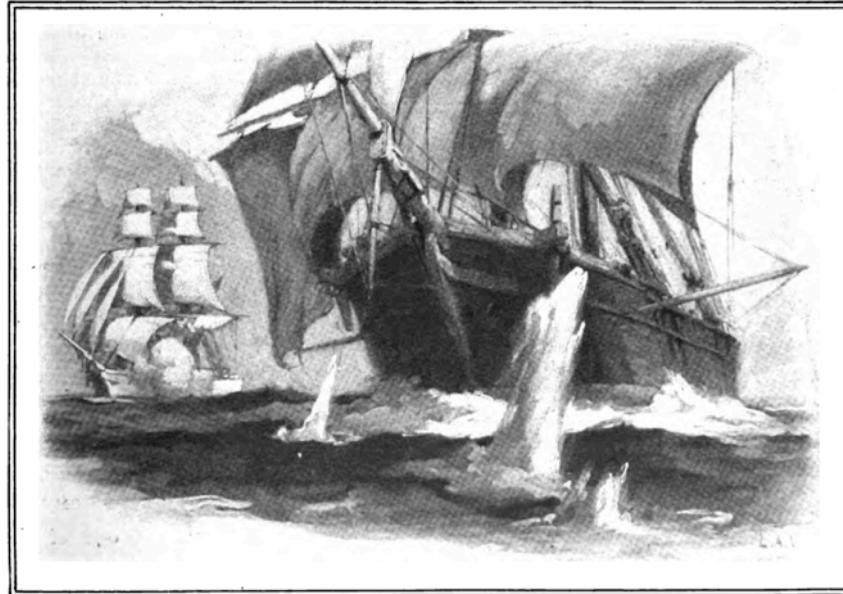
The captain hesitated. He thought of Read's youth and comparative inexperience. He thought, moreover, of the complications of marine international law, and how well one must be versed in that intricate code to distinguish the rights of neutrals and to know to what extent cargoes shipped by neutrals but carried in an enemy's ship must be respected. Moreover, the brig would need a crew and a battery, and he could ill spare men or guns.

But the young Mississippian managed to meet all objections, undertaking to get along with few men and only one gun, if only one could be spared. Eventually Maffitt gave consent. One of the Florida's engineers, Eugene H. Brown, volunteered to join the adventure, as did J. E. Billups, quartermaster; N. B. Price, quarter gunner; J. W. Matthewson, carpenter, and eighteen seamen—Joseph

Mays, Charles Lawson, J. P. Murphy, Robert Miller, James McLeod, J. Robertson, A. L. Drayton, George Thomas, Robert Hunt, Alexander Stewart, M. Gorman, Robert Murray, C. W. Devlin, Hugh McDaniels, Fred Wilton, James Coffa, Daniel Moore, and James McNary.

Six rifles, thirteen revolvers, ten pistols, and four cutlasses made up the small-arm equipment of the party. The only gun Maffitt felt he could spare was a small boat-howitzer, a weapon not much larger than the tiny brass cannon which modern yachts carry for saluting purposes. To make up for this deficiency in guns the enterprising Read borrowed some spare spars from the Florida and out of these fashioned half a dozen "Quaker guns"—make-believe cannon which he mounted about the deck, and which gave his little brig the appearance of being heavily armed.

Read, with his scanty crew and his single gun, having been transferred to the brig, the Confederate flag was hoisted at her gaff; but as powder was too precious to waste in salutes, that formality was foregone. The Florida, to which the former crew of the brig had been transferred, signaled "Good luck!" and stood



READ'S LITTLE GUN BANGED AGAIN, THROWING A SHOT ABOUT AS BIG AS A BASEBALL ACROSS THE BOW OF THE CHASE

on to the southward, the brig at the same time sheeting home her sails and setting her course to the north.

THE CRUISE OF THE CLARENCE

All the seaports of the Confederacy were then closely blockaded by the Northern fleets. It was Read's intention to make a raid upon the unsuspecting shipping which had been plying in safety outside that iron cordon.

Over the smooth waters of the Caribbean the brig glided, her lookouts on the topsail-yard alert for any sail; but none was sighted until the Windward Passage was reached. There, anchored in a bight, was a sloop of war from whose gaff rippled the Stars and Stripes. Read hoisted the same emblem and sauntered past, those on the corvette never suspecting that the little brig slipping by with so meek an aspect carried an unimportant gun on her deck and an important secret in her heart.

Clearing the Passage, the brig found a strong north wind—one that held for several days. It was a wind good enough for sailing craft bound to the southward, but one that drove north-bound vessels scattering to east and west with yards braced sharp up, tacks boarded, and sheets hauled aft. It sent the Clarence slanting alternately to the eastward and westward as she tacked up the coast.

It was while she was buffeting against this head wind that a sail was descried bowling along before it. Narrowly watching her approach, Read so laid his course as to bring the Clarence across the bow of the stranger. Then came the bang of the toy gun and the hoisting of the Confederate flag at the gaff.

The stranger, which was seen to be of the same rig as the Clarence, was so little impressed by the faint thud of the toy weapon and the little bulb of white smoke streaming away to leeward that she decided to try her heels against those of the challenger, and hurriedly sent studdingsails aloft. Meanwhile the Clarence had wheeled and was also running before the wind. With the fugitive on his port beam and but a short pistol-shot away, Read soon saw that his nimble racer had no need of extra canvas to outsail the chase.

When the little gun banged again, throwing a shot about as big as a baseball across the bow of the chase, the fugitive saw that there was no chance of running away, and

reluctantly took in her studdingsails and hove to to await the pleasure of her captor. She proved to be the brig Whistling Wind, bound for New Orleans, and laden with coal for Farragut's fleet, then operating in the Mississippi River. In looking over her papers, Read found that she had been insured by the Federal government for \$14,800.

Setting fire to the prize, he stood away in chase of another sail that had been sighted to the northward. The breeze, which had fallen light, died to a calm, and it was not until the next day that he came up with the stranger. She proved to be the schooner Alfred H. Partridge, of New York, bound for Matamoras, Mexico. The schooner was laden with arms and clothing for Texans, and the captain's bond for five thousand dollars was accepted as a guarantee for the safe delivery of the cargo to citizens of the Confederate States.

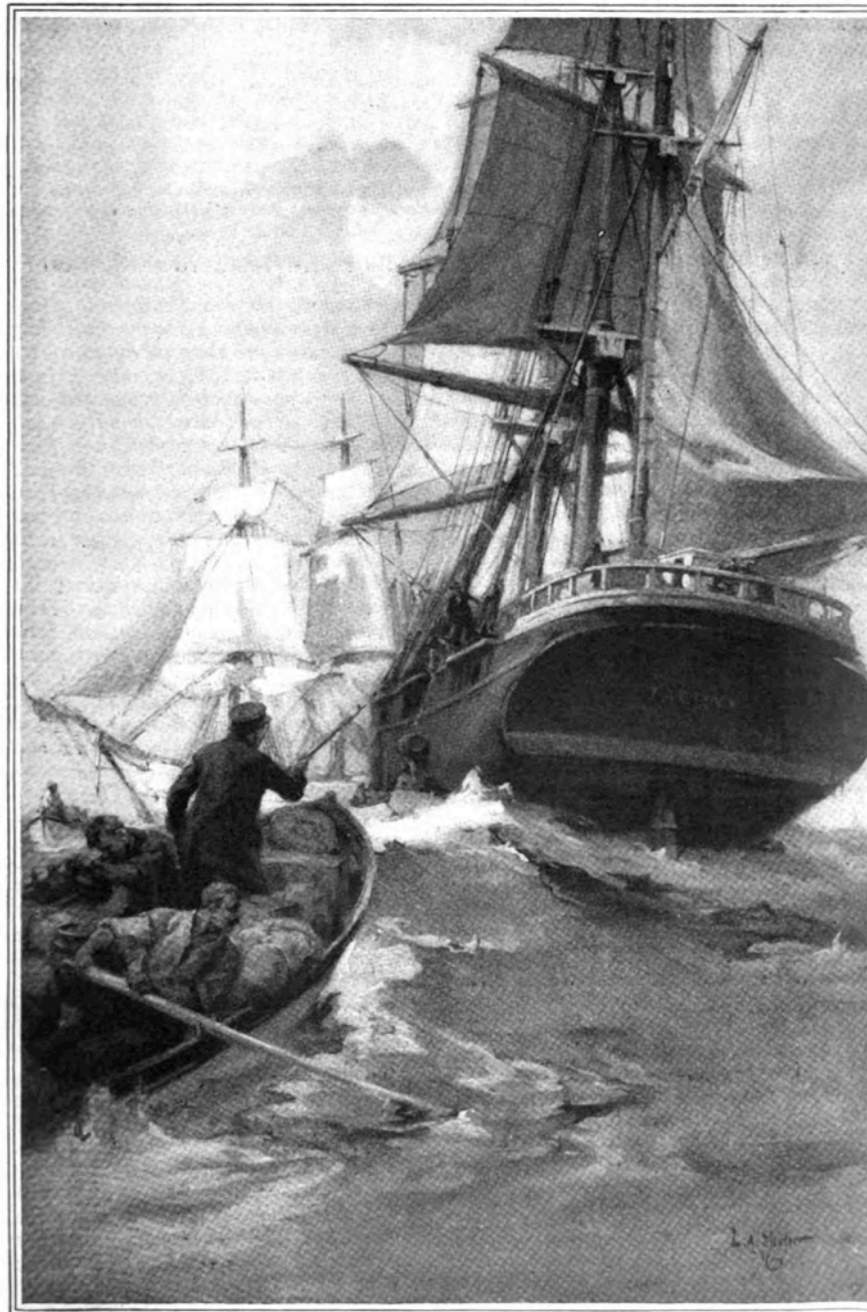
This capture was effected on June 7. The next prize was made two days later, when the brig Mary Alvina, bound from Boston to New Orleans, and laden with commissary stores for the Federal fleet, was captured after an exciting chase. Four days went by without bringing any new prizes, and then the average was restored by three made in one day.

The first of these was the schooner Schindler, of Philadelphia, captured on the morning of June 12. A few hours later the Kate Stewart, another Philadelphia tern, came idling down the wind and was made a prize. Their crews swelled the number of prisoners on board the Clarence to a dangerous proportion, and when the bark Tacony hove in sight and was captured after a short chase, Read realized that he must make a cartel of one of his prizes and transfer his prisoners to her.

He also realized that these would immediately spread the alarm of a brig marauding off the coast, and that a fleet of Federal cruisers would promptly be searching for the Clarence and holding up everything of a brig rig. To meet this danger, he decided on a plan as original as it was audacious.

READ TRANSFERS TO THE TACONY

Putting his prisoners on one of the schooners, he burned the other. Then, after the hurrying cartel was out of sight, he proceeded to the execution of his plan; this being to transfer himself, popgun, and



READ'S TRANSFER FROM THE BRIG CLARENCE TO THE BARK TACONY

crew to the black-hulled, bluff-bowed bark, to sink the nimble little Clarence, and thus to befog pursuers. With released prisoners spreading the alarm of a clean-lined, white-painted brig, what pursuer would think of investigating a lumbering, black-hulled bark?

It was with many regrets that Read quitted his nimble little craft. He had found her the fleetest of her type afloat, but he did not know whether it was the wit of man or the finger of good fortune which had fashioned her on such lines as to enable her to outsail her betters. Whichever it was, she took the secret of it with her, Read scuttling the brig after making his transfer to the bark.

After watching the Schindler burn, Read sheeted home the dingy sails of the somber bark and set out in pursuit of a sail. Being overhauled, his next victim proved to be the bark *Arabella*, an enemy ship, but carrying a cargo shipped by neutrals. She was bonded for thirty thousand dollars and allowed to proceed.

Although Read had been lighting his ocean bonfires all the way from Cuba to Hatteras, no knowledge of his depredations had reached shore. The first news came when the cartel schooner landed the prisoners. Among them was Captain Munday, master of the *Tacony*. He lost no time in taking a train for Washington, and on arrival there made breathless report of a "pirate" who was capturing and burning right and left.

In the papers of the Southern Historical Society, published in Richmond in 1895, there is contained the only connected reference to Read's raid along the coast which I have been able to find. Describing the sensation which the unexpected news of his depredations had caused, the writer says:

Nothing could better illustrate the power and splendid resources of the United States government at this time, and the magnificent discipline of the Navy Department, than the fact that notwithstanding they were blockading with an iron cordon a coast of three thousand miles, and occupying the inland rivers to the extent of five thousand miles, and had twenty-five cruisers in search of the Confederate steamers *Alabama* and *Florida*, in less than three days from the reception of the news of the appearance of the *Clarence* there were thirty-two armed vessels out on the high seas in search of her. Four left Hampton Roads on the night of June 13, five left New York on the morning of the 14th, and the remaining twenty-three got out from Boston, New

York, Philadelphia, and Hampton Roads on the 15th and 16th.

In the next ten days—till June 26—there were fifteen more vessels sent out after her, in obedience to the urgent appeals, petitions, and clamors of the owners, underwriters, and chambers of commerce of the various seaboard cities along the Northern coast, whose commerce was being destroyed. To understand fully the almost panic effect in these cities, it might be well to say that they had been comparatively free from such a visitation so close at home.

READ HOODWINKS A FEDERAL CAPTAIN

Another of those landed by the cartel schooner was Captain Frohoch, of the brig *Mary Alvina*, who recorded his experience while a prisoner on the *Clarence*. On the night after his capture a strange sail was sighted close aboard. Frohoch was expecting to see another capture and subsequent bonfire. He was leaning over the rail, gazing in the direction of the stranger, when one of Read's quartermasters came to him and warned him not to attempt to hail the vessel.

At the same time he noted that the *Clarence* was not making any effort to close with the strange ship, and that the crew of the privateer were suddenly very busy about decks. The Quaker guns were being dismantled and tumbled into the hold, and the howitzer was being disposed of in the same way. The night was so dark and the weather so thick that only the loom of the stranger could be seen, but Read's keen eye had detected her character. Frohoch understood what the commotion on deck had meant, and why a grim quartermaster was standing by his side, when out of the darkness roared a hail:

"This is the United States ship——"
Frohoch could not catch the name.
"What ship is that?"

The former master of the *Alvina* confessed his admiration at the audacity of the reply, which was:

"This is the American brig *Mary Alvina*, from Boston for New Orleans, with stores for the blockading fleet."

From the war-ship was roared an order to heave to and prepare to receive a boat. At this point Frohoch, who had been paroled as a prisoner at large, was ordered to join the other prisoners below, and a guard was placed over them. Within an hour or so he was released, and Read, who seems to have been a cheerful young humorist, told him what had happened.

It appears that the boarding officer and ten men of an armed boat's crew came on board the *Clarence*. Read, who had hurriedly drawn on a sou'wester and a suit of oilskins to conceal his naval uniform of Confederate gray, escorted the officer to his cabin and produced the papers of the *Alvina*, which he had taken from the brig at the time of her capture. While awaiting the coming of the boat, he had detailed his first officer to post the *Alvina's* log to date—a work hurriedly done, but sufficient for the deception.

The Federal officer glanced over manifest and log, noted the last entry, accepted a glass of sherry, and, tendering his apologies for delaying Admiral Farragut's stores, got into his boat and was rowed away.

"And that boarding officer," Read reminiscently added, "graduated fully twenty numbers ahead of me!"

This recalls a description of Read's Annapolis days, given to the writer by Colonel John M. Morgan, of Washington, who knew Read as a student.

"French was one of the studies then, as it is now," the colonel said; "but the only French word Read could master was '*savez*,' and as a consequence he bore it as a nickname, being *Savez* Read to all his intimates. He so little distinguished himself in his other studies that after four years of tremendous effort he triumphantly graduated at the foot of his class."

It may be noted, however, that even so Read did better than one of his classmates whose name has found an enduring place in American history; for William Barker Cushing, famous as the destroyer of the *Albemarle*, was "bilged" at Annapolis on account of his failure to pass his examination.

THE EXPLOITS OF THE TACONY

Although sluggish in looks, with her bluff bows and clumsy stern, the *Tacony* proved to be a fast sailer, and there was no enemy craft coming in sight that Read did not overhaul. Warned to look out for a white-hulled brig, skippers were unaware of the danger that lay hidden in a lumbering, black-hulled bark. The first intimation was the bang of the toy gun and the flag of the Confederate States at the gaff.

The brig *Umpire*, from Cardenas for Boston, made a fine bonfire with her cargo of rum, sugar, and molasses. The fine packet-ship *Isaac Webb*, from Liverpool for

New York, thronged with seven hundred and fifty passengers, was cried halt off Sandy Hook and made a hostage. Read would have burned her, but was prevented by his scrupulous regard for the safety of her passengers. Having no way of disposing of them, he was reluctantly compelled to let the vessel go, in bond for forty thousand dollars.

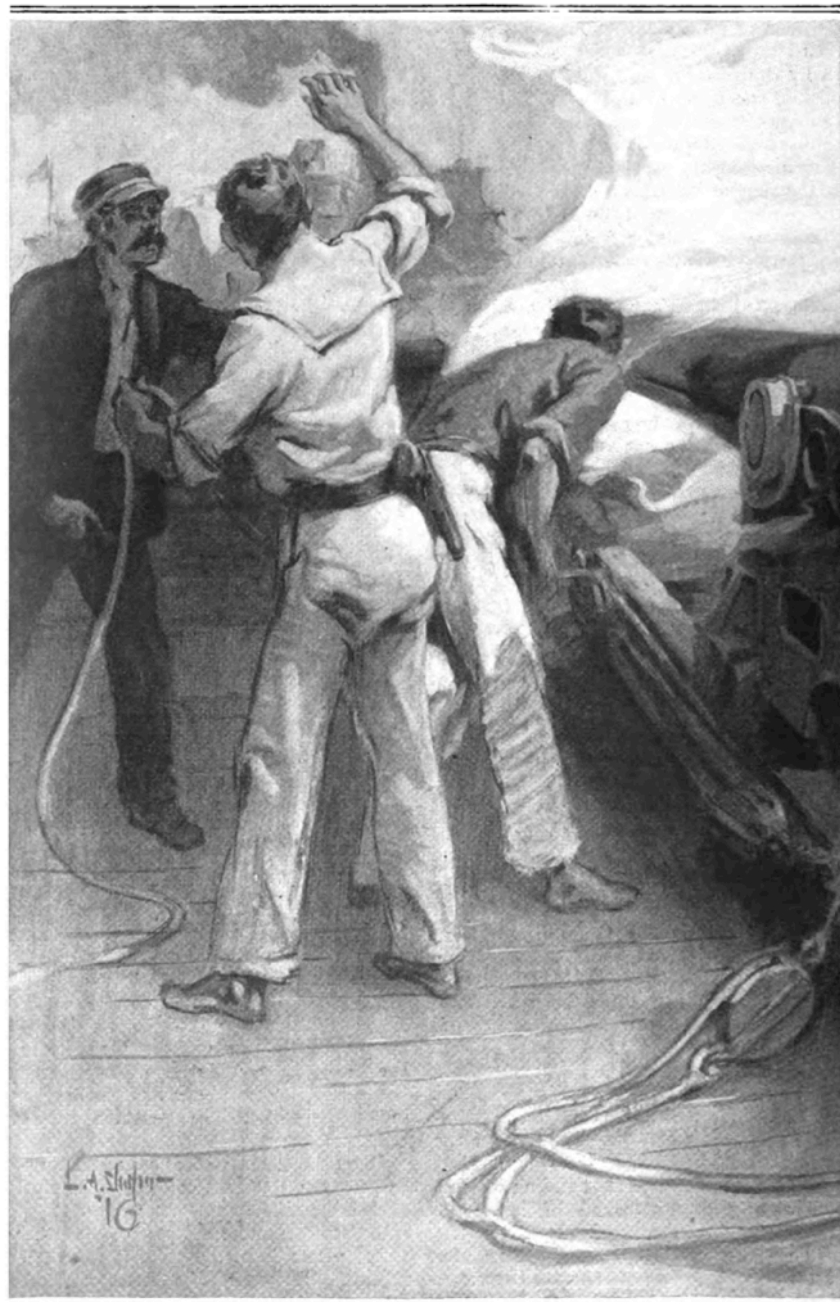
He took occasion to transfer to the packet the prisoners who were encumbering his own ship, the crews of half a dozen prizes. No Confederate raider ever violated the law that forbids endangering the lives of sailors or passengers on a captured merchantman.

In its issue of June 23, 1863, the New York *Herald* briefly noted the arrival of the *Isaac Webb* in port, editorially commented on the fact that the vessel had been captured only a short distance from New York, and urged that the Navy Department should furnish protection to the city. A news despatch of the following day, dated from Chatham, Massachusetts, furnished material for another editorial demand for action against the rover:

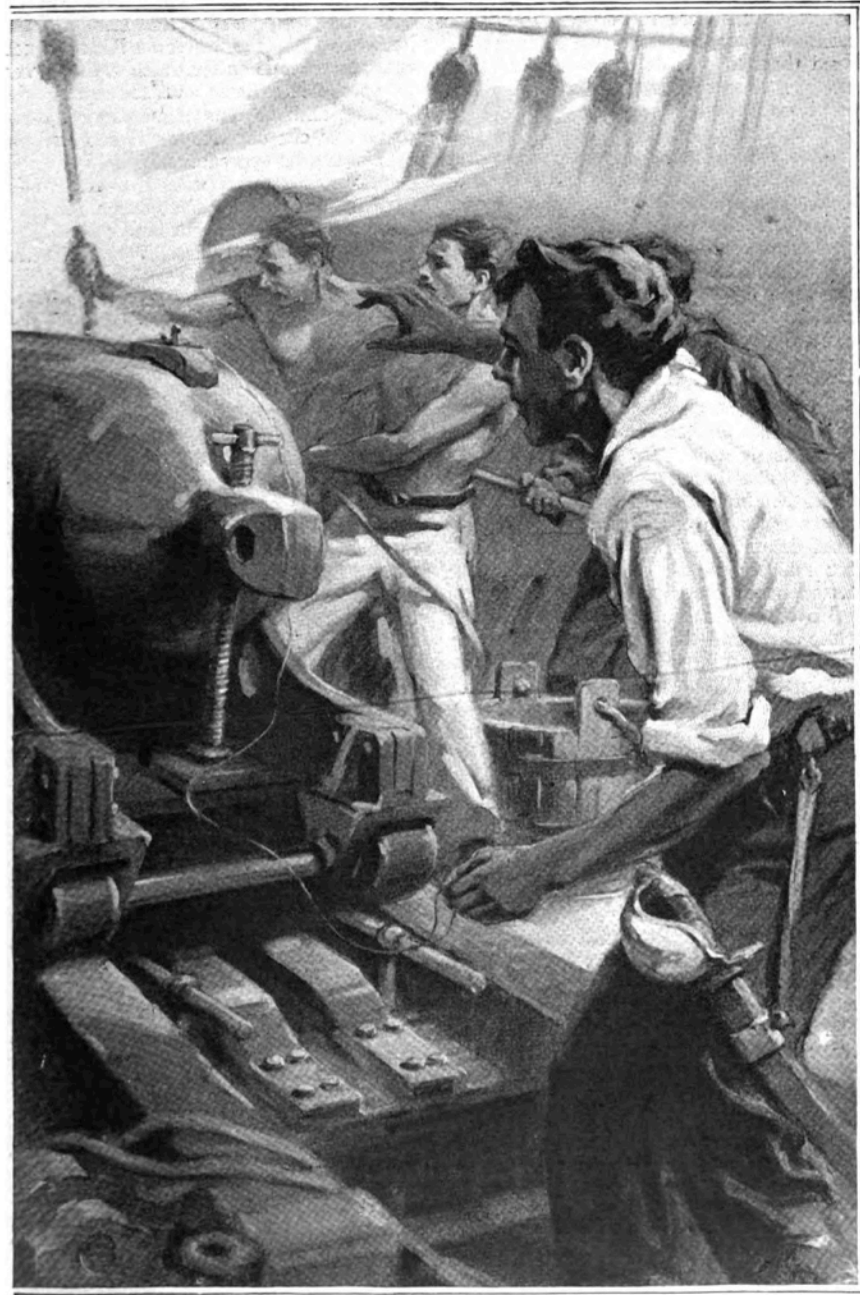
The fishing-schooner *Juliette*, of Beverly, Captain Malloys, arrived here this afternoon. She reports having spoken schooner *Florence*, of Gloucester, this morning. She had on board one hundred and fifty prisoners from the privateer bark *Tacony*, which took the *Florence* yesterday, bonded her, and ordered her to New York with the prisoners. The *Tacony* took and burned six schooners yesterday belonging to Gloucester, and three ships—the *Saratoga*, the *Paraguay*, and one other, name unknown.

A Newport despatch of the following day told of the arrival there of the schooner *Sarah E. Snow*, with news that the *Tacony* had fallen in with a fleet of ten schooners off Hyannis, and had captured and burned them all. Of the ten, the captain of the *Snow* could identify only the *Wanderer*, the *Ripple*, the *Rufus Choate*, the *Elizabeth*, the *Ann*, and the *Marengo*. On the same day a Wellfleet schooner reported the burning of the clipper-ship *Byzantium* and the bark *Goodspeed*.

It was while this fleet was going up in smoke that excited citizens of Boston offered to charter private vessels at their own expense and send them in search of the "pirate," if the Navy Department would furnish guns. The department readily responded to the appeal, and offered to provide guns and officers for any vessels



ALL THAT READ COULD DO WAS TO FIRE HIS ONE REMAINING SHOT—



—IT CAUSED THE PURSUERS TO ABANDON THE IDEA OF RUNNING DOWN THE CUSHING

engaged by private charter. Commandants of navy-yards were also ordered to charter, arm, and equip any available steamers and send them in pursuit of the raider. Even the practise-ships of the Naval Academy were requisitioned and sent out.

Meanwhile the Tacony continued to parade the high seas in search of prizes. In those days news did not travel by wireless, and comparatively little went by wire. Most of the vessels which Read captured had never heard of him or the Clarence or the Tacony until the peremptory bang of the little howitzer made demand for surrender.

On the day that New York was demanding ironclads for defense against the raider Read was engaged in burning two fishing-schooners which he had captured off Cape Cod. On the following day a large ship was sighted coming in from the eastward. The Tacony sauntered across her path, then hauled on the wind, fired a shot across the stranger's bow, and ran up the Confederate flag. The ship promptly laid her mainsail aback, and Read, with an armed boat's crew, went on board.

He found that he had captured another white elephant—the clipper-ship *Shatemuc*, from Liverpool for Boston, crowded with immigrants. Read placed his prisoners on board, bonded the vessel for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and permitted her to proceed.

READ TRANSFERS TO THE ARCHER

Knowing that black-hulled barks were now resting under the suspicion which had attached to white-painted brigs, Read decided to make another change similar to his move from the Clarence to the Tacony. To make the new disguise effective, he barred from his calculations everything of brig or bark rig, no matter what color it might be painted. So when fortune sent him the Gloucester schooner *Archer*, he felt that it was a piece of good luck, and forthwith transferred to the schooner, scuttling the Tacony as he had scuttled the Clarence.

In his new masquerade he cheerfully misinformed two eager gunboats which hailed to ask if he had seen anything of a white brig or a black bark. Assuring them that he had sighted neither, he proceeded on his way up the New England coast, and two days later was off Portland, Maine.

Here he picked up two fishermen who,

mistaking the rover for an excursion party, consented to pilot the schooner into the harbor. From the fishermen Read learned that the revenue cutter *Caleb Cushing* was in port, being fitted out to capture the Tacony, and the notion immediately came to him to cut out this vessel and use her in his future depredations. Hitherto his commands had been peaceful merchantmen with no architectural adaptation for warfare on the high seas, but here was a vessel suitably armed and specially built for the purpose.

In broad daylight the schooner entered the harbor and anchored near the *Caleb Cushing*. The latter was awaiting the arrival of Captain Merriman, of the revenue-cutter service, who had been ordered from Boston to take charge of the search for Read and the Tacony. Little did the crew of the government vessel suspect that Read and his band were within half a cable's length of the cutter at the time.

In the evening Read made all his arrangements. He could place implicit confidence in every one of his followers. After nightfall he summoned the men aft and told them of his intention of capturing the cutter. After assigning them to the two boats to be used in the cutting-out expedition, he told all hands to pack up such belongings as they wished to take with them, as he meant to leave the schooner behind.

This intention of risking all on the hazard of the adventure is merely another illustration of Read's audacious spirit. The young commander's regard for the safety of non-combatants was shown when he took measures to provide for the release of the original crew of the *Archer*, whom he had put in the forecabin under hatches battened down. Before pushing off in the boats he had the schooner's flag run up at the gaff and hoisted union down, knowing that the signal would be seen as soon as daylight dawned, and that rescuers would release the imprisoned men.

THE CAPTURE OF THE CALEB CUSHING

Midnight came, and with muffled oars the two boats pulled for the cutter. Engineer Eugene H. Brown, who commanded one of them, sprang aboard the *Cushing* from the port side, Read at the same time boarding from the starboard side. Swift and silent, the two parties gained the deck of the cutter, and within a minute or so

the watch had been disarmed and placed in irons.

Hearing the noise on deck, Lieutenant Davenport came running up the companionway, to be met by Read, who presented a revolver and told him that his vessel was a prize of the Confederate cruiser Archer. The lieutenant had been dreaming of capturing the Tacony, and here he was captured by an enemy vessel of which he had never heard!

The rest of the crew were quickly made prisoners and put below under an armed guard, and then the expeditious Read began to get his prize under way. But for once his phenomenal luck failed him. The tide had turned earlier than he had expected, and as there was not a breath of wind, it became necessary to tow the cutter out if she was to be got out at all.

The cable was slipped, and the boats which had brought the attacking party began the long, heart-breaking pull against a rapidly flooding tide. There were sturdy hearts beneath the jackets of Read's seamen, and dawn saw the cutter at a fair offing, and her sails being hoisted to a little catspaw that was flurrying over the smooth water.

The Cushing was still becalmed, however, when the Boston steamer carrying Captain Merriman passed close by on its way to Portland. Merriman was on deck at the time, and was puzzled to see the cutter, which he had been ordered to command, off the harbor entrance and under sail. As soon as the steamer reached its pier, the captain hastened ashore and began inquiries about the Cushing.

Meanwhile the Archer's signal of distress had been seen. Boatmen who hurried out to her heard the imprisoned crew banging on the battened hatches, and quickly released them. Their story, when they got ashore, speedily convinced Merriman that the vessel which had been selected to capture Read had itself been captured by that enterprising youngster.

THE PURSUIT OF THE CUSHING

The news rapidly spread, and the wildest excitement thrilled through Portland. At Fort Preble, under the very guns of which Read had towed out his prize, there was quartered a detachment of regular infantry, under the command of Major Andrews. Word was hurried to that officer, and at the same time Colonel

Mason, commanding the volunteers assembled at Camp Lincoln, was notified of Read's astonishing exploit, and a request was made for such men and artillery as he could furnish.

The collector of the port also requisitioned three steam-vessels which were in harbor at the time, these being the Forest City, which had but lately passed the captured cutter while on her way in from Boston; the steamer Chesapeake, and a tug. Eager to gain possession of the vessel which he had been ordered to command, Captain Merriman hurried on board the Forest City. With him went Lieutenant Richardson and fourteen men of the cutter, who had been on shore during the night of the capture. Two pieces of artillery and forty armed volunteers completed the war complement of the merchant steamer.

In tearing haste to make reprisal, the Forest City lost no time in casting off her lines; and with the tug valiantly leading the way, she chugged out of harbor in pursuit of Read and his sea-rovers. The Chesapeake, which had been delayed by the building of deck barricades, was not long in following.

The barricades on the Chesapeake consisted of fifty bales of cotton. Through the embrasures glowered the muzzles of two pieces of field-artillery, and behind them nodded the plumes and glittered the rifles of Colonel Mason's Seventh Regiment of Maine Volunteers. Supporting the Volunteers were fifty citizens heavily armed with shotguns, rifles, revolvers, swords, and other paraphernalia of slaughter.

Meanwhile Read and his crew, although on the verge of exhaustion after their long hours of toil at the oars, had managed to work the becalmed cutter well out of range of the guns of Fort Preble. Seeing the three vessels hurrying toward him, he cleared his craft for action.

He had found that the battery of the cutter comprised one thirty-two pounder and a twelve-pounder howitzer; but he had been unable to find any ammunition for either gun, except two rounds which he had discovered in the quarter-gunner's chest alongside the heavy piece. The thirty-two-pounder was charged with one of the two shots, and a desperate effort was made to find the rest of the ammunition. The prisoners were questioned, but they loyally refused to disclose the whereabouts of the magazine.

Read armed a squad with axes, and sent them to smash in the doors of every locked compartment and to rummage in all the holds for ammunition. The physical exhaustion and nervous strain under which he had been for so long a time would seem to account for his failure to undertake this vital search before.

Meanwhile the Forest City had come within range of the Cushing's long gun. Believing that his men would find the magazine, Read sighted the piece and pulled the lanyard himself. The thirty-two-pound ball fell so close to the Forest City that the splash from it threw a shower of spray over her decks.

READ IS FORCED TO SURRENDER

The nearness of the shot had no effect upon Captain Merriman and his men of the cutter's crew, but it so much moderated the enthusiasm of the citizens who had volunteered for the expedition that they made immediate and clamorous protest against the folly, just then realized, of a frail merchant steamer making attack upon a band of deep-sea desperadoes ensconced on an armed vessel specially-built for purposes of war. Captain Merriman insisted on closing with the Cushing; but moved by the clamor of the volunteers, and by thoughts of the risk to his own ship, the captain of the Forest City decided to haul off and wait for the cooperation of the Chesapeake.

Anon the Chesapeake, with her cotton-bale armor, brass cannon, and bayonets, came lumbering to the scene. She ranged close to the Forest City, and there was a council of war. The military advice prevailed. It was decided to attack the Cushing again, and either to run her down or to capture her by sending the soldiers swarming over her decks.

Read's phenomenal luck had deserted him at last. The Cushing actually had on board more than a hundred rounds of ammunition for each of its two guns, but search as they might his men could not find the hidden storage-place. Had they discovered it, he would doubtless have beaten off his assailants, or even destroyed them, for the cutter's weapons were far heavier than those of the attacking vessels, and Read's men, trained to battery-work on the Florida, were skilled gunners.

All that he could do was to fire his one remaining shot. Its effect was to cause the

pursuers to abandon the idea of running down the Cushing and to make the assault in a flotilla of small boats. Through his glasses Read could count the overwhelming number of his enemies, and, realizing that the game was up, he deliberately began his preparations for destroying the prize. Lowering a boat, he marshaled all his prisoners into it and flung them the keys of their irons, so that they could liberate themselves. Then, launching the two remaining boats, he set the cutter on fire in a dozen places and waited until the flames had gained headway before leaving her.

Fearing that the magazine would explode, the Federal flotilla lay off until the Cushing blew up, and then rowed in and took Read and his men prisoners. Thus ended the cruise of the Clarence-Tacony-Archer-Cushing.

So great was the excitement in Portland when Read was taken ashore that Major Andrews immediately recommended to the War Department "that the prisoners be sent from here as quietly and as expeditiously as possible. I do not think it safe," he added, "for them to be placed in the custody of the citizens."

Read was accordingly transferred to Fort Warren, in Boston Harbor. He had as a fellow prisoner Lieutenant Alexander, a young Confederate officer who had been captured in one of the battles in Virginia.

THE ESCAPE FROM FORT WARREN

Read proposed a plan of escape; and after months of secret toil on the hard masonry of their cell, the two Southerners managed to make an opening sufficiently large for them to pass through. The following midnight found them crouched on the parapet, waiting for the sergeant of the guard to complete his midnight round, before making the effort to descend the wall by means of a rope which they had made out of their blankets. The tramp of the guard was heard, and the two dived under a pile of dunnage.

It had been a misty night, and the sentry going off watch ran his hand along his bayonet, to find it wet with the dampness of the air. Saying to the sergeant that he would dry his bayonet, he plunged it into the dunnage. With the weight of the heavy Springfield rifle behind it, the weapon went clean through Read's thigh; but never a muscle did the young Mississippian move, and not the slightest cry es-

farmhouse, and on the next day resumed its march, fortune so far favoring the adventurers that the storm had kept the enemy's foraging parties close to their own camps.

The third night found Read and his men within a few hours' march of the point where the boats were to have been launched. Although footsore and half frozen, the band was intact save for the absence of a sailor named Lewis, who had been sent ahead to reconnoiter. He was to have met the party at the rendezvous which it had reached, and to have piloted it on to the James.

THE TREACHERY OF LEWIS

The hours wore on, and no Lewis appeared. The man had been mate of a Northern vessel which had been lying in Norfolk at the time of Virginia's secession, and had left his ship to join the Confederate service. There was no suspicion that he was a traitor until a sentry hailed a hurrying oncomer, who identified himself as an escaped Confederate prisoner. It appeared that he had already perfected his plans for escape when Lewis reached the Federal lines and betrayed the Confederates' plans to the officer in command there. An entire regiment of Northern infantry, the fugitive added, was awaiting Read's arrival on the banks of the James, and Lewis was with them.

Read took his men into an adjacent wood, and, leaving orders that no fires should be lit, started out alone to investigate the truth of the report. If no word was heard from him by daylight, the expedition was to conclude that he was killed or captured, and to make the best of its way back to Richmond.

Before the stipulated hour arrived, the crouching band was made aware that enemies were all around them. Reconnoitering parties who stealthily stole from out the wood reported that all the roads were being occupied by Federal cavalry, and that apparently every avenue of escape had been cut off.

Then the young leader of the expedition suddenly reappeared. In brief sentences he explained that the situation was as it had been reported. He had discovered a guide who knew of a horseshoe bend in the river, the expeditious fording of which offered the only chance of escape from the rapidly closing cordon.

There was no time to be lost. Without more ado the Confederates followed their leader to the ford, and plunged into the chilly waters, to emerge with their clothes freezing to their bodies. By dint of incredible endurance they all managed to reach Richmond, where seventy-five of the hundred who had started landed in hospital, and many of them succumbed to the hardships they had endured.

READ'S LAST SERVICE FOR THE SOUTH

The next chapter of Read's adventurous history takes us to Louisiana. Here, moored in the Red River, was a stoutly built side-wheel steamer, the Webb, which before the war had been used in New York Harbor as an ice-breaker. She had been purchased by New Orleans merchants, and on the outbreak of the war had retreated before the advance of the Federal fleet to a point where the blockading vessels could not reach her.

Read heard of the craft, and forthwith proposed to load her with cotton, run the blockade of the Federal fleet, capture the guard-ship at the mouth of the Mississippi River, proceed to Havana, sell the cargo, and then run the blockade into Galveston. The suggestion was accepted, and the dash of that lone vessel through the fleets of the enemy and past the batteries lining the shore is one of the most thrilling in all the literature of desperate chances.

Information of the intended dash had reached the Federal commander, and the force blockading the mouth of the Red River was increased by the monitor Manhattan and the ironclads Lafayette and Choctaw. Read knew of this addition to the cordon through which he would have to break; but, all undaunted, he set out on his desperate enterprise, starting down the river on the night of April 23, 1865, with all lights screened and the safety-valve lashed tight.

Knowing that the flutter of his paddle-wheels would give the alarm, he stopped his engines as the Webb drew near the mouth of the Red River, and allowed her to drift with the current. He was just washing past the Manhattan when discovered. There was a quick alarm, and then came the blaze of guns, the shriek of fast-flying shells, and the rap of canister and grape-shot against the sides of the blockade-runner. Throttles had been thrown wide open at the moment of discovery, and

the vessel was now tearing down the Mississippi with half a dozen gunboats at her heels. She managed to distance all of them.

A few miles above New Orleans Read slackened speed and sent a boat ashore to cut the telegraph-wires. Unluckily for his venture, a despatch had already gone over them, and the Federal fleet anchored off the Crescent City was on the lookout for a Confederate ram heading down-stream and bent on mischief.

Although unaware that his approach had been heralded, the enterprising young commander bethought himself of an expedient which very nearly availed to make his adventure a success. The entire Federal fleet had been cleared for action, and gun-crews were at their stations, when a nondescript-looking craft came sauntering down the stream. Her union ensign was at half-mast, presumably on account of President Lincoln's death a few days before. Her crew, clad in Federal army overcoats, lounged about on cotton-bales, smoking pipes and coolly regarding the ships of war.

Several Northern vessels hailed to know if the craft, plainly an army transport, had heard anything of a Confederate blockade-runner from somewhere up the river. Read replied that he did not know what they were talking about, and continued on his leisurely way until the steam sloop Lackawanna was abeam. She was at the tail end of the fleet, and the Webb had almost cleared her when the Lackawanna's pilot, an old steamboat man, recognized the Webb and gave the alarm.

The Lackawanna opened fire at once, but the speed of the Webb carried her around a bend in the river and out of range. There were many other dangers ahead, however. Swerving around the next bend, the young officer saw one directly

ahead—the ordnance ship Fearnought, laden with ammunition.

The Webb was equipped with a spar-torpedo, and as she drew near the Fearnought Read ordered it lowered into the water, his intention being to torpedo the enemy's ship. But the Webb was steaming so fast that the spar gave way, and the torpedo was swept toward the rapidly flying paddle-wheel. Narrowly escaping being hoist by her own petard, the Webb sheered from the attack on the Fearnought and rounded another bend, to see the spars of the steam frigate Richmond directly ahead.

Meanwhile Read had rigged another torpedo, and he now gave the pilot orders to steer straight for the Richmond. The pilot informed him that a shoal lay between him and the Federal frigate, and that in order to reach the enemy he would have to travel along the edge of the bank. Read then realized that the end had come, for he knew that the powerfully armed frigate could blow his light craft clean out of the water. Having no other recourse, he ran the Webb ashore, set her on fire, and with his crew sought refuge in the woods.

With this futile dash, undertaken two weeks after Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Read's career as a Confederate officer came to an end. Subsequently his restless spirit led him into South American adventures, the recounting of which would require an entire book.

In the succeeding years few captains making for New Orleans ever recognized, in the quiet-spoken pilot who showed their vessels through the passes, the man who, according to one of his classmates and whilom enemies, "embodied the most dashing type of navy officer that the nation has produced since Decatur."

It was as a Mississippi River pilot that Read rounded out his days, dying in 1890.