ADMIRAL FRANKLIN BUCHANAN at the Battle of Mobile Bay.

The Story of The Famous Eastonian Who Commanded the Big Confederate Ram Tennessee Fight Described by one of the Officers.

A FEW MILES FROM Easton, within the brick walled burying ground of the Lloyds, rest the ashes of a man whose name will live in history so long as heroism is honored, and the heart thrills with pride at the deeds of mortals. That man, who "sleeps the sleep that knows no waking," whose memory is fondly cherished and whose name has gone forth over the world, was Admiral Franklin Buchanan, a noted officer of the United States Navy before the Civil war, and later known as the "Fighting Admiral of the Confederacy," for he left the service of the Stars and Stripes, as did many another gallant sailor and soldier, to cast his lot with the Stars and Bars of the South, and go down in the gloom of the lost cause. It was in his able service as First Commandant of the Naval Academy that Franklin Buchanan became best known, and when he sailed out of Norfolk on the ironclad Merrimac, under the Bonnie Blue Flag, to meet the Federal fleet, his name became known in every land. Without dwelling upon the Confederate side of the story of that grand battle of giants, for there are two sides to every story, it may be well simply to state that the true inwardness of the fierce fight of the Monitor and Merrimac has not been told; but in that encounter Buchanan won his fighting laurels and he held them until the star of the Confederacy went down to rise no more.

The appeal to the sword had been made, and the fair minded of the South accepted the result, and today have pride in a united cause, and clasp hands over the bitter memories of the war and are content to "Let the dead past bury its dead." When Admiral Buchanan again trod the deck of an ironclad, the "Tennessee," then came another story of fierce war to tell, for he met his old comrade, Admiral Farragut, also a Southern man, but who had remained in the United States Navy, and it became the "Battle of the Admirals." The story of this fight of the two fleets in Mobile Bay is told in the words of J. B. Conrad, M. D., late Fleet Surgeon of U. S. N., and later of the C. S. N. Today both Admirals live in the hearts of Americans, while their ashes rest "On Fame's Eternal Camping-ground."

Near the home where he dwelt so long, The Rest, within sound of the evening gun at the Annapolis Naval Academy, sleeps the Confederate Admiral, a single slab of marble marking his grave, though it is hoped that Marylanders will unite e'er long and erect above him a fitting tomb, one worthy of his record, and such an one as will yet be reared over the remains of his gallant adversary on the Monitor, the nobler warden, when he passes away, and should placed above the great Farragut.

Who will begin the good work for Buchanan?

Thirty years ago this month (August, 1894) a memorable action was fought in Mobile Bay, between iron-clads of different type, design, and armament; one with a shield and rifled guns, the other with turrets and Dahlgrens (smooth-bores). Many men are now living in New Orleans and Mobile who participated in or saw this conflict; there are many sons and daughters of the men living who have heard of it at the fireside. There are many others who have never heard of the fight, fought so near their homes. For these, too, I write.

The Bay of Mobile was of infinite use and importance to the Confederates, who guarded and held it by two forts, Morgan and Gaines, at its entrance. By holding it they held safe the city of Mobile from attack by water; it could only be captured by a combined army and navy attack, so it was a safe depot for blockade-runners, easy to go out of and enter, and if it was such to the Confederates, how much greater was it to the Federals? For they were compelled to keep their large blockade fleet outside, exposed to all the storms of the gulf. They could only be victualed and watered by going away, one at a time, to Pensacola, their only port; their sick had to be transported to the same place, and the wear and tear both to vessels and crews was fearful, as a constant, vigilant, and never-ceasing watch, both by officers and men, had to be kept up, day and night, year in and year out. The officers were in three watches, the men in two, guarding themselves against night attacks by torpedo-boats or assault by the Confederate gunboats, and seeing that no vessel came out and that none went in. All this had to be endured, or the bay captured and held by the fleet. This was finally determined on by Farragut, and he only awaited the arrival of iron-clads to make sure his end. Finding this plan determined on, the Confederates bestirred themselves. At the hamlet of Selma, on the river above, they built one iron-clad, on the plan of the Merrimac, their resources being exhausted to do even this. Slowly the wooden structure approached completion, then more slowly was it ironed all over above the water-line, then towed down to Mobile, where it was equipped with eight-inch rifle-gun.

Then, when officers and men, provisions and water had been taken on board, all ready for action, she started down the bay, nearly thirty miles, to go outside in rough water and attack the enemy's wooden fleet before the ironclads arrived; when on arriving at the bar of sand caused by Dog Run emptying into the bay, it was found that the bar had shoaled to such an extent that the iron-clad, now christened the Tennessee, drew three feet more water than there was under her. The only expidient that offered itself, which was safe and speedy, was to build of huge square timbers two enormous air-tight tanks, each as high as a two-story house. They were to be towed alongside of the ram and sunk to the water's edge by opening the valves, then all lashed together securely, making one vessel, as it were, of them; the water was pumped out of these tanks, and the air entering, they, by their buoyancy, lifted the huge ship clear of the bottom, then steam tugs towed her over the bar. This was done in May, 1864; it should have been so many months before, for these so-called "camels" were finished in March. But on their arrival off Mobile they were burned by Federal emissaries, who were paid well for their daring deed.

Right here we may interrupt our story to say that the secret service fund was well spent by Admiral Farragut, for we were delayed several months in building two more "camels," and by that time his ironclads were built and on their way to him. I must mention the desertion of five men the day after the destruction of the camels; they had been working on our ironclad, and furnished him with all details of her construction, all her weak points, of the character of her engines, the calibre of her armament, of all of which information he availed himself when the eventful day of action came. In addition to this, they were to be received into the Federal service if they destroyed these camels. These large bribes were offered for the reason that the fleet lying outside of Fort Morgan were solely wooden ships, and could not cope with nor resist the attack of our ironclad, and the Federal ironclads had not yet arrived. Finally, one June day we were towed over the bar down the bay; then, casting loose, we steamed out to attack the Federal fleet. Reaching the passage between the two forts, we encountered rough water and found that, owing to want of buoyancy, we were in great danger of being water-logged and sunk by the amount of water that swept inboard. The ram lay deep in the water, solid and motionless as a cast-iron platform or raft, and every sea tumbling over her came inboard in such masses that the fires in the engine-room were nearly put out and the empty vessel itself filled with salt water. So, discomfited, we put back under the fort in smooth water, and all thought of attacking the fleet outside was dismissed. Then the defects, which this short cruise of ten hours had developed, were looked into. Our engines had been taken from an old river boat; they were weak and old, and could only force us through the water about two miles an hour. They could not be strengthened by any method. The rudder chains, by which the ship was steered, were found to be exposed to the enemy's shot, being in their whole length outside the iron deck; they were covered over by a slight coating of iron rail. The capacity of the ram inboard to accommodate her crew was fearfully deficient; all officers and men, when the weather admitted, slept outside on top of the iron shield and decks, but in rainy times it was awful to endure such close quarters at night; but we bore it in June and July, under the sloping sides of the shield, in shape like the roof of a square house, about twelve feet in height and forty-eight in lenght. On July 26th, Admiral Buchanan and staff came aboard; for, from his information, a fierce fight was imminent, when, on the 1st of August, 1854, we saw a decided increase in the Federal fleet, which was then listlessly at anchor outside of Fort Morgan, in the Gulf of Mexico.

The reinforcement consisted of ten wooden frigates, all stripped to a "grit line" and clean for action; their topmasts sent down on deck and devoid of everything that seemed like extra rigging; they appeared like prize-fighters ready for the "ring." Then we knew that trouble was ahead, and wondered to ourselves why they did not enter the bay. On the 3d of August we noticed another addition to the already formidable fleet—four strange-looking, long, black monsters, the new ironclads; and they were what the Federals had been so anxiously waiting for. At the distance of four miles their lengthy, dark lines could only be distinguished from the sea, on which they sat motionless, by the continuous volume of thick smoke issuing from their low smoke-stacks, which appeared to come out of the ocean itself. These curious-looking craft made their advent on the evening of the 4th of August, and then we knew that the "gage of battle" was offered.

We had been very uncomfortable for many weeks in our berths on board the Tennessee, in consequence of the prevailing heavy rains wetting the decks, and the terribly moist, hot atmosphere, which was like that oppressiveness which precedes a tornado. It was, therefore, impossible to sleep inside; besides, from the want of properly cooked food and the continuous wetting of the decks at night, the officers and men were rendered desperate. We knew that the impending action would soon be determined one way or the other, and everyone looked forward to it with a positive feeling of relief.

I had been sleeping on the deck of the admiral's cabin for two or three nights, when at daybreak on the 5th of August the old quarter-master came down the ladder, rousing us up with his gruff voice, saying: "Admiral, the officer of the deck bids me report that the enemy's fleet is under way!" Jumping up, still half asleep, we came on deck, and sure enough, there was the enemy heading for the "passage" past the fort. The grand old admiral of sixty years, with his countenance rigid and stern, showing a determination for battle in every line, then gave his only order: "Get under way, Captain Johnson; head for the leading vessel of the enemy, and fight each one as they pass!"

The fort and fleet by this time had opened fire, and the Tennessee replied, standing close in and meeting each foremost vessel as it came up. We could see two long lines of men-of-war; the innermost was composed of the four monitors, and the outer of the ten wooden frigates, all engaging the fort and fleet. Just at the moment we expected the monitors to open fire upon us, there was a halt in the progress of the enemy's fleet. We observed that one of the monitors was apparently at a stand-still; "laid to" for a moment, seemed to reel, then slowly disappeared in the gulf. Immediately immense bubbles of steam, as large as caldrons, rose to the surface of the water, and only eight human beings could be seen in the turmoil. Boats were sent to their rescue, both from the fort and fleet, and they were saved. Thus the monitor Tecumseh, at the commencement of the fight, struck by a torpedo, went to her fate at the bottom of the gulf, where she still lies. Sunk with her was her chivalric commander, T. A. M. Craven. The pilot, an engineer, and two seamen were the only survivors picked up by the Federal boats, and they were on duty in the turret. The Pilot, with whom I sometime afterwards conversed at Pensacola on the subject, told me that when the vessel careened so that water began to run into the mouth of the turret, he and Captain Craven were on the ladder together, the captain on the top step, with the way open for his easy and honorable escape. The pilot said: "Go ahead, captain!" "No, sir!" replied Captain Craven. "After you, pilot; I leave my ship last!" Upon this the pilot sprung up, and the gallant Craven went down, sucked under in the vortex, thus sacrificing himself through a chivalric sense of duty.

There was dead silence on board the Tennessee; the men peered through the port-holes at the awful catastrophe and spoke to each other only in whispers, for they all knew that the same fate was probably awaiting us, for we were then directly over the "torpedo bed," and shut up tightly as we were in our "iron capsule," in another moment it might prove our coffin. At this juncture the enemy's leading vessel "backed water" and steered to one side, which arrested the progress of the squadron. But at this supreme moment the second vessel, Admiral Farragut's flagship, the Hartford, forged ahead, and Farragut, showing the nerve and determination of the officer and the man, gave the order: "—— the torpedoes! Go ahead!" and away he went, crashing through their bed to victory and renown. Some of the officers told me afterwards that they could hear the torpedoes snapping under the bottoms of their ships, and that they expected every moment to be blown into high air.

The slightest delay at that time on the part of Farragut, subjected as he was to the terrible fire of the fort and fleet, would have been disaster, defeat, and the probable loss of his entire squadron, but he proved to be the man for the emergency. We in the Tennessee, advancing very slowly, at the rate of about two miles an hour, met the leading vessels of the enemy as they passed and fought them face to face, but their fire was so destructive, continuous, and severe that after we emerged from it, there was nothing left standing as large as your little finger. Everything had been shot away—smoke-stacks, boats, davits, staunchions, and, in fact, "fore and aft," our deck had been swept absolutely clean. A few of our men were slightly wounded, and when the last vessel had passed us and been fought in turn, we had been in action more than an hour and a half; and then the enemy's fleet, somewhat disabled, of course, kept on up the bay and anchored about four miles away. So ended the first part of the fight. Farragut had already won half the battle; he had passed the fort and fleet and had ten wooden vessels and three monitors left in good fighting trim.

Neither the officers nor men of either fleet had as yet been to breakfast, and the order was given: "Go to breakfast!" For us on the Tennessee to eat below was simply impossible, on account of the heat and humidity. The heat below was terrific; intense thirst universally prevailed. The men rushed to the "scuttle butts" or water-tanks, and drank greedily. Soon hard tack and coffee were furnished, the men all eating standing, creeping out of the ports of the shield to get a little fresh air, the officers going to the upper deck. Admiral Buchanan, grim, silent, and rigid with prospective fighting, was "stumping" up and down the deck, lame from a wound received in his first engagement in the Merrimac, and in about 15 minutes we observed that, instead of heading for the safe "lee" of the fort, our iron prow was pointed for the enemy's fleet. Suppressed exclamations were heard from the officers and crew. "The old Admiral has not had his fight out yet; he is heading for that big fleet; he will get his fill of it up there."

Slowly and gradually this fact became apparent to us, and I, being on his staff and in close association with him, ventured to ask him: "Are you going into that fleet, Admiral?" "I am, sir!" was his reply. Without intending to be heard by him, I said to an officer standing near me: "Well, we'll never come out of there whole!" But Buchanan had heard my remark, and, turning around, said sharply: "That's my lookout, sir!" And now began the second part of the fight. I may as well explain here why he did this much criticised and desperate deed of daring. He told me his reason long afterward, as follows: He had only six hours coal on board, and he intended to expend it in fighting. He did not mean to be trapped like a rat in a hole and made surrender without a struggle. Then he meant to go to the "lee" of the fort and assist General Page in the defence of the place. This calculation was unluckily prevented by the shooting away of the rudder chains of the Tennessee in this second engagement. As we approached the enemy's fleet, one after another of Farragut's ten wooden vessels swept out in a wide circle, and by the time we reached the point where the monitors were, a huge heading frigate was coming at us at the rate of ten miles an hour. A column of white foam, formed of the "dead water," piled in front of its bows many feet high. Heavy cannonading from the monitors was going on at this time, when this leading wooden vessel came rapidly bearing down on us, bent on the destruction of the formidable ram, which we on board the Tennessee fully realized as the supreme moment of the test of our strength. We had escaped from the "torpedo bed" safe and "on top," and were now to take our chances of being "run under" by the heavy wooden frigates that were fast nearing us. Each vessel had her own bows heavily ironed for the purpose of cutting down and sinking the Tennessee, as such were the orders of Admiral Farragut.

Captain Johnson, in the pilot-house, now gave the word to officers and men: "Steady yourselves when she strikes; stand by and be ready!" Not a word was heard on the deck under its shelving roof, where the officers and men, standing by their guns, appeared, silent and rigid, awaiting their fate. Captain Johnson shouted out: "We are all right; they can never run under us now!" As he spoke, the leading vessel had struck against our "overhang" with tremendous impact; had shivered its iron prow in the clash, but only succeeded in whirling the Tennessee around as if she were swung on a pivot. I was sitting on the "combing of the hatch," having nothing to do as yet, a close observer as each vessel in turn struck us. At the moment of impact they slid alongside of us, and our "black wales" came in contact. At a distance of ten feet they poured their broadside of twenty eleven-inch guns into us. This continued for more than an hour, and as each vessel "rammed" the Tennessee and slid alongside they followed, discharging their broadsides fast and furious, so that the noise was one continuous, deafening roar. You could only hear voices when close to the speaker, and the reverberation was so great that bleeding at the nose was not infrequent.

Soon the wounded began to pour down to me. Stripped to their waist, the white skins of the men exhibited curious dark blue elevations and hard spots. Coming down to these, I found that unburnt cubes of cannon powder that had poured into the port had perforated the flesh and made these great blue ridges under the skin. Their sufferings were very severe, for it was as if they had been shot with red-hot bullets, but no serious results followed.

Now the wooden vessels, disabled and their prows broken off, anchored in succession over a mile away. Then Admiral Farragut signaled to the monitors: "Destroy the ram!" Soon these three grim monsters, at thirty yards distance, took their positions on each quarter of the Tennessee as she lay nearly motionless, her rudder having been shot away with grape early in the fight. We knew that we were hopelessly disabled and that victory was impossible, as all we could do was to move around very slowly in a circle, and the only chance left us to crawl under the shelter of Fort Morgan. For an hour and a half the monitors pounded us with solid shot fired with a charge of sixty pounds of powder from their eleven-inch guns, determined to crush in the "shield" of the Tennessee, as thirty pounds of powder was the "regulation amount." In the midst of this continuous pounding the port-shutter of one of our guns was jammed by a shot, so that it would neither open nor shut, making it impossible to work the piece. The admiral then sent for some of the firemen from below to drive the bolt out. Four men came up, and two of them holding the bolt back, the others struck it with sledge-hammers.

While they were thus working, suddenly there was a dull sounding impact, and at the same instant the men whose backs were against the shield were riven in pieces. I saw their limbs and chests, severed and mangled, scattered about the deck, their hearts lying near their bodies. All of the gun's crew and the admiral were covered from head to foot with blood, flesh and viscera. I thought at first the admiral was mortally wounded. The fragments and members of the dead men were shoveled up, put in buckets and stuck below. Engineer J. C. O'Connell, one of the wounded, had a pistol ball through his shoulder. "How in the world did you manage to get this?" I asked him. He replied: "Why, I was off watch and had nothing to do, so while the Hartford was lying alongside of us a Yankee cursed me through the port-hole and I jabbed him with my bayonet in the body, and his comrade shot me with his revolver." Cutting the ball out, I proposed to give him morphine, as he was suffering terribly, but he said: "None of that for me, doctor; when we go down I want to be up and take my chances of getting out of some port-hole." Another man was wounded in the ear when fighting in the same manner as the engineer, but he always declared he got even by the use of his bayonet. I merely mention these facts t show how close the fighting was, when men could wound or kill each other through the port-holes of each vessel.

While attending the engineer, Aide Carter came down the ladder in great haste and said: "Doctor, the admiral is wounded." "Well, bring him below," I replied. "I can't do it," he answered; "haven't time. I'm carrying orders for Captain Johnson." So up I went, asked some officer whom I saw: "Where is the admiral?" "Don't know," he replied. "We are all at work loading and firing; got too much to do to think of anything else!" Then I looked for the gallant commander myself, and lying curled up under the sharp angle of the roof discovered the old white-haired man. He was grim, silent and betrayed no evidence of his great pain. I went up to him and asked: "Admiral, are you badly hurt?" "Don't know," he replied, but I saw one of his legs crushed up under his body, and, as I could get no help, raised him up with great caution, and clasping his arms around my neck, carried him on my back down the ladder to the "cockpit," his broken leg slapping against me as we moved slowly along. After applying a temporary bandage, he sat up on the deck and received reports from Captain Johnson regarding the progress of the fight. Captain Johnson soon came down in person, and the admiral greeted him with: "Well, Johnson, they have got me again. You'll have to look out for her now; it is your fight." "All right," answered the captain, "I'll do the best I know how."

In the course of half an hour Captain Johnson again made his appearance below and reported to the admiral that all the frigates had "hauled off," but that three monitors had taken position on our quarters. He added that we could not bring a gun to bear and that the enemy's solid shot were gradually smashing in the "shield," and not having been able to fire for thirty minutes, the men were fast becoming demoralized from sheer inactivity, and that from the smashing of the "shield" they were seeking shelter, which showed their condition mentally. "Well, Johnson," said the admiral at this precarious juncture, "fight to the last; then, to save these brave men, when there is no longer hope, surrender." In twenty minutes more the firing ceased, Captain Johnson having bravely gone up alone on the exposed roof with a handkerchief on a "boarding-pike," and the surrender was effected. Then we immediately carried all our wounded up on the roof into the fresh air, which they so much needed.

From that elevated place, I witnessed the rush of the petty officers and men of the monitors which were nearest to us, to board the captured ship, to procure relics and newspaper renown. Two creatures dressed in the blue shirts, begrimed and black with powder, rushed up to the wounded admiral and demanded his sword. His aide refused peremptorily, whereupon one of them stooped as if to take it, upon which Aide Forrest warned him not to touch it, as it would only be given to Admiral Farragut or his authorized representatives. Still the man attempted to seize it, whereupon Forrest knocked him off the "shield" to the deck below. At this critical moment, when a fight was imminent, I saw a boat near, flying