

CHAPTER XXXIV  
David G. Farragut

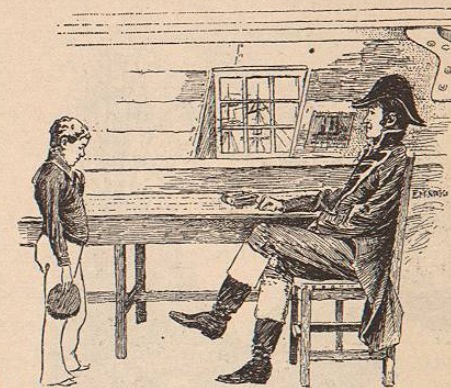
1801-1870

NAVAL service seems to run in some families; like father, like son. Many of our distinguished naval commanders were sons of naval officers. Admiral Farragut was not an exception to this rule. His father was George Farragut, who took part in the Revolutionary War, and was a friend and companion of General Jackson. At one time Admiral Farragut told this story about his boyhood:

"When I was ten years of age I was with my father on board a man-of-war. I had some qualities that I thought made a man of me. I could swear like an old salt, could drink as stiff a glass of grog as if I had doubled Cape Horn, and could smoke like a locomotive. I was great at cards, and fond of gaming in every shape. At the close of dinner one day my father turned everybody out of the cabin, locked the door, and said to me:

"David, what do you mean to be?' 'I mean to follow the sea.' 'Follow the sea! yes, to be a poor, miserable, drunken sailor before the mast, be kicked and cuffed about the world, and die in some fever hospital in a foreign clime.' 'No,' said I, 'I'll tread the quarter-deck, and command as you do.' 'No, David; no boy ever trod the quarter-deck with such principles as you have, and such habits as you exhibit. You'll have to change your whole course of life if you ever become a man.'

"My father left me and went on deck. I was stunned by the rebuke, and overwhelmed with mortification. 'A poor, miserable, drunken sailor before the mast! be kicked and cuffed about the world, and die in some fever



YOUNG FARRAGUT'S LESSON FROM HIS FATHER.

hospital!' That's my fate, is it? I'll change my life, and change it at once. I will never utter another oath; I will never drink another drop of intoxicating liquor; I will never gamble. I have kept these three vows to this hour. Shortly afterward I became a Christian. That act was the turning-point in my destiny."

In December, 1861, Farragut was summoned to Washington. Soon after he wrote a hurried note to his wife: "Keep your lips closed and burn my letters, for perfect silence is to be observed—the first injunction of the Secretary. I am to have a flag in the Gulf, and the rest depends



upon myself. Keep calm and silent. I shall sail in three weeks."

The expedition consisted of twenty-one vessels. It sailed away from Hampton Roads early in February, 1862. Its design was to capture the city of New Orleans.

General Butler at the same time sailed for Ship Island with fifteen thousand troops. Farragut sent a boat up the

river one dark night to cut the chains which the Confederates had put across the river, and make an opening for the fleet to pass through.

At two o'clock in the morning of April 23d, the fleet of thirteen vessels moved up the river. They succeeded in passing the forts after a most desperate battle. They destroyed the Confederate fleet, and, two days after, New Orleans surrendered.



FARRAGUT'S MORTAR BOATS SHELLING NEW ORLEANS.

Then General Butler took command of the city, and Farragut with his fleet sailed up the Mississippi until it met the Mississippi gunboat fleet from Memphis.

This capture of New Orleans was a brilliant victory.

Farragut's flagship, the *Hartford*, during her nineteen months of service had been struck by shot and shell two hundred and forty times. On his return home for refitting his

ship, Farragut was received with great honor, and the Union League Club of New York presented him with a beautiful sword with gold and silver scabbard, the hilt set in brilliants.

Early in 1864 Farragut was again sent to the Gulf to attack the defences of Mobile. The object, particularly, was to stop the blockade runners, which were constantly going in and out through Mobile Bay. Farragut issued general orders containing the most minute instructions for every case. Perhaps no commander was ever so completely master of every detail as Farragut, unless it was his young Lieutenant Dewey, whom he particularly commended, and who, at Manila, thirty-four years after, showed the same qualities. He could have taken the place, and performed the duties, of any man in the fleet.

He had seven sloops of war, four iron-clad monitors, and six steamers to keep up a flank fire upon the forts, and now on the 5th of August, 1864, before daylight everybody in the fleet was astir, and at 5:30 the signal was given to advance. Then came a terrible cannonade. The fleet shelled the forts; the forts shelled the fleet.

The smoke was intense. In order to see over it, Commodore Farragut placed himself in the rigging. As the smoke increased he went up higher and higher. Captain Drayton, to prevent his falling to the deck in case he should be wounded, sent up a quartermaster with a rope, which was made fast to the shrouds, passing around the admiral's body.

The fleet sailed three miles up the bay, when a Confederate ram attacked the fleet with tremendous energy. Then ensued a singular but desperate contest. The ram surrendered. A few days later all the forts capitulated.

Farragut's health was now failing and he was ordered home. The people of New York presented him a purse of



\$50,000. He was made vice-admiral and a year or two later Congress created the grade of admiral, a grade unknown before in the United States navy, and the rank was given to Farragut.

After the war Farragut made a long cruise in European waters, visiting the principal capitals of Europe. He was everywhere received with the greatest honors. One of the



FARRAGUT LASHED TO THE RIGGING IN THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY.

most interesting incidents of the cruise was a visit to the island of Minorca, the home of Farragut's ancestors, where the whole population turned out to welcome him. He died in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1870.

Farragut was a Virginian like Lee. But while Lee felt that his first duty was to his State, Farragut felt that his duty was to the nation. He opposed the secession of Virginia with all his might, and this is the story he told one day of how he left the State in '61:

"I was told by a brother officer that the State had seceded, and that I must either resign and turn traitor to the government which had supported me from childhood, or I must leave this place. Thank God, I was not long in making my decision. I have spent half of my life in revolutionary countries, and I know the horrors of civil war, and I told the people what I had seen and what they would experience. They laughed at me and called me 'granny' and 'croaker'; and I said, 'I cannot live here, and I will seek some other place where I can live.' I suppose they said I left my country for my country's good, and, thank God, I did."

When the war was over, the Union Club of Boston gave a dinner to the admiral, at which Oliver Wendell Holmes read one of his happiest poems, a few lines of which may be quoted here:

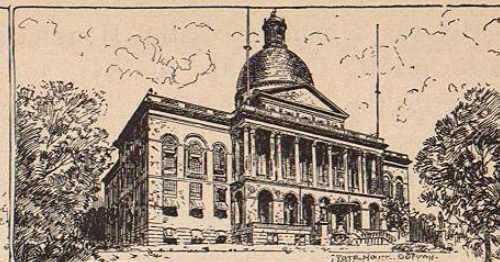
"Our stout old commodores,  
Hull, Bainbridge, Porter—where are they?  
The answering billows roll,  
Still bright in memory's sunset ray,  
God rest each gallant soul!  
A brighter name must dim their light,  
With more than noontide ray—  
The Viking of the River Fight,  
The Conqueror of the Bay.



I give the name that fits him best,  
 Ay, better than his own,  
 The Sea-king of the sovereign West,  
 Who made his mast a throne."

Tell Farragut's story about his boyhood.  
 Give accounts of the capture of New Orleans; of the great naval  
 battle near Mobile.  
 Describe Farragut's speech at Norfolk.

Decatur, Porter, and Farragut were all sons of naval officers; did that fact aid them in their life-work? Did Farragut's father know with certainty what would be his son's life if he did not change? Why did Farragut write to his wife to keep "perfect silence"? What were "blockade runners"? Was Farragut safe in his high position on the mast? Why was Farragut called a "croaker"? Whom did Holmes call the "Viking of the River Fight," the "Conqueror of the Bay," the "Sea-king of the sovereign West, who made his mast a throne"? Explain the reason for each expression, if possible.



## CHAPTER XXXV

## Horace Mann

1796-1859

NEAR the close of the last century, on a small farm in Franklin, Massachusetts, Horace Mann was born. He was a thoughtful and studious boy. From the age of ten until he was twenty he had not more than six weeks' schooling in any one year. The teachers in these schools he afterward described as "very good people, but very poor teachers." His school-books he earned by braiding straw.

When he was twenty years old, he came under the influence of a schoolmaster who was a real scholar, a genius who could appreciate rare mental power when he found it in his pupils. This traveling pedagogue encouraged young Horace to prepare for college and obtain a liberal education. His pupil entered into the plan with an intense zeal, so that in a few months he was admitted to advanced standing in Brown University. He was graduated from college in 1819, and on commencement day he delivered an oration upon "The Progressive Character of the Human Race." He taught Latin and Greek at his alma mater, studied law, and was admitted to the bar in 1823.