

**THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY, AND THE CAPTURE  
OF FORTS POWELL, GAINES AND MORGAN, BY  
THE COMBINED SEA AND LAND FORCES OF THE  
UNITED STATES UNDER THE COMMAND OF  
REAR-ADMIRAL DAVID GLASGOW  
FARRAGUT, AND MAJOR-GENERAL GORDON  
GRANGER, AUGUST, 1864; PP. 1-135**

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The Battle of Mobile Bay, and the Capture of Forts Powell, Gaines and Morgan, by the Combined Sea and Land Forces of the United States Under the Command of Rear-Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, and Major-General Gordon Granger, August, 1864; pp. 1-135 by Foxhall A. Parker

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**FOXHALL A. PARKER**

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TO THE  
OFFICERS, SEAMEN AND MARINES,  
WHO SERVED UNDER FARRAGUT,  
DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST, 1864.

*This Volume is Dedicated.*

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## PREFACE.

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REGARDING the reputation for intrepidity gained by Federal and Confederate sailors and soldiers during our civil war as the common heritage of the American people, I determined, last year, at the instance of The Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, to write the story of Mobile Bay: This, when completed, I read before the Society, (December 10th, 1877,) and the favorable reception it met with has induced me to give it to the public, the more especially as it is accompanied with a number of official reports, never before published, which cannot fail to interest the general reader and be of value to the historian.

As regards my own work, while I can truly say I have spared no pains myself to insure its correctness and completeness, I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to hosts of friends for their hearty co-operation

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in my task; and my especial thanks are due to Major-General Dabney H. Maury, of the late Confederate army, and to Professor A. D. Wharton, Principal of the Fogg School, at Nashville, Tennessee.

F. A. P.

U. S. NAVY YARD, BOSTON, MASS.,  
April 8, 1878.

THE  
BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY,  
AND  
CAPTURE OF FORTS MORGAN, GAINES, AND  
POWELL.

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THAT arm of the Gulf of Mexico, which, extending for thirty-five miles into the state of Alabama, and varying in width from seven to fifteen miles, is known as Mobile Bay, will ever be regarded with interest by the student of history; for there is scarcely a rood of its shores but has served as the last resting-place of one of the early discoverers, while the bay itself derives its name from the Indian town of Mauvila,<sup>1</sup> whose governor, the gigantic Tascaluça, received Hernando de Soto, seated,<sup>2</sup> while all around him stood, and his standard-bearer unfolded that banner which excited the astonishment of the Spaniards, and was so soon to be waved defiantly in their midst: for in Mauvila's blood-stained streets it was that, among other cavaliers of note, De Soto's two nephews fell.<sup>3</sup>

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Mobile Bay fell into the hands of the French and Spaniards, alternately; in 1812, it was taken possession of by United States troops and annexed to Mississippi territory, and, in



1819, it became included within the limits of the state of Alabama.

On the 15th of September, 1814, the stillness that usually hangs over its sluggish waters was for the first time broken by the roar of heavy artillery, (for it was on that day that the British squadron, under Percy, was repulsed in its attack on the little redoubt called Fort Bowyer, with a loss of one vessel, the *Hermes*, and over two hundred men;) and, on August 5, 1864, it was rudely awakened from its half-century slumber by the noise of the great battle which it has become my province to describe.

Alabama, having thrown her sword into the scale of the Southern Confederacy in January, 1861, turned her first thoughts toward the security of her only seaport, Mobile. To this end, Governor Moore seized upon the United States arsenal in the city, and garrisoned, with state troops, forts Morgan and Gaines.<sup>4</sup> As these forts, being at the entrance of Mobile Bay, were the keys to Mobile from the gulf side, a brief description of their condition and armament must now be given. Fort Morgan, on the site of old Fort Bowyer, is a pentagonal, bastioned work, built of brick, whose full scarp wall is four feet, eight inches thick. It is located on the main land, at the west end of Mobile Point, and mounted, at the time of the passage of Farragut's fleet, eighty-six guns of various calibres, consisting of rifled thirty-twos, ten-inch columbiads, and two seven and eight-inch Brook's rifles. In each of its bastion-flanks were two smooth-bore twenty-four pounders. Twenty-nine additional guns were placed in exterior batteries, of which the most formidable, "the water battery," bore two rifled

thirty-tvos, four ten-inch columbiads, and one eight-inch Brook's rifle. Within the fort was a citadel, containing quarters for soldiers, whose brick walls, loop-holed for musketry, were four feet in thickness. The garrison of the fort, including officers and men, numbered six hundred and forty.

Fort Gaines, erected on the ruins of Fort Tombigbee, stands at the eastern extremity of Dauphine Island, three nautical miles in a west-northwest direction from Fort Morgan. It is built of brick, in the form of a star, with semi-detached scarp five feet thick, and small works, in angles, for flank defence. When invested by General Granger, it had forty-four gun-platforms laid, but upon only thirty of them were guns mounted, of which three were columbiads, and the rest thirty-two and twenty-four pounders. Its garrison consisted of forty-six officers and eight hundred and eighteen men.

On the flats, to the southward and eastward of Fort Gaines, innumerable piles were driven, to obstruct the passage of small vessels, and from these, two lines of torpedoes extended toward Fort Morgan, whose eastern limit was marked by a large red buoy. The channel between this and the fort was left open for blockade-runners, and, being but a few hundred yards wide, forced every vessel using it to pass close to the fort.

Such were the works, and such the means employed for guarding the main ship-channel; but, about six nautical miles northwest of Fort Gaines, there is a narrow cut for light-draught vessels, called Grant's Pass, which it was also deemed necessary to prevent the blockading fleet from getting possession of. For this purpose, between Cedar Point and Little Dauphine Island, on an islet of

mostly made-land, covering an area of about half an acre, the Confederates had begun the construction of a redoubt, which they called Fort Powell. The front face of the work was nearly completed, and in a defensible condition, mounting one eight-inch columbiad, and one six and four-tenths and two seven-inch Brook's rifles. The face looking toward Fort Gaines was about half finished, its parapets being nearly complete, while its galleries and traverses had only been framed. The rear face was without parapets, and the ten-inch columbiad and seven-inch Brook's rifle mounted there were exposed from the platform up. This part of the fort was encumbered with a large quantity of lumber, which was being used in the construction of galleries, magazines, &c.

Inside of these defences, to the northward of, and about five hundred yards distant from Fort Morgan, lay the iron-clad steamer Tennessee, two hundred and nine feet in length, and forty-eight feet broad, with an iron spur projecting beyond her bow, at a depth of two feet below the water-line, which made her, in public estimation, the most formidable ram of her time; yet, not trusting to *ramming* alone for victory, she carried in her casemate — whose sloping sides, covered with armor varying in thickness from five to six inches, were supposed to be impenetrable to shot — six Brook's rifled cannon. Of these, two were pivot and the others broadside guns, the former throwing solid projectiles of one hundred and ten pounds weight; the latter, solid projectiles of ninety-five pounds weight. The ports, of which there were ten, were so arranged that the pivot guns could be fought in broadside, sharp on the bow and quarter, and on a direct line with the keel. Her vital defect was her steering