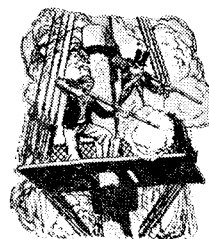


Full Focus on the Fleet



"Picture History of the U.S. Navy: From Old Navy to New, 1776 to 1897," by Theodore Roscoe and Fred Freeman (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1,011 plates, \$12.50), is a generously illustrated volume about one of the most colorful branches of our armed forces. Here it is reviewed by Richard S. West, Jr., a professor of history at the United States Naval Academy.

By Richard S. West, Jr.

TOO OFTEN historians of the United States Navy have accepted a narrow, simon-pure "naval" view of their subject and restricted themselves to ships, weapons, leadership, and events. Too often for want of elbow room they have slighted the British background in naval doctrine and tradition, the economic and political bases of naval power, the causes and balance sheets of wars, and even military matters.

Theodore Roscoe and Fred Freeman, however, are two authors who have accepted the idea that naval history is by nature diverse, all-inclusive, and centrifugal. Their elbows are figuratively waving in every direction and are by no means taped down to their sides. In their "Picture History of the U.S. Navy" they have compiled a generous volume of pictures and captions which boldly and effectively presents the many-sided complexity of the Navy. The use of pictures, maps, diagrams, legible photographs of cartoons, recruiting posters, handbills, newspaper clippings, and entire pages from rare books has proved in this instance economical and efficient. The book contains over a thousand illustrations, and the captions range from a few lines of identification to a 300-word thumbnail sketch of a person or a 600-word tabloid summary of such an event as the mutiny on the *Somers*. Although the authors adopt a top-

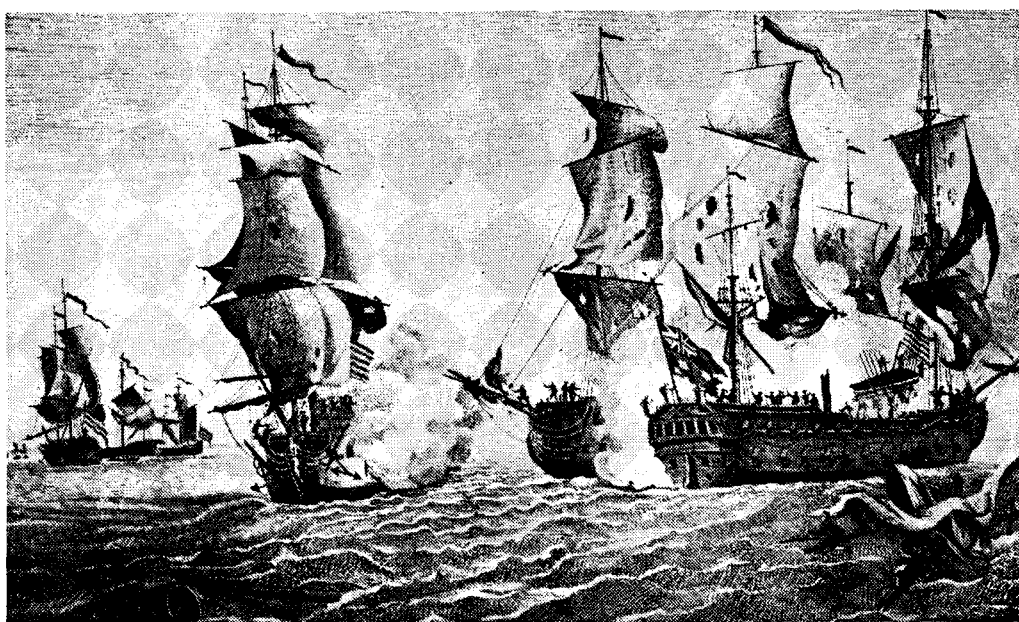
ical arrangement of material whenever it suits their purpose their overall pattern is chronological, with chapters on the Revolutionary War and its background, on the founding of the Navy in the quasi-war with France and the Barbary Wars, on the War of 1812, the transition from sail to steam, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the development of the "new Navy" of 1897. The curtain is rung down on the eve of the war with Spain.

Their volume depicts both the bright spots and the somber ones of the Navy: the creditable line of heroes (Jones, Decatur, Farragut, David D. Porter, Dewey, *et al.*) and the light sprinkling of mutinies (seven to be exact, of which the so-called "mutiny" on the *Somers* achieved widest notoriety). Every aspect of this history is represented whether it be diplomatic (Franklin in France, Perry in Japan), political (John Adams "fathered" the Navy in 1798 when he organized the Navy Department), or social and economic (the California gold rush and America's industrial growth tied in directly with Naval business and technological development). A picture of the simply-dressed Ben Franklin among the splendid periwigs of Louis XVI's court is justly included because

Franklin helped negotiate the French Alliance, which in turn brought French fleets into American waters and clinched Washington's decisive victory at Yorktown.

Necessarily the captions for the book's 1,000-odd illustrations are sketchy. But they are to the point. With a flair for human interest and with an ear for a pithy phrase, Mr. Roscoe compresses much into telegraphic captions. Omnivorous rather than discriminating in his acceptance of sources, however, he sometimes trips on facts. It was Dick Taylor, rather than Bedford Forrest, who hustled Banks and Porter out of the Red River country in 1864; and the "fake ironclad" which caused the Confederates to destroy the *Indianola* was a dummy monitor rather than a casemated vessel.

Mr. Freeman's contributions include end-paper paintings and drawings for chapter headings. Among his several original drawings are the litho-crayon drawing "Paul Jones at Sea," which is used on the jacket; "Flashback!" (depicting a boarding party from the American *Wasp* swinging cutlasses against the crew of H.M.S. *Reindeer*); and "Pointblank Hit!" (depicting Captain Worden as he lay wounded aboard Ericsson's *Monitor*). They are drawings which add realism to the book.



—Illustrations from the book.

Bonhomme Richard alongside the *Serapis*—"naval history is diverse, all-inclusive, and centrifugal."

Naval Pioneers at War

"Mr. Lincoln's Admirals," by **Clarence Edward Macartney** (Funk & Wagnalls. 335 pp. \$5) and **"Civil War on Western Waters,"** by **Fletcher Pratt** (Henry Holt. 255 pp. \$3.50), the latest additions to the ever-lengthening Civil War shelf, throw light on the maritime aspects of the conflict. Our reviewer is Theodore Roscoe, whose "Picture History of the U. S. Navy" is appraised on the opposite page.

By Theodore Roscoe

LINCOLN'S admirals were a colorful group. Individualism and non-conformity were dominant characteristics perhaps to be expected in men leading as non-conformist an assortment of naval vessels as ever sailed under one flag. In squadrons which were part wood, part iron, part stick-and-string, and part steam, Lincoln's admirals bridged the gap between old-time and modern naval warfare. Sometimes they stood this bridge confused, adhering to old ways, mistrustful of new. More often (as when Worden fought the *Merrimac* with the *Monitor*, or as Rodgers took the ironclad *Galena* up the James River) they entered action as pioneers, resourcefully improvising, testing by fire and water. Pioneering, of course, is antithetical to conformity.

In "Mr. Lincoln's Admirals" Dr. Macartney touches upon many of the novel aspects of the Union naval effort: for example, he touches upon such tactical innovations as coordinated fleet maneuvers and as ships attacking forts in a war that introduced rifled guns and turret vessels.

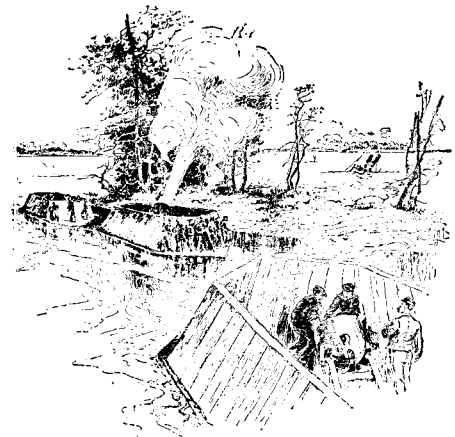
But the author's stated concern is with the "character and personality" of the Navy's Civil War leaders. For study he selects Farragut, Foote, Du Pont, Dahlgren, and David Dixon Porter. Chapters are also devoted to Welles and Fox of the Navy Department, to Captains Worden, Winslow and Napoleon Collins, and to young Lieutenant Cushing, conqueror of the *Albatross*. But biographically Dr. Macartney would have these men conform with "old school" concepts of leadership and with the current effort to lend an evangelical cast to the melody. The subjects are presented in Victorian frames, well suited to

the daguerrotypes of that period. One example: "In the illustrious career of Farragut, our first admiral, and the most famous of our naval commanders," writes Dr. Macartney, "there was one keen disappointment. All his battles were waged against forts. . . . With his always careful preparation for battle, his flaming spirit, and his magnificent courage, he would have made a splendid commander after the style of Nelson or Rodney." Offering opinion as categorical fact in this manner, the author is on unsure ground. "Might have" is always safer than "would have." And just what was the "style" of Nelson or Rodney? The reader is left with a semantic blank.

Again, the author offers shadow for substance when he deals in physiognomy. "No one was ever more determined in battle than Foote. One look at that granite countenance reveals determination and indomitable courage. Among the chief personalities of the Army and Navy during the war only the countenance of George Thomas, the 'Rock of Chickamauga,' shows a comparable iron will and strength of character." In that estimable Civil War album "Divided We Fought" a Brady photo, contrary to Dr. Macartney, endows Foote with a gentle, grandfatherly mien. This reviewer has seen others, equally mild, as well as one of Thomas in which the "Rock of Chickamauga" looks surprisingly like Grant and all those other bearded officers who looked like Grant. Not that Dr. Macartney's idealism is undesirable. But historicity is another matter, and the seams of historicity show in this book.

YET Dr. Macartney's volume contains much in the way of lively anecdote and meaty incident. When the author presents excerpts from diaries, battle reports, and correspondence he is in safe waters. It is when he offers sweeping generalities that he discusses Dr. Macartney's rather than Mr. Lincoln's admirals.

Generalization is a failing of Fletcher Pratt, too, when it comes to his little homilies on tactics and strategy. But, happily, in "Civil War on Western Waters," he remains for the most part in safe waters. His book is superior reading and he writes history. Historians have too long neglected the vital amphibious campaign which cut the Mississippi Valley out of the



—From "Civil War on Western Waters."
Mortar boats on Mississippi's Island 10.

Confederacy. The Mississippi was the South's main artery. After the symbolism at New Orleans and the slashings of Island 10, Memphis, and Vicksburg the great military convulsions in the East were but the Confederacy's death throes.

Mr. Pratt points up the Navy's major role in the Mississippi campaign. Spearheading the operation were the outlandish flotillas of sidewheelers, stern-wheelers, and turret boats—the ironclads, tinclads, timber-clads, cotton-clads, and "hay-clads" that paddled downriver to strike the Confederate defenses. In the main the author lets Foote, Farragut, and D. D. Porter speak for themselves through their deeds. He also writes of Henry Walke, T. O. Selfridge, and other leaders of the "freshwater fleet" whose exploits were certainly as heroic and fully as significant as those of, say, Collins or Du Pont.

Probing material overlooked by run-of-mill researchers, Mr. Pratt uncovers some of the war's more fantastic episodes. For example: Le Roy Fitch devising "crutches" for his paddle-boats to jump them over bars and take them upstream in pursuit of Morgan's cavalry. (Steamboats chasing cavalry, indeed!) The sailors who won the Mississippi were pioneers in every sense; almost nothing on that river frontier "conformed."

Editorializing, the author invites debate by contending that the Confederates lost the river chiefly because their defenses (forts) were static and the Union naval drive was aggressively dynamic. He notes, however, that the Confederates had little to be dynamic with. They entered the war without a navy, and in all the South there was not one machine shop capable of building a marine engine. Without the tools the most enterprising warriors in the world could not do a job. (One might add that enterprising people might have acquired tools in the first place—instead of slaves.)