

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MISSISSIPPI OPENED.

FLAG-OFFICER DAVIS had been relieved in command of the Mississippi flotilla on the 15th of October, by Commander David D. Porter, holding the local rank of acting rear-admiral. The new commander was detained in Cairo for two months, organizing and equipping his squadron, which had been largely increased. A division of vessels was still stationed at Helena, patrolling the lower river, under the command of Captain Henry Walke.

During the fall of 1862 and the following winter, two new types of vessels were added to the squadron. The first, familiarly called tinclads, but officially light-draughts, were river stern-wheel steamers purchased for the service after the suggestion of Flag-Officer Davis, and covered all round to a height of eleven feet with iron from half to three-quarters of an inch thick, which made them proof against musketry. The protection around the boilers was increased to resist the light projectiles of field artillery. They quartered their crew comfortably, and could on a pinch, for an expedition, carry 200 men. The usual battery for these vessels was six or eight 24-pound brass howitzers, four on each side, with sometimes two light rifled guns in the bows. This armament was of little use against works of any strength, but with canister or shrapnel could keep off the riflemen, and meet on equal terms the field artillery brought against

them on the banks of the narrow streams, often thickly timbered or covered with underbrush, into which they were called to penetrate and engage in that kind of warfare significantly called bushwhacking. For this service their light draught, not exceeding three feet when deep, and diminishing to eighteen or twenty inches when light, peculiarly fitted them; but they were also useful in connection with the operations of the larger vessels, and some of them generally went along as a kind of light force fitted for raids and skirmishing.

The other vessels, which were not completed till later, were of an entirely different kind, being intended to supply a class of fighting ships of superior power, armor, and speed to those which had fought their way down to Vicksburg from Cairo. The fighting power of the Confederates had increased, and the successes of the Union arms, by diminishing the extent of their line to be defended, had enabled them to concentrate their men and guns. The defences of Vicksburg, both on the Mississippi and Yazoo, had become greatly stronger. The new armored vessels that were ready for some part of the coming operations were the Lafayette, Tuscumbia, Indianola, Choctaw, and Chillicothe. Of these the Tuscumbia, of 565 tons, the Indianola, of 442, and the Chillicothe, of 303, were specially built for the Government at Cincinnati. They were side-wheel, flat-bottomed boats, without keels; the wheels being carried well aft, three-fourths of the entire length from the bow, and acting independently of each other to facilitate turning in close quarters. The Indianola and Tuscumbia had also two screw propellers. On the forward deck there was a rectangular casemate, twenty-two feet long in each vessel, but of differing widths, as the vessels were of different size. Thus that of the Tuscumbia was sixty-two feet wide, that of the Chillicothe only forty-two. The sides of the casemate sloped at an angle of thirty

degrees from the perpendicular, and they, as well as the hull before the wheels, were plated with two- or three-inch iron, according to the locality; the heaviest plating being on the forward end of the casemate. In the Tuscumbia this forward plating was six inches thick. The casemates were pierced with ports for all their guns at the forward end only; on each beam one port, and two aft. The ports were closed with two three-inch iron shutters which slid back on tracks on either side. In these casemates the Tuscumbia carried three XI-inch guns, the Indianola and Chillicothe each two XI-inch. In the two larger vessels there was also, between the wheels, a stern casemate seventeen feet long, built of thick oak, not armored on the forward end, but having two-inch plating aft and one-inch on each side. In this stern casemate, pointing aft and capable of being trained four points ( $45^\circ$ ) on each quarter, the Tuscumbia carried two 100-pound rifles, and the Indianola two IX-inch guns. The hulls inside and abaft the wheels, and the decks, except inside the main casemate, were plated, but more lightly than the forward parts. In the Tuscumbia and Indianola, iron bulwarks, half an inch thick and pierced with loop-holes for musketry, extended all round the boats, except against the wheelhouses; they were so arranged as to let down on deck when desired. When ready for service, with guns and stores on board, these boats drew from five to seven feet of water; but they were so weakly built as to be dangerous and comparatively inefficient vessels, quickly "disabled," as is apt to be the case with such preparations for war as are postponed to the time of its outbreak. The contingency of civil war on our inland waters was not indeed to be anticipated nor prepared for; but what was the history of the ocean navy, on whose hasty creation such harmful boasts and confidence were and are based? They served their turn, for that enemy

had no seamen, no navy, and few mechanics; but they were then swept from the list, rotten and broken down before their time. At this day nearly every ship that can carry the United States flag was built before the war or long after it.

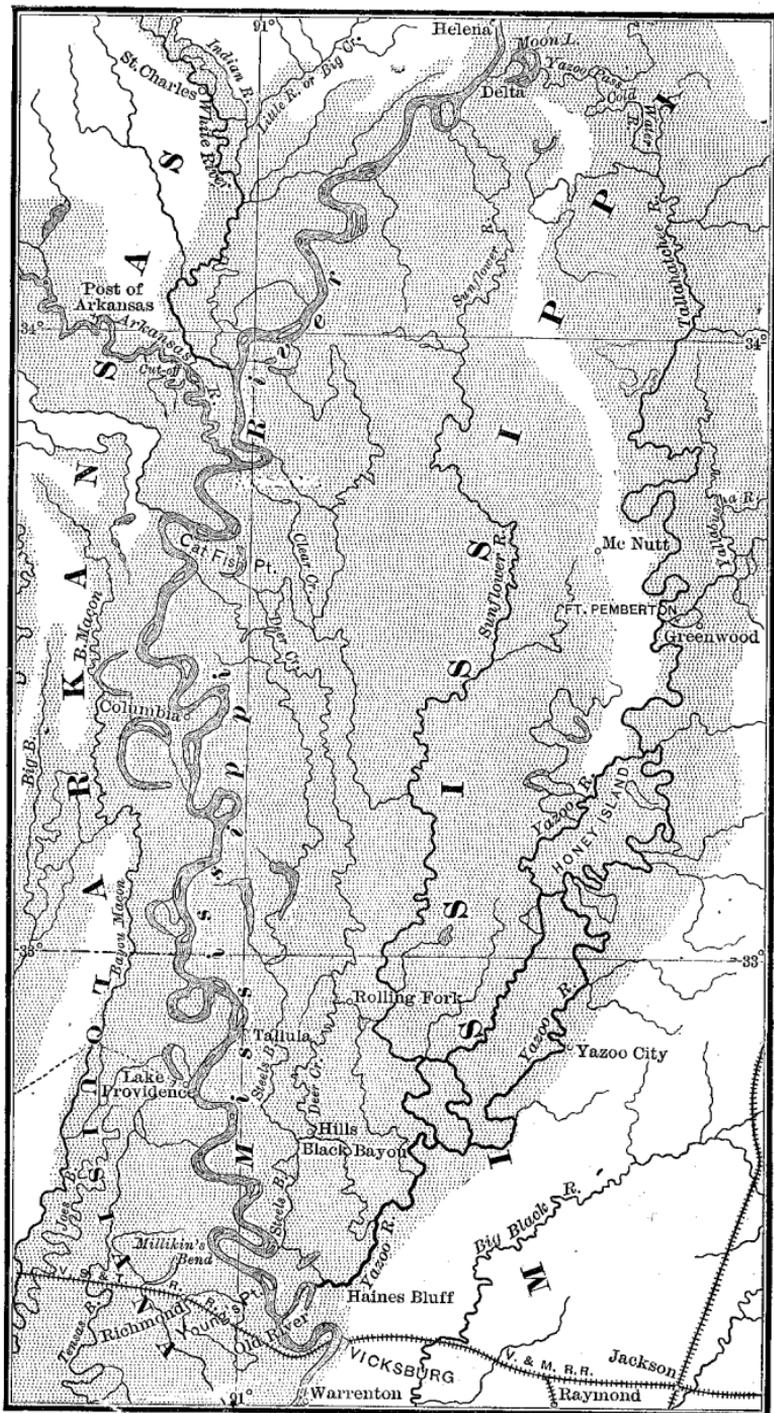
The Lafayette and Choctaw, of one thousand tons each, were purchased by the Government and converted into ironclad gunboats with rams. Built deliberately, they were strong and serviceable vessels, but not able to carry as much armor as had originally been intended. They were side-wheel steamers, the wheels acting independently, but had no screws. The Choctaw had a forward turret with inclined sides and curved top, armored with two inches of iron on twenty-four inches of oak, except on the after end and crown, where the iron was only one inch. Just forward of the wheels was a thwartship casemate containing two 24-pound howitzers pointing forward and intended to sweep the decks if boarders should get possession. Over this casemate was the pilot-house, conical, with two inches of iron on twenty-four of oak. From turret to wheelhouses the sides were inclined like casemates and covered with one-inch iron, as was the upper deck. Aft the wheels there was another thwartship casemate, sides and ends also sloping, in which were two 30-pound Parrott rifles training from aft to four points on the quarter. It had been at first proposed to carry in the forward casemate two guns on a turn-table; but as this did not work, four stationary guns were placed, three IX-inch and one 100-pound rifle, two of which pointed ahead and one on each beam. The Lafayette had a sloping casemate carried across the deck forward, and as far aft as the wheels, covered in the lower part with one inch of iron over one inch of indiarubber; the upper part of the bulwarks had three-quarter-inch plating, and the deck half-inch. She carried two XI-inch bow guns, four IX-inch in broadside but well forward, two 24-pound brass how-

itzers, and two 100-pound stern guns. The draught of these two boats was about nine feet.

Besides these vessels may be mentioned the Black Hawk, a fine steamer, unarmored, but with a battery of mixed guns, which had been remodelled inside and fitted as a schoolship with accommodations for five hundred officers and men. She carried also syphon-pumps capable of raising any vessel that might sink. The old ram Sampson had been fitted as a floating smithery. The two accompanied the fleet, the former taking her place often in battle and serving as a swift flag-ship on occasions.

Active operations again began toward the end of November, when the rivers were rising from the autumnal rains. The great object of the combined Union forces was the reduction of Vicksburg, upon which the authorities at Washington preferred to move by way of the river, as it gave, under the convoy of the navy, an easy line of communication not liable to serious interruptions. The Confederate line of which Vicksburg was the centre then faced the river, the right resting on Haines's Bluff, a strongly fortified position twelve miles away, near to and commanding the Yazoo; while the left was on the Mississippi at Grand Gulf, sixty miles below Vicksburg by the stream, though not over thirty by land. The place, in the end, was reduced much in the same way as Island No. 10; the troops landing above it on the opposite bank, and marching down to a point below the works. The naval vessels then ran by the batteries and protected the crossing of the army to the east bank. A short, sharp campaign in the rear of the city shut the Confederates up in their works, and the Union troops were able to again secure their communications with the river above the town. There were, however, grave risks in this proceeding from the time that the army abandoned its water-base, adding to





MISSISSIPPI VALLEY—HELENA TO VICKSBURG.

its line of communication thirty miles of bad roads on the river bank, and then throwing itself into the enemy's country, leaving the river behind it. It was therefore preferred first to make every effort to turn the position from the north, through the Yazoo country.

The Yazoo Valley is a district of oval form, two hundred miles long by sixty wide, extending from a short distance below Memphis to Vicksburg, where the hills which form its eastern boundary again reach the Mississippi. The land is alluvial and, when not protected by levees, subject to overflow in ordinary rises of the river, with the exception of a long narrow strip fifteen miles from and parallel to the eastern border. It is intersected by numerous bayous and receives many streams from the hills, all of which, from the conformation of the ground, find their way first to the Yazoo River, and by it to the Mississippi. The Yazoo is first called, in the northern portion of the basin, the Cold Water, then the Tallahatchie, and, after receiving the Yallabusha from the east, the Yazoo. In the latter part of its course it is a large stream with an average width of three hundred yards, and navigable always, for vessels drawing three feet of water, as far as Greenwood, a distance of two hundred and forty miles. It flows in a southerly direction along the eastern side of the basin, between the hills and the narrow strip of dry land before mentioned, receiving the streams from the former, which it does not touch except at Yazoo City, eighty miles from its mouth. After passing Yazoo City the river makes several successive bends to the west, and then begins to receive the various bayous which have been pursuing their own southerly course on the other side of the strip of dry land, the principal one of which is the Big Sunflower. At the present day the Yazoo enters the Mississippi eight miles above Vicksburg, but formerly did so by another

bed, now a blind lead known as the Old River, which diverges from the existing channel about six miles above its mouth.

Neither rivers nor bayous are the simple streams thus described. Separating at times into two or more branches which meet again lower down, having perhaps undergone further subdivisions in the meanwhile, connected one with the other by lateral bayous, they form a system of water-courses, acquaintance with which confers the same advantage as local knowledge of a wild and desolate country. Opposite Helena, in the natural state of the ground is a large bayou called Yazoo Pass, leading from the Mississippi to the Cold Water, by which access was formerly had to Yazoo City; but before the war it had been closed by the continuation of the levees across its mouth.

When not under cultivation, the land and the banks of the streams are covered with a thick growth of timber. Where the troops or gunboats penetrated, it was found that there was abundance of live stock, stores of cotton, and rich harvests of grain. The streams carried on their waters many steamers, the number of which had been increased by those that fled from New Orleans when the city fell; and at Yazoo City the Confederates had established a navy yard, where at least three powerful war vessels were being built for the river service.

The first step by the navy was undertaken early in December, when the autumn rains had caused the rivers to rise. Admiral Porter issued orders, dated November 21st, to Captain Walke to enter the Yazoo with all his gunboats, except the Benton and General Bragg left at Helena, and to destroy any batteries that he could. The object was to get possession of as much of the river as possible and keep it clear for General McClelland, who was to land and make the first attempt on Vicksburg by that way.

In accordance with his orders, Walke, on arriving off the mouth of the river, sent two light-draught gunboats, the *Signal* and *Marmora*, which made a reconnoissance twenty miles up, where they fell in with a number of torpedoes, one of which exploded near them. Having received their report, Captain Walke determined, as the river was rising, to send them up again with two of the heavy boats, the *Cairo* and *Pittsburg*, to cover them while they lifted the torpedoes. The ram *Queen of the West* also went with them.

These vessels left the main body at 8 A.M., December 12th. When the torpedoes were reached they began removing them, the two light-draughts in advance, the ram next, the two heavy boats bringing up the rear. While thus engaged the *Marmora* began firing musketry, and Lieutenant-Commander Selfridge, in the *Cairo*, pushed ahead to support her. It was found that she was firing at an object floating in the water, which turned out to be a torpedo that had already been exploded. The *Marmora* was then ordered to proceed slowly again, the *Cairo* following; but before the latter had gone her length two sharp explosions occurred in quick succession, one under the bow and one under the stern, the former so severe as to lift the guns from the deck. The ship was at once shoved into the bank, and hawsers run out to keep her from slipping off into deep water; but all was useless. She filled and sank in twelve minutes, going down in a depth of six fathoms, the tops of her chimneys alone remaining visible. The work of destroying the torpedoes was continued after the accident, in which no lives were lost. Thus, at the very beginning of operations, the flotilla was deprived of one of its best vessels, the first to go of the original seven.

The torpedoes by which the *Cairo* was sunk were merely demijohns filled with powder and ignited by a common fric-

tion primer rigidly secured inside. To the primer was fastened a wire passing through a water-tight cork of gutta percha and plaster of Paris. The first very primitive idea was to explode them by pulling from the shore, and it is possible that the first to go off near the light-draughts was thus fired. The matter was then taken in hand by a Confederate naval officer, who arranged them in pairs, anchored twenty feet apart, the wire leading from the primer of one to that of the other. Torpedoes had hardly yet come to be looked on as a respectable mode of warfare, especially by seamen, and the officer who laid these, and was looking on when the Cairo went down, describes himself as feeling much as a schoolboy might whose practical joke had taken a more serious shape than he expected.

The work of removing the torpedoes was continued by the boats under Lieutenant-Commander John G. Walker, of the Baron de Kalb, formerly the St. Louis. Two landing-places were at the same time secured. After the arrival of the admiral the work went on still more vigorously from the 23d to the 26th of December. A bend in the river was then reached, which brought the vessels under fire of the forts on Drumgoold's Bluff. Every step of the ground so far gained had been won under a constant fire of musketry, which the armored portion of the light-draught gunboats resisted, but their upper works were badly cut up. The batteries of the enemy being now only twelve hundred yards off, the flag-ship Benton took position to cover the lighter vessels, having to tie up to the bank because the wind blowing up stream checked the current and threw her across it. She remained in this position for two hours, receiving the enemy's fire and being struck thirty times, but without serious injury. Unfortunately her captain, Lieutenant-Commander William Gwin, a valuable officer, who had distinguished himself at

Shiloh and in the fight with the Arkansas, was mortally wounded; having, in his anxiety to see how effective was the fire of the vessels, left the armored pilot-house, saying, with a noble rashness, that the captain's place was on his quarter-deck.

The army, 32,000 strong, under General W. T. Sherman, had arrived on the 26th, and landed on the low ground above the old mouth of the Yazoo, the gunboats occupying the sweep of river around them for a length of eight miles. Heavy rains had set in, making the ground almost impassable and causing the water to rise. After various preliminary operations the troops assaulted the works on the hills in front on the 29th, but the attack failed entirely. Sherman considered the works too strong to justify its renewal at the same point, but determined to hold his ground and make a night assault with 10,000 men higher up the river, upon the right of the Confederate works at Haines's Bluff, where the navy could get near enough to try and silence the batteries. Colonel Charles Rivers Ellet,<sup>1</sup> of the ram fleet, volunteered to go ahead with the ram *Lioness* and attempt to blow up a raft which was laid across the stream. Everything was ready on the night of the 31st, but a dense fog setting in prevented the movement.

The continued rains now rendered the position of the army dangerous, and it was re-embarked on the 2d of January. The enemy apparently did not discover the movement till it was nearly finished, when they sent down three regiments with field pieces to attack the transports, a movement quickly checked by the fire of the gunboats.

When Sherman's army was embarked, the transports moved out into the Mississippi and anchored five miles

---

<sup>1</sup> A son of Colonel Charles Ellet, Jr., the first commander of the ram fleet.

above Vicksburg, where General McClelland joined and assumed the chief command. Soon after his arrival he determined upon a movement against Fort Hindman, on the Arkansas River, fifty miles from its mouth. This point, better known as Arkansas Post, commanded the approach to Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas, but was specially obnoxious to the Union forces at this time, as being the base from which frequent small expeditions were sent out to embarrass their communications by the line of the Mississippi, from which it was but fifteen miles distant in a straight line. A few days before, the capture of the Blue Wing, a transport loaded with valuable stores, had emphasized the necessity of destroying a work that occupied such a menacing position upon the flank and rear of the projected movement against Vicksburg.

The admiral detailed the three ironclads, De Kalb, Louisville, and Cincinnati, and all the light-draught gunboats to accompany the expedition; the gunboats, on account of their low speed, being taken in tow by the transports. Passing by the mouth of the Arkansas, to keep the enemy as long as possible uncertain as to the real object of the movement, the fleet entered the White River and from the latter passed through the cut-off which unites it with the Arkansas.

On the 9th of January the army landed about four miles below the fort. This was a square bastioned work of three hundred feet on the side, standing on ground elevated above the reach of floods on the left bank, at the head of a horse-shoe bend. It had three casemates, one in the curtain facing the approach up the bend, and one in the face of the northeast and southeast bastions looking in the same direction. In each bastion casemate was a IX-inch, and in that of the curtain an VIII-inch shell-gun. These were the special antagonists of the navy, but besides them there were four

rified and four smooth-bore light pieces on the platform of the fort, and six similar pieces in a line of rifle-pits exterior to and above it. Some trenches had been dug a mile and a half below the fort, but they were untenable in presence of the gunboats, which enfiladed and shelled them out.

While the army was moving round to the rear of the fort the admiral sent up the ironclads to try the range, and afterward the light-draught Rattler to clear out the rifle-pits, which was done at 5.30 P.M. Hearing from General McClermand that the troops were ready, the Louisville, Lieutenant-Commander Owen; De Kalb, Lieutenant-Commander Walker, and Cincinnati, Lieutenant Bache, advanced to within four hundred yards of the work and opened fire; the Louisville in the centre, the De Kalb on the right and the Cincinnati on the left, each having one of the enemy's casemate guns assigned to it. The vessels fought bows on, three guns each; the odds being thus three guns afloat to one in casemate on shore, leaving the advantage by the old calculation, four to one, rather with the fort, without counting the light pieces in the latter. When the ironclads were hotly engaged the admiral brought up the light-draught vessels, with the Black Hawk and Lexington, to throw in shrapnel and light rifled shell. Later, when the battery was pretty well silenced, the Rattler, Lieutenant-Commander Watson Smith, was ordered to pass the fort and enfilade it, which he did in handsome style, suffering a good deal from the enemy's fire; when above, however, he became entangled in snags and was obliged to return. No assault was made this day by the army.

The following day, at 1.30 P.M., the army again being reported ready, the attack was renewed in the same order by the navy, the artillery on shore in rear of the fort opening at the same time. The guns opposed to the fleet were silenced

by 4 P.M., when the Rattler and Glide, with the ram Monarch, Colonel Ellet, pushed by the fort and went up the river, destroying a ferry ten miles above, so that not over thirty or forty of the enemy escaped by it. At 4.30 P.M., when the army had worked its way close to the intrenchments and orders had been issued for a general assault, but before it could be made, white flags were displayed on the face of the works. The commanding officer of the fort, Colonel Dunnington, formerly an officer in the United States Navy, surrendered to Admiral Porter; General Churchill, commanding the troops, to General McClelland. The total number of Confederate troops taken was 5,000.

It was impossible that the work of the navy could be done more thoroughly than in this instance. Every gun opposed to it was either destroyed or dismantled, and the casemates were knocked to pieces, the fire of the X-inch guns of the De Kalb being in the opinion of the enemy most injurious. In performing this service the vessels did not come off scatheless. The De Kalb had one 32-pounder gun dismantled and one X-inch destroyed, besides undergoing severe damage to the hull. The other vessels were repeatedly struck, but none were rendered unfit for immediate service. The armor was found to protect them well, the injuries to the crew being by shot entering the ports. The casualties, confined to the Louisville and De Kalb, were 6 killed and 25 wounded.

The next morning, January 12th, the admiral despatched the De Kalb and Cincinnati, under Lieutenant-Commander Walker, to the White River; transports and troops, under General Gorman, accompanying. St. Charles was reached at 11 A.M. of the 14th, and found to be evacuated; the garrison having left on the evening of the 12th, in the Blue Wing, taking with them two VIII-inch guns and a field battery.

Leaving the Cincinnati here, the De Kalb with the troops pushed on to Duvall's Bluff, fifty miles further up, where is the crossing of the railroad to Little Rock, on the Arkansas River. The transports were left four miles below, while the De Kalb steamed up to the bluff, arriving there at 3 P.M. of the 16th. She was close on the heels of the Blue Wing, which got away fifteen minutes before her arrival, but the two VIII-inch guns were seized in the act of being loaded on the cars for Little Rock. At this point of his progress, the orders issued by General Grant for the return of McClelland's forces to before Vicksburg were received. The dépôt buildings and captured rolling stock having been destroyed, the gunboats and transports rejoined the main body in the Mississippi.

The naval vessels, on the 24th of January, lay off the mouth of the Yazoo, and from there to the neck of land opposite Vicksburg, where the army under Grant's orders was disembarking. A few days before Porter had been obliged to withdraw the gunboats, because the coal supply of the fleet was exhausted. During their absence eleven Confederate transports that had been employed on the river between Vicksburg and Port Hudson went up the Yazoo for supplies, and were there caught by the unexpected return of the squadron, a serious embarrassment to the enemy.

At this time the vessels of the squadron near Vicksburg, or within easy reach, were: The Benton, Cincinnati, De Kalb, Louisville, Mound City, Pittsburg, and Chillicothe, ironclads; Rattler, Glide, Linden, Signal, Romeo, Juliet, Forest Rose, Marmora, light-draughts; the Tyler and Black Hawk, wooden armed steamers; Queen of the West, Monarch, Switzerland, Lioness, rams. During the following month the Carondelet and Indianola, ironclads, joined the fleet. The heavy vessels remained near the army and the

principal scene of operations, but some of these lighter vessels and rams, with others farther up, were scattered at intervals along the river from Island No. 10 downward, cruising up and down, keeping off guerillas, preventing contraband traffic, and convoying transports and supply boats; in a word, keeping open the communications of the army. A small squadron of five light-draughts performed the same service constantly in the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers.

General Grant arrived on the 30th of January. The army were busy digging on the canal across the neck, which had been begun the previous summer, and the various plans as yet discussed had mainly reference to turning the right flank of the Confederates. Meantime there was no hindrance to the complete control of the river between Vicksburg and Port Hudson by the enemy, who continued their traffic across it and by the Red River unmolested.

Porter, therefore, determined to send some vessels below. The batteries were much stronger than when Farragut had last passed, but the importance of the step justified the risk. Once below, the possession of the west bank by the Union troops gave a safe base to which to retreat. The honor of leading in such an enterprise was given to Colonel Charles R. Ellet, of the ram fleet, a man of tried daring. Many considerations pointed to the rams being the fittest to make such an attempt. They had greater speed, were well able to cope with any vessel they were likely to meet, their greater height gave them more command of the levees, and they were not needed to fight batteries, which the heavier boats might be. The *Queen of the West* was chosen and prepared with two thicknesses of cotton bales. Her commander received minute orders as to his undertaking, and was directed to proceed by night, under low speed until near the town, or discovered, to ram a steamer called the *Vicks-*

burg lying at the wharf, at the same time firing turpentine balls into her, and then to pass on down under the guns of the army. She started on what was to prove a chequered career at 4.30 A.M. of the 2d of February. Unfortunately it was found that a recent change in the arrangement of her wheel kept her from being steered as nicely as was needful, and the delay to remedy this defect brought daylight upon her as she rounded the point. A heavy fire opened at once, but still she went straight on, receiving three shots before she reached the Vicksburg. Rounding to partly, she succeeded in ramming, and at the same time firing the enemy with her turpentine balls. Just then two shells from the Confederate batteries passed through her cotton armor, one of them setting it on fire near the starboard wheel, while the discharge of her own bow guns produced the same effect forward. The flames spread rapidly, and the dense smoke was suffocating the men in the engine-room. Seeing that, if he delayed longer in order to ram again, he would probably lose his vessel, Ellet turned her head down stream and arrived safely abreast the army below. The fire was subdued by cutting her burning bales adrift and throwing them overboard.

In this gallant affair the Queen of the West was struck twelve times by heavy shot, besides undergoing a steady fire from the Confederate sharpshooters. One of her guns was dismantled, but the other harm was trifling, and none of her company were hurt. The Vicksburg was badly injured.

The ram was at once sent down the river, starting at 1 P.M. of the same day. At Warrenton, just below Vicksburg, she encountered two batteries, which fired upon without hurting her. The following day, when fifteen miles below the mouth of the Red River, she captured two Confederate steamers, one of which was loaded down with provisions for the army ;

and when returning up stream, a third, similarly loaded, was taken coming out of the Red River. The coal supply running short, it became necessary to burn them. A quantity of meal on a wharf, awaiting transportation, was also destroyed, and seven Confederate officers captured. The Queen returned from this raid on the 5th.

On the night of the 7th a barge, with coal enough to last nearly a month, was set adrift from the fleet above and floated safely by the batteries to the ram. Having filled up, she took the barge in tow and again went down the river on the 10th, accompanied by the De Soto, a small ferryboat which the army had seized below and turned over to the navy; she was partly protected with iron and cotton. At 10.15 P.M. of the 12th the admiral sent down the ironclad steamer Indianola, Lieutenant-Commander George Brown. Taking with her two coal barges, she proceeded slowly and quietly, and was not discovered till she had passed the upper batteries. When the first gun was fired, she started ahead full speed, and, though under fire for twenty minutes longer, was not struck. With justifiable elation the admiral could now write: "This gives us complete control of the Mississippi, except at Vicksburg and Port Hudson. We have now below two XI-inch guns, two IX-inch, two 30-pounder rifles, six 12-pounders, and three vessels." Yet, with the same mockery of human foresight that followed Farragut's satisfaction when he felt he controlled the whole Gulf coast, on the same day that these lines were penned two of the three passed out of Union hands, and the third had but a few days' career before her.

The Queen of the West went down the Mississippi, destroying skiffs and flatboats whenever found, as far as the Red River, which was reached on the morning of the 12th. Going up the Red River to the point where the Atchafalaya

Bayou branches off on its way to the Gulf, the De Soto and barge were secured there, while the Queen went down the bayou destroying Confederate Government property. In performing this service one of her officers was wounded by a party of guerillas. Returning to the De Soto, the two started up Red River. On the morning of the 14th a transport, called the Era No. 5, was captured with two Confederate officers. Hearing that there were three large boats lying, with steam down, at Gordon's Landing, thirty miles higher up (about seventy-five miles from the mouth of the river), Colonel Ellet decided to attempt their capture. On rounding the bluff above which they were lying, the Queen was fired upon by a battery of four 32-pounders. Orders were immediately given to back down behind the bluff, but by some mishap she ran aground on the right side, in plain view of the battery, within easy range and powerless for offence. Here she received several shots, one of which, cutting the steam-pipe, stopped the engines, that had been backing vigorously. Nothing further in the way of escape was tried, and the commanding officer was deterred from setting fire to the ship by the impossibility of removing the wounded officer.

The Queen and the De Soto each had but one boat, and in the panic that followed the explosion a party took possession of the Queen's and made off with it to the De Soto, under the pretext of hurrying that vessel up to the assistance of her consort; so the remainder of the ship's company, including her commander, made their escape to the other steamer on cotton bales. The De Soto sent up her yawl, which took off one load, getting away just before the Confederates boarded their prize.

The De Soto now started on a hurried retreat down the river, but running into the bank she lost her rudder. Deprived of the power of directing her motions, she was allowed

to drift with the stream, picking up, from time to time, a fugitive on a bale, and was rejoined by her yawl about ten miles lower down. Shortly after this the parties fell in with the prize of the morning, when the De Soto was burned and the hasty flight continued in the Era. The following morning the Mississippi was reached, and the day after, the 16th, they met the Indianola eight miles below Natchez.

The Queen of the West had thus passed practically unhurt into Confederate hands, the manner of her loss giving another instance of how lack of heed in going into action is apt to be followed by a precipitate withdrawal from it and unnecessary disaster. Colonel Ellet's only reason for not burning the Queen was that he could not remove one of her officers, who had been wounded the day before. If he had transferred him to the De Soto before going under the battery with the Queen, the fighting ship, this difficulty would not have existed. No one seems to have been hurt, by the Union and Confederate reports, and it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Ellet's rashness in exposing his vessel, though he knew the Indianola was to be sent down, was not atoned for by sticking to her until he had destroyed her. The accidents were of a kind most likely to happen, and very simple appliances that might have been all ready would have ensured her burning. It is to be remembered, however, that Colonel Ellet was at this time not twenty years old.

On receiving the news of the disaster, Lieutenant-Commander Brown decided to go down as far as the mouth of the Red River. The same day was met off Ellis's Cliff the Confederate gunboat Webb, which had been lying at Alexandria and had started in hot pursuit of the fugitives from the Queen of the West. Upon making out the Indianola, which she had not expected, the Webb at once turned, and having greater speed easily escaped; the Indianola following

down to the mouth of the Red River. Here she anchored and remained three days, while the *Era*, on the 18th, returned to the neck below Vicksburg.

Brown now learned that the *Queen of the West* had not been so much injured as her late commander had thought, and that a combined attack would probably be made by her and the *Webb* upon the *Indianola*. Two cottonclad boats were also in preparation by the Confederates for the same purpose. In view of these facts he determined to go up the Mississippi and get cotton, with which better to protect the *Indianola* against boarders by filling up the gangways between the casemates and the wheels. By the time this was done, having as yet met no other vessel of the squadron, though he had hoped for reinforcements when the loss of the *Queen* became known, he had reached the decision to return and communicate with the admiral.

With two barges alongside, the progress of the *Indianola* against the current was slow—too slow, for the swift rams of the enemy were already on her track; but although Brown had kept the bunkers of the *Indianola* full, he confidently expected to meet another boat which would need the coal, and was unwilling to sink it. The smoke of the pursuers had been seen throughout the day, and at 9.30 P.M. of the 24th four steamers were made out. These were the rams *Queen* and *Webb*, the former in charge of Captain McCloskey, the latter of Captain Pierce; Major J. L. Brent, of General Taylor's staff, having command of this part of the expedition, which was fitted out in Alexandria and accompanied by a tender called the *Grand Era*. These had been joined before leaving the Red River by the cottonclad steamer *Batey* from Port Hudson, carrying 250 riflemen under Lieutenant-Colonel Brand, whose rank entitled him to command the whole.

The enemy used the advantage of their greatly superior speed to choose the night for attacking, that the *Indianola* might not fire with the certainty of clear sight. They first saw her near Palmyra Island, a little above New Carthage, and were themselves made out at the same instant. The *Indianola* at once went to quarters and cleared for action, continuing up stream till her preparations were made; then she turned and stood down. The channel above Palmyra Island at that time hugged the eastern shore, crossing to the western just above the island, and the *Indianola* seems to have been in this place when the enemy coming up describes her as "with her head quartering across and down river," presenting the port bow to their approach. The order of advance was with the *Queen* leading, the *Webb* five hundred yards astern, and the two other boats lashed together some distance in the rear. The *Queen* dashed up, firing her light pieces to no purpose when one hundred and fifty yards off, and endeavored to ram the *Indianola* abaft the port wheel; but the latter, backing, received the blow on the barge, through which the enemy's sharp bow passed but without injuring her opponent. The barge went adrift and sunk. The *Webb* followed, and, the *Indianola* standing for her at full speed, the two came together bows on with a crash that knocked down most of their crews. The *Webb's* bow was cut in for a distance of eight feet, extending from two feet above the water-line to the keelson, but as she was filled in solid for more than eight feet she did not sink. The *Indianola* received no damage.

A third blow was delivered on the starboard side by the *Webb*, in what manner does not appear precisely, with the effect of crushing the other barge, leaving it hanging by the lashings, which were then cut adrift. The *Webb* passed up following the *Queen*. The latter, having gained sufficient

distance, turned and charged down, but as the *Indianola* was turning up at the same moment the blow on the starboard bow glanced, the vessels rasping by each other; and as the *Queen* cleared the stern of her enemy, the latter planted two IX-inch shot successfully, killing 2 and wounding 4 of her crew and disabling two guns. During all this time the *Indianola* kept firing her guns whenever they could be made to bear, but, as the enemy had calculated, the darkness of the night prevented them from doing as much execution as they otherwise would. The rams also kept up a constant firing with their musketry and light guns. In the uncertain light it was very difficult to watch the two assailants through the peep-holes in the pilot-house of the gunboat, but yet a fifth blow was received forward of the wheels without injury. At last, however, the *Queen* was able to strike just abaft the starboard wheel-house, crushing the wheel, disabling the starboard rudder, and starting a number of leaks abaft the shaft. The starboard engine was thus useless and the *Indianola* helpless to avoid the onset of the *Webb*, which struck her fair in the stern, starting the timbers and starboard rudder-box so that the water poured in in large volumes. This settled the fight, and Brent reported to Colonel Brand that the enemy was disabled. The *Batey* then dashed up to board, but the *Indianola*, after delaying a few moments in mid river, till the water had risen nearly to the grate-bars, to assure her sinking, had run her bows into the west bank, and surrendered as soon as the cottonclads came alongside. The enemy, finding that she must sink and not willing that this should happen on the side where the Union army was, made fast at once two steamers and towed her down and over to the east bank, where she sank in ten feet of water near the plantation of the President of the Confederacy. The loss of the In-

dianola was 1 killed, 1 wounded, and 7 missing. The latter probably got ashore on the west bank, for 3 were captured there the following day and more than one got through to Porter's squadron. The loss of the enemy was officially stated at 3 killed and 5 wounded, but a Confederate officer admitted to the commander of the Indianola that it was much greater.

This ended Porter's sanguine hopes of blockading the river by detached vessels while he kept the body of the fleet above. After being harassed and stirred up during three weeks, the Confederates again found themselves masters of the line from Vicksburg to Port Hudson for a few days longer, and with two Union vessels in their hands, one of which was serviceable, while the other, badly damaged and partly sunk, it is true, had still her armament intact and was possibly not beyond repair. Their possession of the Indianola, however, was of short duration. The second day after the capture, a detail of 100 men with a lieutenant was sent to try and save her, by the army officer commanding near by, while the Queen of the West went up to Warrenton, to act as picket for the fleet, and with despatches to General Stevenson, commanding at Vicksburg, asking for pumps and other help. In a short time, the Queen returned in great haste and reported a gunboat approaching. All the vessels that had behaved so gallantly two nights before got under way in a panic and went hurriedly down, leaving the working party and the lieutenant. The gunboat did not come nearer than two miles and a half, and seemed very apprehensive of an attack herself, sticking close to the bank. The lieutenant stood his ground for one day; but then finding himself deserted by his own fleet, which by this time was up Red River, and the gunboat still lying, terrible though inert, just above him, he, the next evening, laid the

two XI-inch guns muzzle to muzzle, and so fired them. One was burst, the other apparently only kicked over. He next threw overboard two field pieces he had with him, made an attempt to blow up the vessel, which resulted in destroying the forward casemate and burning most of the wreck above water, and then fled with his command.

The gunboat which caused all this consternation with such happy results to the Union fleet was a mock monitor, built upon the hull of an old coal barge, with pork barrels piled to resemble smoke-stacks, through which poured volumes of smoke from mud furnaces. She went down swiftly with the current, passing the Vicksburg batteries just before daylight, and drawing from them a furious cannonade. As day broke she drifted into the lower end of the canal, and was again sent down stream by the amused Union soldiers, who as little as the admiral dreamed of the good service the dummy was to do. Such was the end of the *Indianola*, a striking instance of the moral power of the gunboats. The *Queen of the West* was subsequently sent through the Bayou Atchafalaya to Grand Lake, and there destroyed two months later by the gunboats of the Gulf Squadron.

When the news of these reverses reached New Orleans, Admiral Farragut, who had for some time contemplated a movement up the river, felt that the time was come. On the 12th of March he was at Baton Rouge, where he inspected the ships of the squadron the next day; and then moved up to near Profit's Island, seven miles below the bend on which Port Hudson is situated. On the 14th, early, the vessels again weighed and anchored at the head of the island, where the admiral communicated with Commander Caldwell, of the *Essex*, who for some time had occupied this station with a half dozen mortar-schooners.

As one ascends the river to Port Hudson, the course pur-

sued is nearly due north; then it takes a sharp turn to the west-southwest for a distance of one or two miles. The little town of Port Hudson is on the east bank just below the bend. The bluffs on which the batteries were placed begin at the bend, extending for a mile and a half down the river, and are from eighty to one hundred feet high. From the opposite bank, at and just below the point, a dangerous shoal spot makes out. At the time of the passage of the fleet there were mounted in battery nineteen heavy guns,<sup>1</sup> viz.: two X-inch and two VIII-inch columbiads; two 42-, two 32-, and three 24-pound smooth-bores; and eight rifles, varying from 80- to 50-pounders.

The object of the admiral was simply to pass the batteries with his fleet, so as to blockade the river above. The vessels he had with him were the Hartford (flag-ship), twenty-four guns, Captain James S. Palmer; Monongahela, ten guns, Captain J. P. McKinstry; Mississippi, seventeen guns, Captain Melancton Smith; Richmond, twenty-four guns, Commander James Alden; Genesee, eight guns, Commander William H. Macomb; Albatross, six guns, Lieutenant-Commander John E. Hart; Kineo, six<sup>2</sup> guns, Lieutenant-Commander John Watters.

The larger ships, except the Mississippi, were directed to take a gunboat on the port side, securing her well aft, so as to leave as much of the port battery as possible clear. Each was to keep a little to starboard of her next ahead, so as to be free to use her bow guns as soon as possible with the least danger from premature explosions of projectiles. In accordance with this order, the Hartford took the Alba-

---

<sup>1</sup> Confederate Return of March 27, 1863. A large number of field pieces, reported to be as many as 35, took part in the action of the 15th.

<sup>2</sup> Of these, four were 24-pounder brass howitzers, usually not counted in ships' batteries.

tross, the Monongahela the Kineo, and the Richmond the Genesee; the Richmond being the slowest ship and the Genesee the most powerful gunboat. The ships were prepared as at the passage of the lower forts, and in the Hartford the admiral had placed his pilot in the mizzen-top, where he could see more clearly, and had arranged a speaking-tube thence to the deck. The Essex and Sachem were not to attempt the passage, but with some mortar-boats to engage the lower batteries to cover the movement.

Shortly before 10 P.M. the ships weighed and advanced in the following order: Hartford, Richmond, Monongahela, Mississippi. At eleven, as they drew near the batteries, the lowest of which the Hartford had already passed, the enemy threw up rockets and opened their fire. Prudence, and the fact of the best water being on the starboard hand, led the ships to hug the east shore of the river, passing so close under the Confederate guns that the speech of the gunners and troops could be distinguished. Along the shore, at the foot of the bluffs, powerful reflecting lamps, like those used on locomotives, had been placed, to show the ships to the enemy as they passed; and for the same purpose large fires, already stacked on the opposite point, were lit. The fire of the fleet and from the shore soon raised a smoke which made these precautions useless, while it involved the ships in a danger greater than any from the enemy's guns. Settling down upon the water, in a still damp atmosphere, it soon hid everything from the eyes of the pilots. The flagship, leading, had the advantage of pushing often ahead of her own smoke; but those who followed ran into it and incurred a perplexity which increased from van to rear. At the bend of the river the current caught the Hartford on her port bow, sweeping her round with her head toward the batteries and nearly on shore, her stem touching the ground

slightly; but by her own efforts and the assistance of the Albatross she was backed clear. Then, the Albatross backing and the Hartford going ahead strong with the engines, her head was fairly pointed up the stream, and she passed by without serious injury. Deceived possibly by the report of the howitzers in her top, which were nearly on their own level, the Confederates did not depress their guns sufficiently to hit her as often as they did the ships that followed her. One killed and two wounded is her report; and one marine fell overboard, his cries for help being heard on board the other ships as they passed by, unable to save him.

The Richmond, with the Genesee alongside, following the Hartford, had reached the last battery and was about to make the turn when a plunging shot entering about four feet above the berth-deck, passed through a barricade of clothes-bags and hawsers into the engine-room, upsetting the starboard safety-valve; then glancing a little upward, it displaced the port safety-valve weight and twisted the lever, leaving the valve partly opened. The steam escaped so rapidly as to reduce the pressure at once to nine pounds, while filling the fire-room and berth-deck. Deprived thus of her motive force, it was found that the Genesee was not able to drag both vessels up against the strong current then running. Commander Alden was therefore compelled to turn down stream, and after some narrow escapes from the fire of his own fleet, was soon carried by the gunboat out of range. The two vessels lost 3 killed and 15 wounded; among the latter the first lieutenant of the Richmond, A. Boyd Cummings, mortally.

The Monongahela and Kineo were third in line. While under the fire of the principal batteries, musketry opened upon them from the west bank, which was soon silenced by shrapnel and grape from the Kineo. A few moments later a

chance shot lodged between the stern-post and rudder-post of the gunboat, wedging the rudder and making it completely useless. The density of the smoke, complained of by all the officers of the fleet that night, caused the pilots to miss their way; and the larger ship took the ground on the spit opposite the town. The Kineo, not touching, with the way she had tore clear of her fasts, and, ranging a short distance ahead, grounded also. Both vessels received considerable though not serious damage from the violence of the separation. The Kineo was soon able to back clear and, though disabled, managed to get a hawser from the Monongahela and pull that ship off after she had been twenty-five minutes aground. The latter then went ahead again, while the Kineo, unable to steer properly, drifted down stream out of range. While aground a shot came in, cutting away the bridge under Captain McKinstry's feet, and throwing him to the deck below; the fall incapacitated him from remaining at his station, and Lieutenant-Commander N. W. Thomas took command of the Monongahela. Meanwhile the Mississippi had passed, unseen and unseeing, in the smoke, and had herself grounded a little farther up near the head of the spit. She was observed to be on fire as the Monongahela again drew near the bend, and at the same moment the latter vessel's engines ceased to move, a crank-pin being heated. Thus unmanageable she drifted down within thirty yards of the batteries, and had to anchor below. Her loss was 6 killed and 21 wounded; the Kineo, though repeatedly struck, had no one hurt.

The Mississippi had passed the lower batteries and had reached the bend, going fast, when she struck, heeling at once three streaks to port. The engines were reversed and backed to the full extent of their power, and the port battery run in to bring the ship on an even keel. After working for

thirty-five minutes it was found impossible to get her off. The port battery and pivot gun were then ordered to be thrown overboard, but before that was done Captain Smith decided that the ship would have to be abandoned, as three batteries had her range and were hulling her constantly.

The sick and wounded were brought up, and three small boats, all that were left, were employed in landing the crew. The fire of the starboard battery had been kept up until this time, but now ceased. The ship was then set on fire in the forward store-room; but before the fire had gained sufficient headway, three shot entering there let in water and put it out. She was then fired in four different places aft, and as soon as it was sure that she would be destroyed, the captain and first lieutenant left her, passing down to the Richmond in safety. The Mississippi remained aground till 3 A.M., when she floated off and drifted down the river, passing the other ships without injuring them. At 5.30, being then some distance below, she blew up, thus meeting the same fate that had befallen her sister ship, the Missouri, twenty years before, in the harbor of Gibraltar.

From the circumstances of the case the exact number of killed and wounded of the Mississippi could not be ascertained. Upon mustering the ship's company after the action, 64 were found missing out of a total of 297. Of these 25 were believed to have been killed.

It is sufficiently apparent, from the above accounts of the experiences of each vessel, that the failure of the greater part of the fleet to pass was principally due to other circumstances than the Confederate fire. The darkness of the night, the stillness of the air, which permitted the smoke to settle undisturbed, the intricacy of the navigation, the rapidity of the current, then running at the rate of five knots, the poor speed of the ships, not over eight knots, were known

beforehand, and were greater elements of danger than the simple fire of the enemy. To these is to be added the difficulty of making the turn, with the swift current of the river round the bend tending to throw the ship bodily on to the hostile shore before she could be brought to head in the new direction. The Hartford and her consort alone reached this final trial, and were by it nearly involved in the common disaster.

Nearly, but not quite; and the success of the two vessels, though it placed them in a trying and hazardous position, ensured the attainment of the object for which the risk had been run. The Red River was blockaded, not again to be open to the Confederates during the war; and though nearly four months were still to elapse before the Mississippi would be freely used throughout its length by Union vessels, it slipped finally from the control of the enemy as Farragut with his two ships passed from under the batteries at Port Hudson.

The morning after the action the flag-ship dropped down nearly within range of the enemy, to communicate, if possible, by signal with the fleet below, but they could not be seen from her mast-heads; therefore after firing three guns, as before concerted with General Banks, the admiral went on up the river. The following morning he anchored off the mouth of the Red River, remaining twenty-four hours; and then went on to below Vicksburg to communicate with Porter, arriving there on the 20th. On the way the ships engaged a battery of four rifled pieces at Grand Gulf, losing 2 men killed and 6 wounded, but met with no other opposition. Porter was absent in Deer Creek, one of the bayous emptying into the Yazoo, when Farragut's messenger arrived, but communication was held with General Grant, Captain Walke, the senior naval officer present, and General A. W.

Ellet, commanding the ram flotilla. Farragut, deprived of the greater part of his own fleet, was very desirous of getting reinforcements from above; asking specially for an ironclad and a couple of rams to assist him in maintaining the blockade of Red River and to patrol the Mississippi. In the absence of Porter he was not willing to urge his request upon the subordinate officers present, but General Ellet assumed the responsibility of sending down two rams, without waiting to hear from the admiral, of whose concurrence he expressed himself as feeling assured; an opinion apparently shared by the others present at the consultation. It would seem, however, that Porter did not think the rams actually sent fit to be separated from a machine-shop by enemies' batteries; and his ironclads could not be spared from the work yet to be done above. The rams *Switzerland* and *Lancaster*, the former under command of Colonel Charles R. Ellet, late of the *Queen of the West*, the latter under Lieutenant-Colonel John A. Ellet, were detailed for this duty and started during the night of the 24th, but so late that they did not get by before the sun had risen. The batteries opened upon them between 5.30 and 6 A.M. of the 25th. The *Lancaster*, an old and rotten boat, received a shell in her boilers; and her hull was so shattered by the explosion that she went to pieces and sank, the officers and crew escaping on cotton bales. The *Switzerland* was hulled repeatedly and received two shots in her boilers; but being a stronger boat survived her injuries and drifted down safely to her destination, where a week's labor put her again in fighting condition. The recklessness of the daring family whose name is so associated with the ram fleet had thus caused the loss of two of them, and led Porter to caution Farragut to keep the one now with him always under his own eye.

Soon after the coming of General Grant, while the army was digging canals at two or three different points, with the view of opening new waterways from above to below Vicksburg, Admiral Porter had suggested that by cutting the levee across the old Yazoo Pass, six miles below Helena, access might be had to the Yazoo above Haines's Bluff and Vicksburg turned by that route. Grant ordered the cutting, and Porter sent the light-draught *Forest Rose* to stand by to enter when open.

There are two entrances from the Mississippi to the pass, the upper one direct, the lower one turning to the left and running parallel to the course of the river. Just within their junction the levee, built in 1856, crosses the pass, which is here only seventy-five feet wide between the timber on either side. At the distance of a mile from the great river the pass enters the northern end of Moon Lake, a crescent-shaped sheet of water, probably an old bed of the Mississippi. The lake is seven or eight miles long and from eight hundred to a thousand yards wide, with a uniform depth enough to float the largest steamboats. Two or three plantations were then on the east shore, but the rest was unbroken forest, quiet and isolated, abounding in game as the waters did in fish. The pass issues again half way down the eastern side, through an opening so shut in with trees that it can scarcely be seen a hundred yards away, and pursues a tortuous course of twelve or fourteen miles to the Coldwater River, the upper portion of the Yazoo. In this part of the route, which never exceeds one hundred feet in width and often narrows to seventy-five or less, the forest of cyprus and sycamore trees, mingled with great cottonwoods and thickly twining wild grape-vines, formed a perfect arch overhead, shutting out the rays of the sun; and, though generally high enough to allow the tall smoke-stacks to pass underneath, sometimes

grazed their tops and again swept them down to the deck as the swift current bore the vessels along.

Digging on the levee was begun on the 2d of February, under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel James H. Wilson, of the Engineers. At this time the difference of level between the water inside and out of the levee was eight and a half feet. At seven the next evening, the digging having gone far enough, a mine was exploded and the water rushed in. By eleven the opening was forty yards wide and the water pouring in like a cataract, tearing aways logs, trees, and great masses of earth with the utmost ease. Owing to the vast tract of country to be flooded before the waters could attain their level, it was not possible to enter for four or five days; during that time they were spreading north and south and east, driving the wild animals from their lairs and the reptiles to take refuge in the trees.

Meanwhile news of the project had reached the Confederates, who, though they could have little idea of the magnitude of the force which intended to penetrate where few but flat-boats had gone before, had taken the easy precaution of felling large trees across the stream. On the 10th Colonel Wilson had passed through Moon Lake and into the pass beyond. Then it took three days of constant labor to get through five miles of felled timber and drifted wood. Some of the trees reached quite across the stream, and were four feet in diameter. To add to the difficulties of the pioneers, the country all around was overflowed, except a mere strip a few inches out of water on the very bank. Still they persevered, and the way was opened through to the Coldwater.

Porter detailed for this expedition the ironclads Chilli-cothe, Lieutenant-Commander James P. Foster, and De Kalb, Lieutenant-Commander John G. Walker; light-draught steamers Rattler, Marmora, Signal, Romeo, Petrel, and For-

est Rose; rams Lioness and Fulton; the whole being under Lieutenant-Commander Watson Smith, of the Rattler. The expedition went through Yazoo Pass, meeting many obstructions and difficulties, despite the work of Wilson's corps.

Three and a half days were consumed in making the twelve miles from the lake to the Coldwater; for, though the current ran swiftly—five or six miles an hour—the low, overhanging trees threatened the chimneys, and big projecting limbs would come sweeping and crashing along the light upper works, making a wreck of anything they met. The great stern-wheels were constantly backing, and a small boat lay on either quarter in readiness to run a line to the trees to check the way of the vessels and to ease them round the sharp bends, which were so frequent it was impossible to see ahead or astern one hundred yards in any part of the route. Huge rafts of driftwood still remained to be dislodged.

On the 28th of February the vessels entered the Coldwater. Here the stream was wider and the current slacker, the trees rarely meeting overhead; but the channel was nearly as crooked, and accidents almost as frequent. Six days were consumed in advancing thirty miles through an almost unbroken wilderness. The stream widened and the country became more promising in the lower part of the Coldwater and the upper part of the Tallahatchie, into which the vessels steamed on the evening of the 6th in a sorely damaged condition. The Petrel had lost her wheel and was wholly disabled; both smoke-stacks of the Romeo were gone; the Chillicothe had run upon the stump of a tree and started a plank in her bottom, which was now kept in place by being shored down from the beams of the deck above; and though none, except the Petrel, were unfit for fighting, all had suffered greatly in hull and upper works.

The transports, which had joined with 6,000 troops, were yet more roughly handled.

The lower part of the Tallahatchie again became narrow and crooked, and for forty or fifty miles no break appeared in a wild and forbidding wilderness until they began to draw near Fort Pemberton, when the stream grew to a fair size. Tokens of the enemy now were seen in burning piles of cotton, and a Confederate steamer, which was picking up what she could, was so closely pressed as to be burned by her crew. The position of the Confederates had been chosen but a few days before, and the works were only partially up. The Tallahatchie here sweeps sharply to the east, and then returns again, forming a horseshoe bend thirteen miles long, the two parts of the stream approaching each other so closely that the neck of the enclosed peninsula is less than a quarter of a mile wide. It is in this bend that the Yallahusha enters, the river then taking the name of Yazoo; so that the works erected across the neck were said to be between the Tallahatchie and Yazoo, though the stream is one. The fort, which was called Pemberton, was built of cotton and earth; in front of it was a deep slough, and on its right flank the river was barricaded by a raft and the hull of the ocean steamer *Star of the West*, which, after drawing the first shots fired in the war, when the batteries in Charleston stopped her from reinforcing Fort Sumter in January, 1861, had passed by some chance to New Orleans, where she was seized by the Government of Louisiana when that State seceded. When Farragut took New Orleans, she, with many river steamers, was taken to the Yazoo, and now met her end sunk in the swollen waters of a Southern creek. The cannon mounted in the works were one six-and-a-half-inch rifled gun, three 20-pounder Parrott rifles, and some field pieces, among which was a Whitworth rifle. Lieutenant F.

E. Shepperd, of the Confederate Navy, who had been busy felling trees in the upper river, was put in charge of these pieces because none of the army officers present, except General Loring, were familiar with the use of great guns. The heavy rifle, the main reliance of the fort, was only got into position by blocking it up from the ground, no other appliances being at hand; and as there was not enough blocking, the attempt had nearly failed. It was in place barely in time to meet the gunboats.

The Chillicothe, at 10 A.M. of the 11th of March, steamed round the bend above and engaged the battery. She was twice struck on the turret, being materially injured, and withdrew to fortify with cotton bales. At 4.25 P.M. she again went into action, at a distance of eight hundred yards, with the De Kalb, but after firing four times, a shell from the Confederate battery struck in the muzzle of the port XI-inch just as the loaders had entered a shell and were stripping the patch from the fuze; both projectiles exploded, killing 2 and wounding 11 of the gun's crew, besides injuring the gun. The Chillicothe was then withdrawn, after receiving another shot, which killed one of her ship's company, and showing her unfitness for action through scamped work put upon her. The stream was so narrow that two vessels could with difficulty act, and therefore a 30-pound rifled gun was landed from the Rattler on the 13th and an VIII-inch from the De Kalb on the 15th. The action was renewed again on the 13th, by both ironclads at 10.45 A.M., at a distance of eight hundred yards, and was severe until 2 P.M., when the Chillicothe was forced to retire, her ammunition running short. The De Kalb remained in position until dark, firing every fifteen minutes, but receiving no reply from the enemy. In this day's fight the fort was much damaged, the earth covering and bales being knocked away

and the cotton set on fire in many places. None of the guns were dismounted, but the large rifle was struck on the side of the muzzle. The greater part of the powder was in a powder-boat a mile away in the Yazoo, but small supplies for the immediate service of the battery were kept in temporary receptacles in the fort. One of these was struck by a shot and the cotton bale covering it knocked off; before it could be replaced a bursting shell exploded the powder, killing and wounding a number of the garrison.

On the 16th another attack was made by the two boats, but the Chillicothe was disabled in a few minutes and both were withdrawn. The difficulty of handling when fighting down stream prevented the vessels from getting that nearness to the enemy which is so essential in an attack by ships upon fortifications. Besides the damage sustained by the Chillicothe, the De Kalb was much cut up, losing ten gun-deck beams and having the wheel-house and steerage badly knocked to pieces, but was not rendered unfit for service as the Chillicothe was. The latter lost 4 killed and 16 wounded; the De Kalb 3 killed and 3 wounded. On the 17th, the troops being unable to land because the country was overflowed and the ships unable to silence the fort, the expedition fell back. On the 22d General Quimby and his command was met coming down, and at his desire the whole expedition returned to Fort Pemberton; but after remaining twelve days longer without effect the attempt was finally abandoned.

Though thus inconclusive, the attempt by Yazoo Pass has an interest of its own from the unique character of the difficulties encountered by the ships. Although forewarned, the enemy were taken unawares, and there is reason to believe, as we have seen, that had a little more feverish energy been displayed the vessels might have got possession of Fort

Pemberton before its guns were mounted. As it was, by the Confederate reports, "notwithstanding every exertion the enemy found us but poorly prepared to receive him." There was no other favorable position for defensive works down to Yazoo City.

While the result of the Yazoo Pass expedition was uncertain and the vessels still before Fort Pemberton, an enterprise of similar character was undertaken by Admiral Porter in person, having for its object to reach the Yazoo below Yazoo City but far above the works at Haines's Bluff. The proposed route was from the Yazoo up Steele's Bayou, through Black Bayou to Deer Creek, and thence by Rolling Fork, a crooked stream of about four miles, to the Big Sunflower, whence the way was open and easy to the Yazoo River. Fort Pemberton would then be taken between two divisions of the fleet, and must fall; while the numerous steamers scattered through the streams of the Yazoo country would be at the mercy of the gunboats.

After a short preliminary reconnoissance as far as Black Bayou, which indicated that the enterprise was feasible, though arduous, and having received encouraging accounts of the remainder of the route, the admiral started on the 16th of March with five ironclads: the Louisville, Lieutenant-Commander E. K. Owen; Cincinnati, Lieutenant George M. Bache; Carondelet, Lieutenant J. M. Murphy; Mound City, Lieutenant Byron Wilson; Pittsburg, Lieutenant W. R. Hoel; four mortars, and four tugs. All went well till Black Bayou was reached. This is about four miles long, narrow, and very crooked, and was then filled with trees. Here the crews had to go to work, dragging the trees up by the roots, or pushing them over with the ironclads, and cutting away the heavy overhanging branches. Having done this the ironclads were able to force their way

through the bushes and trees which lined the banks and clung closely to the bows and sides of the vessels, but the way remained impracticable for transports and wooden boats. In twenty-four hours the ironclads had gotten through these four miles to Hill's plantation, at the junction of Black Bayou and Deer Creek.

General W. T. Sherman had been directed to support the movement with one division of his corps and a body of pioneers. The number of steamers fit for the bayou navigation being limited, the division was landed on the east bank of the Mississippi and crossed by land to Steele's Bayou, which there approaches to within a mile of the river. The pioneers followed the admiral up Black Bayou, and when the gunboats entered Deer Creek remained to further clear the bayou. On the 20th the work had progressed so that two transports entered as far as a mile and a half below Hill's, where was the first piece of dry land between that point and the mouth of the Yazoo, the country generally being under water.

Meanwhile the admiral had pushed on up Deer Creek, where the water was deep but the channel narrow, crooked, and filled with young willows, which bound the boats and made progress very difficult. The bends were sharp, and much trouble was experienced in heaving the vessels around them, while the banks were lined with heavy trees and overhanging branches that would tear down the chimneys and demolish boats and light woodwork. Still they worked on, making from half a mile to a mile an hour. The enemy, notwithstanding what had been done at Yazoo Pass, were taken by surprise, not having believed that even gunboats would try to penetrate by those marshy, willowy ditches. On the night of the 17th, Colonel Ferguson, commanding the district, first received word at his headquarters on Deer Creek, forty miles above Rolling Fork, that the gunboats had entered the creek.

He at once hurried a battalion of sharpshooters and some artillery on board a steamer and hastened down to Rolling Fork, being so lucky as to get there before the vessels, on the afternoon of the 19th. A small detached body of cavalry were ahead of him, and, acting on their own account, had begun to cut down trees across the stream. Anticipating this, the admiral had sent Lieutenant Murphy ahead in a tug and he had come up in time to stop the felling of the first; but the horsemen galloped across country faster than the tug could force her way through the channel and at last got down a large tree, which arrested the tug till the rest of the force came up. Then the slaves, with muskets to their breasts, were compelled to ply their axes to stop the advance of those to whom they looked for freedom.

The situation was critical, and the crews turned to with a will, working night and day to clear away these obstacles, without sleep and snatching their food. They were now five or six miles from Rolling Fork, and hearing that the enemy were landing, Lieutenant Murphy was sent forward with 300 men and two howitzers to hold the stream until the gunboats could cover it with their guns; which he did, occupying an Indian mound sixty feet high. After working all night and the next day, the 19th, the squadron had hewed its way by sundown to within eight hundred yards of Rolling Fork. They rested that night, and the morning of the 20th again started to work through the willows, but the lithe trees resisted all their efforts to push through, and had either to be pulled up one by one or cut off under water both tedious processes. Meanwhile Ferguson, having collected 800 men and six pieces of artillery, attacked Murphy's little body of men, who had to be recalled. At three in the afternoon Featherstone's brigade, with a section of artillery, arrived from Vicksburg to reinforce the enemy, and toward

sundown opened a sharp fire upon the gunboats from a distance. Though this was easily silenced by the vessels, the difficulty of throwing out working parties in the presence of the enemy's force was apparent. Word was at once sent to Sherman of the state of things, and reached him at 3 A.M. of the 21st; but before that time the admiral, learning that some of the enemy had reached his rear and had begun felling trees behind him to prevent his retreat, had decided to withdraw. Advance through Rolling Fork was no longer possible, it having been so obstructed that two or three days' labor would have been needed to clear it, even if unopposed.

Having but ten or twelve feet to spare on either side it was impossible to turn the boats, so the rudders were unshipped and they began that night to back down, rebounding from tree to tree on either bank as they struck them. The country from Rolling Fork to Black Bayou was mostly a chain of plantations, in which the trees at few points came down to the bank of the stream thickly enough to afford cover for troops in numbers; but yet there was shelter for sharpshooters at such a distance as enabled them to pick off any of the crews that exposed themselves. The guns were three feet below the levee, depriving them of much of their power to annoy the assailants. At 4 P.M. of the 21st, however, Colonel Giles A. Smith, of Sherman's command, arrived with 800 men; Sherman, as soon as he heard of the admiral's dilemma, having sent every man he had by the east bank of Deer Creek, remaining himself alone at Hill's until nightfall. Three steamboat loads of troops then arrived below and were conducted by him, with lighted candles, through two and a half miles of dense cane-brake to the plantation.

When Smith reached the vessels, they had been stopped

for an hour or two by a coal barge sunk across the creek, and were kept from sending out working parties by the enemy's sharpshooters. Smith now took charge of the banks, being reinforced with 150 men and two howitzers from the fleet, and before midnight the barge was blown up. The retreat continued next day, the boats backing, and the Louisville, which was the farthest down, clearing away the obstructions while the troops kept the enemy from molesting the workers. Owing to the number of trees to be removed, only six miles had been gained by 3 P.M., at which hour a large body of the enemy were seen passing by, along the edge of the woods, and taking position about a mile ahead of the advance of the troops. The gunboats opened upon them, and at this time General Sherman himself opportunely came up with his reinforcements and drove the Confederates well back to the north and rear of the squadron, thus finally freeing it from a very anxious and critical dilemma. On the 24th Hill's plantation was reached, and the vessels returned without further adventure to the mouth of the Yazoo, where Porter communicated with Farragut, who still remained near the lower end of the canal.

On the 29th and 30th it blew a gale of wind from the north, during which the steamer Vicksburg, that had been rammed two months before by the Queen of the West, broke adrift from her moorings at the city, and went ashore on the bank opposite the Hartford. Upon examination it was found that her machinery had been removed, and before any further action had been taken by Farragut, the Confederates sent down and burned her. Meanwhile coal from the army and provisions from the upper squadrons were floated down in bags, and on the 31st, having waited for the completion of the repairs on the Switzerland, the admiral

got under way, with the Albatross and the ram in company, and went down the river. At Grand Gulf the batteries again opened on the ships, striking the Switzerland twice and the Hartford once; the latter losing one man killed. On the evening of April 1st the little squadron reached Red River, having destroyed on its passage down a large number of skiffs and flat-boats, available for the transport of stores across the Mississippi from the western country, on which Vicksburg now mainly depended for supplies.

In their isolated condition, and occupying a position so obnoxious to the enemy, there was reason to expect a repetition on a larger scale of the attack made upon the Indianola. The Hartford was specially prepared for such a meeting. The lower yards were lowered down to the rail and the stream-chain, lashed to the bowsprit end, was carried aft, clove-hitched to the yard-arms and brought in again at the warping chocks. This barrier, while it remained intact, would keep an assailant fifteen to twenty feet from the ship; then, if it were passed, as a further protection against boarders, hawsers were stretched along fore and aft by the lower rigging, thirty feet above the deck, carrying a heavy boarding netting which extended from that height to the ship's rail. The hammock-cloths were kept triced up, and the poop-deck and topgallant-forecastle, which were flush with the rail of the ship, were barricaded with hammocks and sails. For protection against rams large cypress logs were slung around the vessel, a foot above the water line. During the time they were thus alone the guns' crews always slept by the guns and the ship was kept in a constant state of preparation for instant action.

On the 6th Farragut went down again to Port Hudson, anxious for news about his other ships, from which he had now been for three weeks separated, and desiring to commu-

nicate with General Banks. The ordinary methods of signalling having failed to attain these objects, the admiral's secretary, Mr. Gabaudan, volunteered to pass Port Hudson in a skiff by night. The boat was covered with twigs, arranged to resemble one of the floating trees not uncommon in the Mississippi.

At a quarter past eight on the evening of the 7th Mr. Gabaudan stepped into his ark, and lying down in the bottom of it, with a paddle and revolver by his side, was committed to the current. This bore him safely by; but once grazing the shore, the sentinels were heard commenting on the size of the log, and a boat put out to make an examination. Fortunately the men were contented with a glance, which satisfied them that the object was what it seemed; and Gabaudan's safe arrival was signalled from the vessels below at 10 P.M.

The next morning the admiral returned to Red River and caught two steamers outside, one of which managed to get in again; but the other was captured, and with her a Confederate commissary, who was making arrangements for crossing a large number of cattle from the West at various points. Red River was effectually closed, but the smallness of his force made it necessary to keep them all together, in case of attack, and though intercourse across the Mississippi was seriously impaired, it was not wholly checked. On the 15th the admiral again returned to the bend above Port Hudson, and communicated by signal with the Richmond, which had come up in accordance with instructions transmitted through Mr. Gabaudan. This officer at the same time returned to the ship, under protection of an escort, overland, there being no regular Confederate force on the right bank.

Meanwhile General Grant had been maturing his plans

for the movement by which Vicksburg was eventually reduced. The bayou expeditions had failed, and with them every hope of turning the enemy's right flank. The idea had been entertained of opening a water route by cutting a channel from the west bank of the Mississippi, seventy-five miles above Vicksburg, to Lake Providence, from which there was communication by bayous to the Tensas, Wachita, and Red Rivers, and so to the Mississippi below Vicksburg. Yet another water-way by bayous was contemplated from Milliken's Bend, twenty miles above, through the Tensas, to New Carthage, thirty miles below, Vicksburg. Work was done upon both these routes by the army; but the rapid falling of the river toward the middle of April at once made them less desirable and the roads on the west bank passable. Three army corps had already moved, one after the other, beginning on the 29th of March, toward New Carthage on the west bank; but though not over twenty miles by land in a straight line, the condition of the country from broken levees and bad roads made necessary a circuit of thirty-five miles to reach this point. As soon as the movement was definitely decided upon, Admiral Porter made his preparations for running the batteries of Vicksburg with the greater portion of his fleet. To assure a supply of fuel below, the vessels detailed for the duty took each a coal barge on the starboard side, leaving the port guns, which would bear upon the batteries, clear for firing. There being no intention to engage the enemy except for the purpose of covering the passage, every precaution was taken to avoid being seen or heard. All lights were extinguished, ports carefully covered, and the fires well lighted before starting, so as to show, if possible, no smoke; while to lessen the noise, the steam, as with the Carondelet at Island No. 10, was to exhaust into the wheel, and the vessels were to proceed at low

speed. To avoid collisions, fifty yards were prescribed as the interval to be observed, and each boat was to keep a little to one side of its next ahead, so that, in case of the latter stopping, the follower would be able to pass without change of course. The sterns of the vessels—their weakest part—were to be specially protected against raking shots, which was done by piling wet bales of hay and slinging heavy logs near the water line.

At a quarter past nine of the night of April 16th, the fleet destined for this service got under way from the mouth of the Yazoo River, the flag-ship Benton, sixteen guns,<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Commander James A. Greer, leading, and the other vessels in the following order: Lafayette, eight guns, Captain Henry Walke; Louisville, twelve guns, Lieutenant-Commander Elias K. Owen; Mound City, fourteen guns, Lieutenant Byron Wilson; Pittsburg, thirteen guns, Lieutenant W. R. Hoel; Carondelet, eleven guns, Lieutenant J. McLeod Murphy; Tuscumbia, five guns, Lieutenant-Commander James W. Shirk. The Lafayette carried with her, lashed to the other side of her coal barge, the ram General Price, Lieutenant S. E. Woodworth, which had continued in the service after being taken from the Confederates at Memphis. After the Carondelet, between her and the Tuscumbia, came three army transports, the Silver Wave, Henry Clay, and Forest Queen, unprotected except by bales of hay and cotton round the boilers. They carried stores, but no troops.

A month later, and probably at this time also, the river batteries before which the fleet was to pass contained thirty-one pieces of heavy artillery and thirteen of light.<sup>2</sup> Among

---

<sup>1</sup> For particulars of batteries of Mississippi Squadron of 1862 and 1863, see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Colonel Higgins, C. S. A., commanding the river batteries.

them were eight X-inch, one IX-inch, and one VIII-inch columbiad, smooth-bore guns; and eleven rifled guns of a calibre of 6.5 inches and upward.

At 11.10 P.M., the fleet then moving at a speed scarcely exceeding the drift of the current, a musketry fire began from the upper batteries of the enemy. At 11.16 the great guns began, slowly at first, but soon more rapidly. A few moments later a large fire was lit on the point, bringing the vessels, as they passed before it, into bold relief, and serving to confuse, to some extent, the pilots of the fleet. Each ship as she brought her guns to bear on rounding the point, opened her fire, first from the bow and then from the port battery. The engagement thus soon became general and animated. The confusion of the scene was increased by the eddying currents of the river, which, catching the slowly moving steamers, now on the bow, now on the quarter, swung them round with their broadside to the stream, or even threw the bow up river again. Unable to see through the smoke and perplexed by the light of the fire, the majority of the vessels, thus cut around, made a full turn in the stream under the guns of the enemy, and one, at least, went round twice. The flag-ship Benton, though heavily struck, passed through without other adventure than this involuntary wheel. The Lafayette, in the smoke, found her nose nearly on shore on the enemy's side, and her coal barge received a shell in the bow which reduced it to a sinking condition. The Louisville, next astern, coming up, fouled the Lafayette's consort, the General Price; which, being already badly cut up by shot and shell, cast off her fasts and made the rest of the journey alone. The Lafayette then let go her barge and went down without further adventure. The Louisville also lost her barge, apparently, at this time, but picked it up again while still under fire. The Mound City following

# LIBRARY

THE MISSISSIPPI OPENED. 157  
THE GENERAL SERVICE SCHOOLS  
FORT LANE, MISSISSIPPI

came down upon the three vessels thus sported with by the current in the difficulties of the night, and to avoid a like disaster passed them by. The Pittsburg came next in her appointed station; like the Mound City, she escaped the pranks of the eddy, and both vessels, steaming leisurely on, used their guns with good effect; receiving, while passing the burning pile ashore, several shot from the enemy. The Pittsburg was struck on the quarter, where the logs alone prevented the shot from entering the magazine. The Carondelet met with no other mishap than making an involuntary circle in the river. The Tuscumbia remained in rear of the transports, which had a hard time. Either swung by the eddy, or daunted by the tremendous fire which they were certainly ill-fitted to resist, two of them at one time pointed up stream. The Tuscumbia stopped, prepared to compel their passage down; but force was not needed. The Henry Clay caught fire, was burnt and sank; the other resumed her course. When rounding the point, the Tuscumbia touched, and as she backed off fouled the Forest Queen, causing great hurrahs among the enemy. The vessels soon got apart, but the transport had a shot through her steam-pipe; so the Tuscumbia stuck to her, the two drifting down together until out of range, when the gunboat towed the other ashore. The Tuscumbia had a shot in the bows under water, starting seven planks and causing her to leak badly.

Though repeatedly hulled, the armed vessels received no injury unfitting them for instant service, and of their crews lost only 13 wounded. By three o'clock in the morning they were all anchored twelve miles above New Carthage, ready to co-operate with the movements of the army.

Encouraged by the comparative success of the transports on the 16th, Grant directed six more to run the batteries, which was done on the night of the 22d. One got a shot

under water, and sank after getting by; the others were more or less damaged, but were repaired by the orders of Admiral Porter. Still the number was so limited, in proportion to the amount of transportation required, that the general decided to move the troops by land to Hard Times Landing, twenty-five miles below New Carthage by the course of the river. The ships of war and transports followed, the latter carrying as many men as they could.

Five miles below Hard Times, on the opposite shore, is Grand Gulf, where a battery had fired upon Farragut, both on his passage to Vicksburg and return from there, after the fight at Port Hudson. The Confederates had begun to strengthen the works immediately after that time to prevent him from going by with impunity; but as he considered his task limited to the blockade of the Red River and the Mississippi below, to which alone his force was adequate, he had not again come within their range. Immediately above Grand Gulf is the mouth of the Big Black River, a considerable stream, by which supplies from the Red River country were transported to the interior of the Confederacy on the east of the Mississippi.

Eight hundred yards below the mouth of the Big Black is the Point of Rocks, rising about seventy-five feet above the river at its then height. On this was the upper battery, mounting, at the time of attack, two VII-inch rifles, one VIII-inch smooth-bore, and a 30-pound rifled gun on wheels. A line of rifle-pits and a covered way led from there to the lower fort, three-quarters of a mile farther down, in which were mounted one 100-pound rifle, one VIII-inch smooth-bore, and two 32-pounders. There were in addition five light rifled guns, 10- and 20-pounders, in different parts of the works. The Point of Rocks battery was close over the river, but the bluffs below receded so as to leave a narrow strip of



Battle at Grand Gulf.

land, three to four hundred yards wide, along the water and in front of the lower fort. All the fortifications were earth-works.

The intention was to silence the works by the fleet, after which the army was to cross in transports, under cover of the gunboats, and carry the place by storm. The orders prescribing the manner of attack were issued by the admiral on the 27th. On the 29th, at 7 A.M., the fleet got under way, the Pittsburg leading; her commander, Lieutenant Hoel, a volunteer officer, being himself a pilot for the Mississippi, obtained the honor of leading through his local knowledge. The Louisville, Carondelet, and Mound City followed in the order named, firing upon the upper fort so long as their guns bore, but passing by it to attack the lower work, which was allotted to them. The Pittsburg rounded to as she reached her station, keeping up her fire all the time, and took position close into the bank with her head up stream. The Louisville, following the Pittsburg's motions, passed her, rounded to and took her station immediately astern. The Carondelet and Mound City successively performed the same manoeuvre. All four then went into close action with the lower fort, at the same time directing any of their guns that would bear upon other points of the works. The remaining vessels, Lafayette, Tuscumbia, and flag-ship Benton, followed the first four, but rounded to above the town to engage the upper fort; the Lafayette taking position at first in an eddy of the river, and using her two stern guns, 100-pound rifles. The Benton and Tuscumbia fought their bow and starboard guns; all the vessels keeping under way during the engagement, and being at times baffled by the eddies in the stream. At eleven o'clock, the admiral signalled the Lafayette to change her position to the lower battery, which she did. About

eleven, a shot came into the Benton's pilot-house, wounding the pilot and shattering the wheel. The vessel was for a moment unmanageable, got into an eddy, and was carried down three-quarters of a mile before she could again be brought under control; but her place was promptly supplied by the Pittsburg, which had just moved up with that division of the fleet, the lower fort being silenced. The whole squadron now concentrated its fire upon the Point of Rocks battery, keeping under way, and from the difficulties of the stream and the eddying current, at varying ranges. The Lafayette took again her position in the eddy to the north of the battery. Half an hour after noon, the Tuscumbia's port engine was disabled, and being unable to stem the stream with her screws, she was compelled to drop down below Grand Gulf. The action was continued vigorously until 1 P.M., when the enemy's fire, which had not been silenced in the upper fort, slackened materially. The admiral then passed up the river to consult with Grant, who had seen the fight from the deck of a tug and realized, as did Porter, that the works had proved themselves too high and too strong to be taken from the water side. He therefore decided to land the troops, who were already on board the transports waiting to cross, and march down to the point immediately below Grand Gulf, while Porter signalled his ships to withdraw, which they did, after an action lasting four hours and a quarter, tying up again to the landing at Hard Times. The limitation to the power of the vessels was very clearly shown here, as at Fort Donelson; the advantage given by commanding height could not be overcome by them. On a level, as at Fort Henry, or with slight advantage of command against them, as at Arkansas Post, the chances were that they would at close quarters win by disabling or silencing the guns; but when it came to a

question of elevation the guns on shore were too much sheltered. Even so, it may be looked upon as an unusual misfortune that after tearing the works to pieces as they did, no gun of the Confederates was seriously injured. On the other hand, though the gunboats were roughly handled, it could be claimed for them, too, that they were not silenced, and that, like the earthworks, they were not, with one exception, seriously injured. The loss of the fleet was: the Benton, 7 killed and 19 wounded; Tuscumbia, 5 killed and 24 wounded; Pittsburg, 6 killed and 13 wounded. The Lafayette had one man wounded, while the remaining vessels lost none.

In the afternoon the Confederates were observed to be repairing their works, so the Lafayette was ordered down to stop them. She soon drove off the working parties, and then kept up a steady fire at five-minute intervals against the upper battery until 8 P.M., getting no reply from a work which had responded so vigorously in the morning.

That evening the fleet got under way at 8 P.M., the Benton leading, followed by the other gunboats and the transports, the Lafayette joining as they reached her station. The armed vessels again engaged the batteries and the transports slipped safely by under cover of this attack, receiving no injury; in fact, being struck not more than two or three times. As soon as they had passed, the gunboats followed, and tied up again on the Louisiana shore, four miles below Grand Gulf. One life only was lost in the night action, on board the Mound City.

At daylight the following morning the work of carrying the army across the Mississippi to Bruinsburg began, the gunboats as well as the transports aiding in the operation.

The same day, April 30th, a feigned attack was made at Haines's Bluff by the vessels of the squadron remaining above

Vicksburg, under Lieutenant-Commander K. R. Breese, in conjunction with the Fifteenth Army Corps, under General W. T. Sherman. The object of General Grant in ordering this demonstration was to hinder the Confederates at Vicksburg from sending heavy reinforcements to Grand Gulf to oppose the troops on their first landing. The expedition was most successful in attaining this end, but the vessels were very roughly handled, having been much exposed with the wish to make the attack appear as real as possible. The Choctaw, Lieutenant-Commander F. M. Ramsay, was struck as often as forty-six times. Despite the heavy fire of the enemy, no serious casualties occurred on board the fleet in an action which lasted three hours, from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M. The demonstration was continued during the following day, but at 8 P.M. General Sherman withdrew his troops to the other side of the Mississippi, taking up his march to join the main body of the army; and the vessels returned to their anchorage off the mouth of the Yazoo.

On the morning of the 3d Porter advanced upon Grand Gulf with his fleet below, intending to attack if the enemy were still there; but the place was found to be evacuated, as had been expected, the march of the army inland having rendered it untenable. The earthworks were torn to pieces by the fire of the fleet, and Colonel Wade, the commandant, had been killed; but the guns were still in position, except two 32-pounders in the lower battery, which were dismounted and broken. A large quantity of ammunition was also obtained, showing that lack of it was not the cause of the fire slackening on the 29th of April. The same day General Grant arrived, and made the necessary arrangements for transferring his base of supplies to Grand Gulf instead of Bruinsburg.

On the day that Porter ran by the batteries of Vicksburg,

April 16th, Farragut, having received his secretary and the despatches brought by him, went back from Port Hudson to the mouth of the Red River. During the next fortnight he kept up the blockade of the Mississippi between those two points, twice catching stores crossing in flat-boats, besides destroying a number of boats along the river and a large quantity of commissary stores at Bayou Sara. Besides cutting off Port Hudson from the west bank of the Mississippi, his presence in this position prevented reinforcements from that place being sent by the Red River, as they otherwise might have been, to the Confederate General Taylor, who was now being pressed by Banks toward Alexandria. Farragut had also in view blockading the Black River, a tributary of the Red, which enters it from the north and northwest about thirty miles from the Mississippi and by which it was reported that reinforcements to Taylor were expected to arrive from Arkansas.

These military movements in Western Louisiana were due to the operations of General Banks, who had abandoned the demonstration made from Baton Rouge against Port Hudson, at the time Farragut passed, and resumed his operations by the Bayous Teche and Atchafalaya. This expedition was accompanied by four light gunboats, the Calhoun, Clifton, Arizona, and Estrella, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander A. P. Cooke, of the latter vessel. The land forces reached Opelousas near the Teche, sixty miles from Alexandria, on the 20th of April; and the same day the gunboats took Butte-à-la-Rose, on the Atchafalaya, sixty miles from Brashear City, a fortified place, mounting two heavy guns. Banks continued his advance upon Alexandria, and the gunboats pushed on through the Atchafalaya for the mouth of the Red River.

On the evening of the 1st of May the Arizona arrived

where the Hartford was then lying, bringing with her despatches from Banks to Farragut, asking his co-operation against Alexandria. The Estrella coming a few hours later, the admiral sent the two, with the Albatross, under Lieutenant-Commander John E. Hart, senior officer, up the Red River on the 3d. The little detachment reached the mouth of the Black River that afternoon, and there learned that none of the Confederate reinforcements expected by that stream had as yet passed. At sunset they anchored thirteen miles below Gordon's Landing. The next day, at 5 A.M., they again went up the stream, reaching, at 8.40, the bluff and bend which had been the scene of the capture of the Queen of the West ten weeks before. When the Albatross, which was leading, looked out from behind the bluff her people saw a battery with three casemates, now called Fort De Russey, commanding the river, covering two river steamers with steam up; alongside one of these was a flat-boat loaded with a heavy gun, believed to be one of those taken from the Indianola. Below the battery was a heavy raft, stretching across the stream and secured by chains to both banks. The Albatross went at once into action at a distance of five hundred yards, having, at that distance, to deal not only with the battery but with sharpshooters sheltered behind cotton barricades on board the steamers. The ship was much embarrassed by the eddies and the intricacy of the channel, touching several times; but the fight was maintained for forty minutes, after which she withdrew, having been hulled eleven times, her spars and rigging seriously injured, and having lost two men killed and four wounded. The force was too small to grapple successfully with the work, so Lieutenant-Commander Hart gave the order to return.

On the way down the vessels met Admiral Porter, who had

delayed at Grand Gulf no longer than was necessary to take possession. Leaving there at noon of the day of its occupation he reached the mouth of the Red River on the 4th, and communicated with Farragut. The next day he went up the Red River, taking with him, besides the flag-ship Benton, the Lafayette, Pittsburg, and Price. The ram Switzerland, which Farragut no longer needed, and the tug Ivy accompanied him.

When he fell in with Hart's expedition, Porter took the Estrella and Arizona in addition to his own force, leaving the Albatross to rejoin Farragut alone. On the 5th, toward sundown, Fort DeRussey was reached, but found to be abandoned and the guns removed, except one 64-pounder. Losing no time in destroying the abandoned works, the squadron pushed on at once for Alexandria; a passage through the raft being opened by the Price's ram. The Arizona having speed was sent ahead to surprise any steamer that might be at the town, where she arrived the evening of the 6th, the rest of the vessels coming up the following morning. Most of the Confederate public property had been already removed to Shreveport, three hundred and fifty miles farther up, in the northwest corner of Louisiana, where the gunboats in that stage of the river could not follow. General Banks arrived on the evening of the 7th from Opelousas.

As the river was beginning to fall, Porter went down again on the 8th with all the vessels but the Lafayette, Captain Walke, who was left at Alexandria to co-operate with the army. The Benton stopped for a short time at Fort De Russey, while a detached expedition consisting of the Price, Switzerland, Pittsburg, and Arizona was sent up the Black River. They got as far as Harrisonburg, seventy miles up, where were found batteries on high hills too heavy for the

force, which was recalled after communicating with the admiral, having succeeded in destroying \$300,000 worth of the enemy's provisions. The Switzerland, Estrella, and Arizona were now sent up to Captain Walke at Alexandria, and the admiral returned to Grand Gulf on the 13th. The Black River expedition was in itself of no great consequence; but, taken in connection with others of the same character through these waters, after the fall of Vicksburg, and the expected reinforcements of Taylor by the same route, it illustrates the facilities for rapidly traversing the enemy's country afforded by the navigable streams, and the part played by them in the conduct of the war by either party.

Farragut now felt that his personal presence was no longer required above Port Hudson, and returned to New Orleans by one of the bayous; leaving Commodore Palmer with the Hartford, Albatross, Estrella, and Arizona to maintain the blockade above until Porter was ready to assume the entire charge. The Hartford, however, did not come down till after the surrender of Port Hudson, two months later.

After the capture of Alexandria and the dispersal of the enemy in that quarter, General Banks moved down with his army to Simmesport, on the Atchafalaya Bayou, five miles from the Red River, and thence across the Mississippi at Bayou Sara, five or six miles above Port Hudson. General Augur of his command at the same time moved up from Baton Rouge. The two bodies met on the 23d of May, and Port Hudson was immediately invested. An assault was made on the 27th, but proved unsuccessful, and the army settled down to a regular siege. A battery of four IX-inch shell-guns from the navy was efficiently served throughout the siege by a detachment of seamen from the Richmond and Essex under Lieutenant-Commander Edward Terry,

executive officer of the former vessel. The Essex, Commander Caldwell, and the half dozen mortar-schooners under his orders maintained a constant bombardment and succession of artillery fights with the river batteries of the enemy, being exposed to the fire of four VIII- and X-inch columbiads and two heavy rifles. Between the 23d of May and 26th of June Caldwell estimated that one thousand shot and shell had been fired at him from these guns. During these daily engagements the Essex was hulled twenty-three times, besides being frequently struck above her decks, and had received severe injury. The mortar-schooners also came in for their share of hard knocks, and their captains were all specially commended both by Caldwell and Farragut.

On the 15th of May Porter went to the Yazoo and there awaited news from the army. On the 18th heavy firing in the rear of the city assured him of Grant's approach. That afternoon the advance of Sherman's corps came in below Snyder's Bluff, between the city and Haines's Bluff. The works at the latter point had been abandoned the evening before on the approach of the army; a small party only being left to destroy or remove whatever they could. Upon the appearance of the troops the admiral sent up a force of gunboats under Lieutenant-Commander K. R. Breese, whereupon the party ran off, leaving everything in good order. The works mounted fourteen heavy guns, VIII- and X-inch smooth-bores, and VII $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rifles; the carriages of these were burned, as were the Confederate encampments, and the magazines blown up. Porter now received letters from Grant, Sherman, and Steele, informing him of the entire success of the campaign in the rear of Vicksburg, and asking that provisions might be sent up, the army having lived off the country almost entirely during a fortnight of constant marching and fighting. Lieutenant-Commander J.

G. Walker in the De Kalb was sent up to Yazoo City with sufficient force to destroy the enemy's property which he might find, and the gunboats below Vicksburg were moved up to fire on the hill batteries, an annoyance to the garrison which they kept up off and on during the night. On the 19th six mortar-boats were got into position, with orders to fire night and day as rapidly as possible.

Grant, having completed the investment of Vicksburg, sent word on the evening of the 21st that he intended to make a general assault upon the enemy's works at 10 A.M. the following day, and asked that the fleet might shell the batteries from 9.30 to 10.30. Porter complied by keeping up his mortar fire all night and sending up the gunboats to shell the water batteries, and other places where he thought the enemy might find rest. At 7 A.M. the next day the Mound City, followed at eight by the Benton, Tuscumbia, and Carondelet, moved up abreast the lower end of the canal, opening upon the hill batteries; then they attacked the water batteries, the duel between them and the ships at a range of four hundred and fifty yards being maintained incessantly for two hours. The Tuscumbia proved, as before, too weak to withstand such close action and had to drop down. The admiral wrote that this was the hottest fire that the gunboats had yet endured, but the water batteries having little elevation, the ships contended on more even terms than at Grand Gulf, and fighting bows on, received little damage.

The fire was maintained for an hour longer than Grant had asked, when the vessels dropped out of range, having lost only a few wounded. The assault of the army was not successful and regular siege operations were begun. Vicksburg and Port Hudson, the two extremes of the Confederate line, were thus formally invested by the 27th of May. On that day, Porter, having received a request from Grant and

Sherman to try whether the enemy had moved from the batteries the guns on their extreme left, as they had from many of the other hill batteries, sent down the gunboat Cincinnati, Lieutenant George M. Bache, to draw their fire if still there; and, if possible, to enfilade the enemy's rifle-pits in that quarter and drive them out. The Cincinnati started from the upper division of the squadron at 7 A.M.; the vessels of the lower division, Price, Benton, Mound City, and Carondelet, steaming up at the same time to cover her movement by engaging the lower batteries, which might have played upon her. General Sherman took a position upon a hill at the extreme right of the Union lines, overlooking the river, so as to see the affair and take advantage of any success gained by the Cincinnati's attack. The gunboat, protected as usual by logs and hay, came within range shortly after nine o'clock, and the enemy began firing rapidly from all their batteries, the guns whose position had been doubted proving to be in their old place. When abreast the position assigned her for enfilading the rifle-pits the Cincinnati rounded to, and as she did so a shot pierced her side and entered the shell-room, capsizing nearly all the boxes on one side of the alley. As she came to with her head up stream, another ball entered the shell-room below the water-line, and a third pierced her stern, always the weakest part of these vessels, going into the magazine, also below the water-line, flooding it instantly and causing the vessel to fill rapidly. A heavy shot drove through the pilot-house, and shortly afterward the starboard tiller was carried away. The plunging fire of many big guns, concentrated on a single vessel, wrought great injury in a short time; penetrating her light deck, five of her guns were disabled by it. All three flag-staffs were shot away, carrying the colors down with them; upon which, a quartermaster, Frank Bois by

name, went out and nailed a flag to the stump that was left of the forward staff. Finding the vessel must sink, Lieutenant Bache kept running up stream, hugging the east bank to be as far as possible out of the enemy's range, and about ten minutes before she went down sheered in, ran out a hawser, and a plank by which the wounded were landed. Unfortunately the men who went ashore with the hawser did not secure it properly, the boat began drifting out into the stream, and the officers and crew had to swim for their lives. She sank in three fathoms of water within range of the enemy's batteries, the second to go down of the seven first built. The loss was 5 killed, 14 wounded, and 15 missing; supposed to have been drowned.

The detached expedition to Yazoo City, under Lieutenant-Commander Walker, had returned on the evening of the 23d. On the approach of the vessels, the Confederates had set fire to the navy yard and three steamers on the stocks building for ships of war, one a very large vessel, 310 feet long by 70 feet beam and intended to carry 4½-inch plating. All that had not been destroyed or removed by the enemy the gunboats finished, the loss being estimated at two million dollars. An attack was made upon the gunboats at a bend of the river by a small force of riflemen with three field pieces, but was repelled without trouble, one man only being killed and eight slightly wounded. The morning after their return the same vessels were again sent up. One of the light-draughts, the Signal, met with the curious accident of knocking down her smoke-stacks, an incident which again illustrates the peculiar character of this bayou warfare. Sending her back, and leaving his own vessel, the De Kalb, to follow as rapidly as possible, Walker pushed on with the Forest Rose, Linden, and Petrel to within fifteen miles of Fort Pemberton, by which the Yazoo Pass expedition

had been baffled. Here four fine steamers had been sunk on a bar, stopping farther progress. Having no means of raising them, they were fired and burned to the water's edge. The vessels then passed down the Yazoo, burning a large saw-mill twenty-five miles above Yazoo City, till they came to the Big Sunflower River. They ascended this stream one hundred and eighty miles, branch expeditions being sent into the bayous that enter it, destroying or causing the destruction of four more steamers. Transportation on the Yazoo by the Confederates was now broken up below Fort Pemberton, while above it a few steamers only remained.

From this time until the surrender of Vicksburg little occurred to vary the routine siege operations. Thirteen heavy cannon, from IX-inch to 32-pounders, were landed from the fleet to take their place in the siege batteries, in charge, at different points of the lines, of Lieutenant-Commander T. O. Selfridge, and Acting-Masters C. B. Dahlgren and J. F. Reed; and as many officers and men as could be spared were sent with them. Three heavy guns, a X-inch, IX-inch, and 100-pound rifle, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander F. M. Ramsay, of the Choctaw, were placed in scows close to the point opposite the town, but where they were protected by the bank, enfilading the batteries and rifle-pits on the enemy's left, against which the Cincinnati had made her unsuccessful attack. The gunboats below were constantly under fire and the mortars steadily shelling. On the 19th of June Grant notified the admiral that he intended to open a general bombardment at 4 A.M. the following day and continue it till 10 A.M. The lower division, the scow battery, and the mortars joined in this, shelling the hill batteries and the city, but no reply was made by the enemy from the water front.

The great service of the navy during the siege was keeping open the communications, which were entirely by the river from the time that Sherman's corps reached Snyder's Bluff. The danger of Vicksburg thrilled from the heart of the Confederacy through every nerve to its extremities. It was felt that its fall would carry down Port Hudson also, leave the Mississippi open, and hopelessly sever the East and West. Every man, therefore, that could be moved was in motion, and though the enemy had no vessel on the river, the banks on either side swarmed with guerillas, moving rapidly from spot to spot, rarely attempting to attack any body of troops, but falling back into the interior and dispersing when followed up. Provided with numerous field pieces, they sought to cut off the transports carrying reinforcements and the steamers carrying supplies. The tortuous course of the stream in many places enabled those who knew the ground to move rapidly across the country and attack the same vessel a second time if she escaped the first assault. On several occasions batteries were built, and a large force attempted the destruction of transports. From these dangers the navy was the only, as it was the best protection. The long line from Cairo to Vicksburg was patrolled by the smaller class of gunboats, and, thanks to their skilful distribution and the activity and courage of the individual commanders, no serious interruption of travel occurred. One steamer only was badly disabled and a few men killed or wounded.

On the 4th of July, 1863, Vicksburg surrendered, and on the 9th the garrison of Port Hudson also laid down its arms. The Mississippi was now open from Cairo to the Gulf, and the merchant steamboat *Imperial*, leaving St. Louis on the 8th, reached New Orleans on the 16th of this month without molestation.

The Navy Department now directed that the command of the river as far down as New Orleans should be assumed by Porter, Farragut to confine himself henceforth to the coast operations and blockade. Toward the end of July the two admirals met in New Orleans, and, the transfer having been made, Farragut sailed on the 1st of August for the North to enjoy a short respite from his labors. Porter then returned to Cairo, where he at once divided the long line of waterways under his command into eight districts,<sup>1</sup> of which six were on the Mississippi. The seventh extended on the Ohio from Cairo to the Tennessee, and thence through the course of the latter river, while the eighth embraced the upper Ohio and the Valley of the Cumberland. Each district had its own commander, who was responsible to the admiral, but was not to interfere with another unless in case of great need. For the present all was quiet, but there were already rumors of trouble to come when the enemy should recover from the stunning blows he had just received.

---

<sup>1</sup> The number of districts was afterward increased to ten.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MINOR OCCURRENCES IN 1863.

ON the 4th of July, the same day that Vicksburg surrendered, an attack was made upon Helena, in Arkansas, by the Confederates in force. The garrison at the same time numbered 4,000 men, the enemy were variously estimated at from 9,000 to 15,000. Having attacked the centre of the position, the Confederates carried the rifle-pits and a battery upon the hills, in rear of the town, which commanded all the other defensive works as well as the town itself. They then began pushing masses of troops down the hill, while their sharpshooters were picking off the artillerists in the main fort, called Fort Curtis. Guns had also been placed in commanding positions near the river, both above and below the town, and opened fire upon the line of defensive works across the river bottom, there about a thousand yards in width. Lieutenant-Commander Pritchett, of the Tyler, seeing how the assault was about to be made, placed his vessel in front of the town, so that her broadside played upon the enemy descending the hills, while their artillery above and below were exposed to her bow and stern guns. From this advantageous position the Tyler opened fire, and to her powerful battery and the judgment with which it was used must be mainly attributed the success of the day; for though the garrison fought with great gallantry and tenacity, they were outnumbered two to one. The enemy were driven back

with great slaughter. General Prentiss, commanding the post, took occasion to acknowledge, in the fullest and most generous manner, Pritchett's care in previously acquainting himself with the character of the ground, as well as the assistance afterward rendered by him in the fight. Four hundred of the enemy were buried on the field and 1,100 were made prisoners.

While Grant was occupied at Vicksburg and Banks at Port Hudson, General Taylor, commanding the Confederate forces in West Louisiana, had concentrated, on the morning of the 6th of June, a force of three brigades at Richmond, about ten miles from Milliken's Bend and twenty from Young's Point. At Milliken's there was a brigade of negro troops, with a few companies of the Twenty-third Iowa white regiment, in all 1,100 men; and at Young's a few scattered detachments, numbering 500 or 600. Taylor determined to try a surprise of both points, having also a vague hope of communicating with Vicksburg, or causing some diversion in its favor. At sundown of the 6th one brigade was moved toward Milliken's, and one toward Young's Point, the third taking a position in reserve six miles from Richmond. The force directed against Young's Point blundered on its way, got there in broad daylight, and, finding a gunboat present, retired without making any serious attempt. The other brigade, commanded by McCulloch, reached its destination about 3 A.M. of the 7th, drove in the pickets and advanced with determination upon the Union lines. The latter were gradually forced back of the levee, the Iowa regiment fighting with great steadiness, and the negroes behaving well individually; but they lacked organization and knowledge of their weapons. Accordingly when the enemy, who were much superior in numbers, charged the levee and came hand to hand, the colored troops, after a few moments of desper-

ate struggle, broke and fled under the bank of the river. Nothing saved them from destruction but the presence of the Choctaw, which at 3.30 A.M. had opened her fire and was now able to maintain it without fear of injuring her friends. The Confederates could not, or would not face it, and withdrew at 8.30 A.M. What the fate of these black troops would have been had the Confederates come upon them in the flush of a successful charge seems somewhat doubtful, in view of Taylor's suggestive remark that "*unfortunately* some fifty of them had been taken prisoners."

Immediately after the surrender of Vicksburg, Porter followed up the discomfiture of the Confederates by a series of raids into the interior of the country through its natural water-ways. Lieutenant-Commander Walker was again sent up to Yazoo City, this time in company with a force of troops numbering 5,000, under Major-General Herron. During the month that had passed since Walker's last visit, the enemy had been fortifying the place, and the batteries were found ready to receive the vessels. General Herron was then notified, and when his men were landed, a combined attack was made by the army and navy. The Confederates made but slight resistance and soon fled, abandoning everything. Six heavy guns and one vessel fell into the Union hands, and four fine steamers were destroyed by the enemy. Unfortunately, while the De Kalb was moving slowly along she struck a torpedo, which exploded under her bow and sunk her. As she went down another exploded under her stern, shattering it badly. This gunboat, which at first was called the St. Louis, was the third to be lost of the seven. The Cincinnati was afterward raised; but the De Kalb was so shattered as to make it useless to repair her.

At this same time Lieutenant-Commander Selfridge, with a force of light-draught gunboats, entered the Red River,

turned out of it into the Black, and from the latter again into the Tensas; following one of the routes by which Grant had thought to move his army below Vicksburg. This water-line runs parallel with the Mississippi. Selfridge succeeded in reaching the head of navigation, Tensas Lake and Bayou Macon, thirty miles above Vicksburg, and only five or six from the Mississippi. The expedition was divided at a tributary of the Black, called Little Red River; two going up it, while two continued up the Tensas. Afterward it went up the Washita as far as Harrisonburg, where the batteries stopped them. Four steamers were destroyed, together with a quantity of ammunition and provisions.

A few weeks later, in August, Lieutenant Bache, late of the Cincinnati, went up the White River with three gunboats, the Lexington, Cricket, and Marmora. At a second Little Red River, a narrow and crooked tributary of the White, the Cricket was sent off to look for two steamers said to be hidden there. Bache himself went on to Augusta, thirty miles further up the White, where he got certain news of the movements of the Confederate army in Arkansas; thus attaining one of his chief objects. He now returned to the mouth of the Little Red, and, leaving the Marmora there, went up himself to see how the Cricket had fared. The little vessel was met coming down; bringing with her the two steamers, but having lost one man killed and eight wounded in a brush with sharpshooters. On their return the three vessels were waylaid at every available point by musketry, but met with no loss. They had gone two hundred and fifty miles up the White, and forty up the Little Red River.

During a great part of 1863, Tennessee and Kentucky, beyond the lines of the Union army, were a prey not only to raids by detached bodies of the enemy's army, but also to

the operations of guerillas and light irregular forces. The ruling feeling of the country favored the Confederate cause, so that every hamlet and farm-house gave a refuge to these marauders, while at the same time the known existence of some Union feeling made it hard for officers to judge, in all cases, whether punishment should fall on the places where the attacks were made. The country between the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers early in the year harbored many of these irregular bodies, having a certain loose organization and a number of field-pieces. The distance between the two streams in the lower part of their course being small, they were able to move from the banks of one to the other with ease. It was necessary, therefore, to keep these rivers patrolled by a force of gunboats; which, though forming part of Porter's fleet, were under the immediate orders of Captain Alexander M. Pennock, commanding the naval station at Cairo. West of the rivers, between them and the great river, the western parts of Kentucky and Tennessee and the northern part of Mississippi were under control of the Union troops, though incrcads of guerillas were not unknown. Nashville was held by the Union forces; but the Confederates were not far away at Shelbyville and Tullahoma. The fights between the gunboats and the hostile parties on these rivers do not individually possess much importance, but have an interest in showing the unending and essential work performed by the navy in keeping the communications open, aiding isolated garrisons, and checking the growth of the guerilla war.

On the 30th of January Lieutenant-Commander S. L. Phelps, having been sent by Captain Pennock in the Lexington to make a special examination of the condition of affairs on the Cumberland River, reported that, a transport having been fired upon twenty miles above Clarksville, he

had landed and burned a storehouse used as a resort by the enemy. As he returned the vessel was attacked with some Parrott rifles and struck three times; but the heavy guns of the Lexington drove the enemy off. Going down to Clarksville he met there a fleet of thirty-one steamers, having many barges in tow, convoyed by three light-draught gunboats. These he joined, and the enemy having tested the power of the Lexington, did not fire a shot between Clarksville and Nashville. As a result of his enquiries he thought that no transport should be allowed to go without convoy higher than Fort Henry or Donelson, situated on either river on the line separating Kentucky and Tennessee. The Lexington was therefore detained, and for a time added to the flotilla on those rivers.

Four days later, Lieutenant-Commander Le Roy Fitch, in active charge of the two rivers, was going up the Cumberland with a fleet of transports, convoyed by the Lexington and five light-draughts. When twenty-four miles below Dover, the town on the west bank near which Fort Donelson was situated, he met a steamer bearing a message from Colonel Harding, commanding the post, to the effect that his pickets had been driven in and that he was attacked in force. Fitch at once left the convoy and pushed ahead as fast as he could. A short distance below the town he met a second steamer with the news that Harding was surrounded. At 8 P.M. he arrived, and found the Union forces not only surrounded by overwhelming forces but out of ammunition.

The enemy, not thinking about gunboats, had posted the main body of his troops in a graveyard at the west end of the town, the left wing resting in a ravine that led down to the river, thus enabling the vessels to rake that portion of his line. The gunboats opened fire simultaneously up the ravine, into the graveyard and upon the valley beyond. Taken

wholly by surprise, the Confederates did not return a shot, but decamped in haste. Leaving two boats to maintain the fire through the ravine, Fitch hastened up with the other four to shell the main road, which, after leaving the upper end of the town, follows nearly the bank of the stream for some distance. The attacking force in this case was 4,500 strong, composed of regular Confederate troops under Generals Wheeler, Forrest, and Wharton. By 11 p.m. they had disappeared, leaving 140 dead. The garrison, which numbered only 800, had defended itself gallantly against this overwhelming force since noon, but was *in extremis* when the gunboats arrived.

On the 27th of March, Fitch was at Fort Hindman, on the Tennessee, where he took on board a force of 150 soldiers and went up the river. On reaching Savanna he heard of a cotton-mill four miles back being run for the Confederate army. The troops and a force of sailors were landed and took the mill, although a regiment of the enemy's cavalry was but two or three miles away. Finding no sure proof of its working for the army, they did not destroy the building, but removed some of the essential parts of the machinery. Going on to Chickasaw, south of the Tennessee line, as the water was too low for the Lexington, he sent on two light-draughts as far as Florence, where they shelled a camp of the enemy. The rapid falling of the river obliged them to return. On the way a quantity of food and live stock belonging to a noted abettor of guerilla warfare were seized.

Having returned to the mouth of the Cumberland to coal, Fitch received a telegram on the 3d of April that a convoy had been attacked at Palmyra, thirty miles above Dover, and the gunboat St. Clair disabled. He at once got under way, took five light-draughts besides his own vessel, the Lexing-

ton, and went up the river. When he reached Palmyra he burned every house in the town, as a punishment for the firing on unarmed vessels and harboring guerillas. A quick movement followed against a body of the enemy higher up the stream, but they had notice of his approach, and had disappeared.

On the 24th a steamer was fired upon in the Tennessee, and three men badly wounded. Fitch went at once to the scene, but the enemy were off. On the 26th, cruising up the river, he found the vessels of General Ellet, commanding what was now called the Marine Brigade, fighting a battery and body of infantry 700 strong. Fitch joined in, and the enemy were of course repulsed. The Marine Brigade landed and pursued the enemy some distance, finding their commander mortally wounded.

On the 26th of May Lieutenant-Commander Phelps, with the Covington and two other gunboats, was at Hamburg, on the Tennessee, a few miles from the Mississippi State line. Here he ferried across 1,500 cavalry and four light field-pieces from Corinth, in Mississippi, under Colonel Cornyn. This little body made a forced march upon Florence, forty miles distant, in rear of the left of the Confederate army at Columbia, captured the place and destroyed a large amount of property, including three cotton-mills. An attempt was made by the enemy to cut this force off on its return to the boats, but without success.

Early in July a very daring raid was made by General J. H. Morgan of the Confederate army into the States of Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. Crossing the Ohio River at Brandenburg, he moved in an easterly direction through the southern part of Indiana and Ohio, burning bridges, tearing up railroads, destroying public property, capturing small bodies of troops, and causing general consternation. Fitch

heard of him, and at once started up the river with his lightest vessels to cut off the retreat of the raiders. Leaving some boats to patrol the river below, he himself, in the *Moose*, came up with them on the 19th, at a ford a mile and a half above Buffington Island, and two hundred and fifty miles east of Cincinnati. The retreating enemy had placed two field-pieces in position, but the *Moose's* battery of 24-pound howitzers drove them off with shell and shrapnel. The troops in pursuit had come up, so the Confederates, finding their retreat stopped, broke and ran up the stream in headlong flight, leaving their wounded and dismounted men behind. The *Moose* followed, keeping always on their right flank, and stopping two other efforts made to cross. Only when the water became too shoal for even his little paddle steamer of one hundred and sixty tons to go on, did Finch stop the chase, which had led him five hundred miles from his usual station. His efforts and their useful results were cordially acknowledged by Generals Burnside and Cox, at Cincinnati.

During the siege of Port Hudson the enemy on the west bank of the Mississippi made several demonstrations against Donaldsonville and Plaquemine, with a view to disturbing General Banks's communications; threatening also New Orleans, which was not well prepared for defence. Farragut stationed the *Princess Royal*, Commander Woolsey, at Donaldsonville; the *Winona*, Lieutenant-Commander Weaver, above at Plaquemine, and the *Kineo*, Lieutenant-Commander Watters, some distance below. The Confederates attacked the fort at Donaldsonville in force at midnight of June 27th. The *Princess Royal* kept under way above the fort, engaging the assailants, the *Winona* arriving at 4 A.M. and joining with her. The *Kineo* also came up from below, but not in time to take part. The storming party of the enemy suc-

ceeded in getting into the fort, but the supports broke and fled under the fire of the gunboats, leaving the advance, numbering 120, prisoners in the hands of the garrison. On the 7th of July, as the Monongahela was coming up the river, some field batteries of the enemy attacked her, and her commander, Abner Read, an officer of distinguished activity and courage, was mortally wounded. Her other loss was 1 killed and 4 wounded ; among the latter being Captain Thornton A. Jenkins, on his way to assume command of the Richmond and of the naval forces off Port Hudson.