

of description. From the batteries along the river and just above its level, and from the terraced steps above, all the way to the crest of the Vicksburg hills was a mass of living flame.

As the fleet approached the city and passed it, fire was opened from innumerable batteries, which had hitherto been unable to bring their guns to bear. Light field batteries were hurried into position on the main streets of the city near the river, and on the sloping hillside in front of and between the fortified lines, until it seemed as though every square foot of soil possessed a gun. Heavy bodies of infantry were placed along the levee and wharf, and kept up a deadly fire upon the boats as long as these were within range.

Soon after the alarm was given from the picket-boats, houses and barns on the Louisiana and Mississippi shores were set on fire, and the bright glare thrown across the water, added to the incessant flashing of the guns, made the night as light as day. The men at the batteries and in the streets of Vicksburg could be distinctly seen from the "Tigress" and other vessels of the fleet, when they were opposite the Vicksburg court-house; and it was here that each vessel was exposed to the heaviest and most destructive fire. The guns from nearly every battery above and below the city could be brought to bear with deadly accuracy, and the broadside fire from the guns in the main line of intrenchments, covering the west front of the city proper, must have been terrible to face. A storm of solid shot and shell, of almost every variety and size, poured upon the fleet, — crashing through hull and pilot-house, shivering the machinery, cutting ropes and chimney guys, and bursting in the cabins.

A grand ball was in progress in Vicksburg at the time the alarm was given; General Pemberton and a large number of the prominent officers of the garrison being present. The greatest excitement and confusion prevailed when the opening guns were heard. There was

"hurrying to and fro," and "mounting in hot haste." The ball-room was quickly deserted, the officers hastening to their respective commands, and the ladies, in ball attire, rushing into the streets to witness the grand spectacle and the sinking of the Yankee fleet. The entire population was awake and out of doors, watching with intense interest the brilliant and indescribable scene on which the fate of Vicksburg depended.

The fleet was under fire for two and a half hours. But at length the last boat was out of range; "the blazing bonfires on the hills, and burning houses and barns along the stream, and beacon fires which lighted up the sky for many miles, burned low, flickered, and went out." The heavy guns ceased firing, and silence once more reigned over the beleaguered city.

On the night of April 16, 1863, three wooden transports with ten barges, all loaded with forage and supplies, were run by the Vicksburg batteries. These transports and barges were led by seven ironclad gunboats, with Admiral Porter, on the "Benton," in advance. The transport "Henry Clay" was set on fire by a bursting shell, and was burned to the water's edge. The two remaining transports, "Forest Queen" and "Silver Wave," passed by the batteries, but were considerably damaged, the "Forest Queen" being disabled by a solid shot, and towed past the lower batteries by the gunboat "Tuscumbia."

General Sherman in his "Memoirs," and Badeau in his "Life of Grant," give graphic descriptions of the running of the batteries on the night of the 16th of April, but barely mention the fact of the second attempt.

In the first instance, the ironclads convoyed the three transports by the batteries, engaging them sharply at every point, and drawing upon themselves a heavy fire, thereby increasing largely the chances of success. On the night of the 22d, the wooden transports had no convoy of ironclad ships to mark the way, cover the movement, and aid them if disabled.

General Grant's orders for the movement of the army past Vicksburg, by the way of Richmond and Carthage, were dated April 20. In order to carry out his plans, it was necessary to get a sufficient number of transports past the batteries of Vicksburg, Warrenton, and Grand Gulf, in order to ferry his army quickly across the river at any point he might decide upon. Two of the transports were already below the Warrenton guns, but five or six more were needed to make his new campaign a success. The second attempt was therefore decided upon.

Ten barges were secured, five stern-wheel steamers and one side-wheel (the "Tigress") were selected, and all were loaded with forage and supplies. Volunteers were called for from the army, to man them. Nearly the whole command volunteered. The best men only were accepted.

Colonel William S. Oliver, of the Seventh Missouri Infantry, Seventeenth Corps, one of the most gallant and determined officers of our army, was placed in command of the flagship "Tigress," and made captain of the fleet.

The following orders explain themselves : —

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE TENNESSEE,
MILLIKEN'S BEND, LA., April 21, 1863.

Special Orders }
No. III. } (Extract.)

Colonel William S. Oliver, Captain P. D. Toomer, Company H, Captain Monroe Harrison, Company C, Second Lieutenant Cirdell, Company D, First Sergeant Robert Minaugh, Company K, and twenty men of the Seventh Regiment Missouri Infantry Volunteers, are hereby detailed to run the batteries at Vicksburg, and will report on the steamer "Tigress" at two o'clock this day.

By order of Major-General U. S. Grant.

JOHN A. RAWLINS,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Admiral G. W. GRAHAM,
Master of Transportation.

QUARTERMASTER'S DEPARTMENT,
DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS, NEAR VICKSBURG.
ON BOARD STEAMER "H. VON PHUL," April 22, 1863.

CAPTAIN STEAMER "TIGRESS" :

SIR, — You will have your boat in readiness as soon as possible, and make a trip two or three miles up the river, so that your engineer, pilots, and crew will learn the ringing of the bells and the handling of the engine. Report here the result. I will give you the signal instructions at six o'clock this afternoon.

Yours very truly,

GEORGE W. GRAHAM,

To Colonel W. S. OLIVER,
Captain of Fleet.

Commanding Fleet.

HEADQUARTERS, NEAR VICKSBURG.
OFFICE ON BOARD STEAMER "H. VON PHUL,"
April 22, 1863.

CAPTAIN STEAMER "TIGRESS" :

SIR, — You will have your boat in readiness at nine (9) o'clock this evening in the middle of the river at Young's Point, ready to move at the signal given by me. I will be alongside and give the signal to each boat. The line of boats will be as follows : —

"Tigress" (flagship), "Empire City," "Moderator," "J. W. Cheesman," "Anglo-Saxon," "Horizon."

You will have your crew in their proper places, with instructions to remain at their posts.

This is an important movement, and I trust every officer and man will do his duty.

Colonel Clark B. Lago, A. D. C. to General Grant, is on board the "Tigress," and will take charge of the fleet when under weigh.

Very respectfully,

GEORGE W. GRAHAM,

To Colonel W. S. OLIVER,
Captain of Fleet.

Commanding Fleet.

The six transports named were put in order and prepared for running the batteries, under the supervision and

direction of Colonel Oliver. A large quantity of cotton was gathered from the country adjacent to Milliken's Bend. Double tiers of cotton bales were placed forward and aft of engine and boilers, and on the sides as high as the cabin floors, and sacks of oats, corn, and bran were laid two and three tiers deep on the upper deck and cabin floors, to prevent plunging shots from going through to boilers and hull. Every boat was well loaded with forage and supplies, the same being placed with a view to protect to the fullest extent the machinery and hull. Barrels filled with water were placed in the hold and on the main deck, with plenty of buckets close at hand. Hose was attached to pumps, ready for instant use. Each boat had a crew of twenty-five men, including captain, mates, engineers, and firemen.

I very much regret that I cannot give the names of the officers and men composing the six crews. It would be a pleasure to mention them, as they are all entitled to equal praise and credit.

From the lips of Colonel Oliver I have heard most graphically described his experience on the flagship "Tigress." I give it here in substantially his own words. The experience of one boat and crew was that of all.

On the evening of the 21st, the transports and barges were in readiness for the trip, and the officers and men assigned to their positions. Colonel Oliver was furnished with a diagram of the river, showing the location of a bad bar at the Big Bend, and the general situation of the Vicksburg batteries. As the "Tigress" was to lead the way and mark the path of the fleet, Oliver suggested to General Grant the propriety of hugging closely the Mississippi shore as soon as he rounded the bend and passed the upper point of the bar referred to, running in as close as possible to the Vicksburg levee, or wharf, for the reason that most of the batteries were on high ground, and the guns were trained for the Louisiana shore. This plan was approved by all.

The officers of the "Tigress" were: Colonel W. S. Oliver, captain of fleet; Lieutenant McBride, Seventh Missouri, mate; Captain P. D. Toomer, Seventh Missouri, first engineer; Lieutenant Cirdell, Seventh Missouri, second engineer. For pilot, they had a citizen, name unknown, who had had experience on the Lower Mississippi, and possessed great knowledge of the eddies and channels of the river about Vicksburg. This pilot was the only citizen on any of the boats. Sergeant Robert Minaugh, Seventh Missouri, was made second pilot, and had instructions from Oliver to keep a sharp eye on the citizen pilot, and to kill him and take the wheel if he attempted to leave the boat or refused to steer as ordered. The remainder of Oliver's crew were picked men from his own regiment.

At nine o'clock, the boats were in readiness in the middle of the river, at Young's Point. Colonel Lago and Colonel Oliver took positions on the hurricane-deck of the "Tigress," in front of the boat's bell. All officers and men were in their places, and eager for the signal, which was to be given by Commodore Graham from the headquarters' boat. The orders were to carry plenty of steam, but to float down without any noise until fired upon by the enemy's picket-boats. No lights were allowed on board, and even the light of fires under boilers was hidden by cotton bales and tarpaulins.

The signal was finally given, and the boats were off on their perilous trip. They drifted with the current for about four miles, when the "Tigress" was discovered by the picket-boats and immediately fired upon, and signal rockets were sent up. At once steam was put on, and the "Tigress" headed for the Vicksburg shore, the other boats following directly in her wake. By the time the "Tigress" had rounded the bend and was opposite the upper batteries, the houses and buildings on the Louisiana shore were on fire. When a point opposite the courthouse was reached, hundreds of bonfires were burning, and all the batteries and field-pieces were firing, and it was

as light as day. As Colonel Oliver expressed it: "It was the most magnificent display of fireworks ever witnessed by man. Shot and shell showered upon us so thick and fast, and we were so wrapped up in the awful grandeur and sublimity of the scene, that we were in reality unconscious of danger, and gave no thought to our own safety. It seemed as though Heaven and Hell had turned everything loose to destroy us. I can never forget it, nor can I describe it. Only those who faced this terrible concentrated fire, or who witnessed it from Vicksburg or the headquarters' boat, can have the faintest idea of its beauty." The streets of the city were filled with citizens; and hundreds of ladies, dressed in white, had congregated on the slope of a bluff called "Sky Parlor Hill." The gunners at work could be distinctly seen, and a newspaper could have been read with ease from the hurricane-deck of the "Tigress." It was twenty minutes past twelve by the clock in the court-house, when the flagship was abreast of it, and Lago and Oliver took out their watches and compared time.

Just above the city the "Tigress" ran very close to the levee, — so close, in fact, that the infantry and many of the guns for a few moments ceased firing, it being thought that the boat wished to surrender; and at about the same time the "Cheesman," Captain Harrison commanding, struck the sand-bar, which rounded her to, head up stream. The enemy evidently thought this boat also wished to surrender. The "Cheesman," fortunately, soon backed off the bar, swung around into the channel, and kept on her course, closely followed by the remainder of the fleet. The enemy soon discovered his mistake, and the firing was renewed by the infantry and artillery, and never again slackened until the last boat was out of range. The scene about this time from the deck of the transports must have been grand. Solid shot, shell, and bullets were raking the vessels fore and aft. The Warrenton batteries were in full play, and the guns first encoun-

tered could still be brought to bear, and were firing with deadly accuracy; solid shot were tearing great holes through the upper works, and shells were bursting every second above and around the ill-fated vessel. One shot carried away the railing upon which Oliver's foot was resting; another cut the guy-rope of a spar to which he was holding. A moment later, an eight-inch shell exploded in the captain's state-room, sending splinters flying in every direction, one of which knocked Oliver down, injuring him quite severely. Hundreds of heavy shot struck short, and, ricochetting, passed clear over the boats. The men in the hold reported to the engineer that they were no longer able to keep the "Tigress" afloat, as the holes were made faster than they could stop them with cotton bags and plank; and the engineer asked the pilot to request Oliver to come into the pilot-house, so that he could communicate readily with him. When the "Tigress" reached the foot of the canal, or cut-off, some two miles below Vicksburg, Colonel Oliver left his position on the hurricane-deck and went into the pilot-house. Lieutenant Toomer then reported that there were already thirty holes in the hull made by heavy shot, and that the boat was making water very fast, and must soon go down. A moment later, a shot from the celebrated gun "Whistling Dick," in position in the upper Vicksburg battery, struck the stern of the "Tigress" low down, ripping the side plank half-way to her bow. This was the finishing touch. The boat was almost instantly reported to be sinking, and there was barely time for the men to get out of the hold. The orders to the engineer, however, were to stand by the engine, and to the pilot to try and run the boat ashore on the Louisiana side. McBride, the mate, with two men, stood ready to jump, with hawser in hand. When the boat was about twice her length from shore, she refused to answer to either rudder or wheel. The water in the engine-room was then waist deep, and the fires

were nearly out; but still the brave engineer stuck to the engine. Finally, the order was given to let off steam, to prevent the boilers exploding, and for all hands to come to the hurricane-deck. When the engineer left his post the water in the vessel was nearly up to his neck, and the cotton bales were floating.

McBride, with three of his brave men, volunteered to jump overboard and swim ashore with the hawser, and permission was given them to make the attempt; but as the boat was drifting into the channel again, and it was evident that it was impossible for the men to make shore with the heavy line, they were ordered to let it go and swim back to the boat, which they did. The water was then over the cabin floor. As the boat settled, her bow struck a reef and the hull broke in the centre, the decks being held together by the hog-chains. The "Cheesman" was hailed and asked to round to; but the answer came that her steam-pipe was cut and steam nearly exhausted. She was, however, able to round to with head up stream, but could not run alongside the "Tigress." The officers and men, seeing this, clung to cotton bales and pieces of the wreck, and paddled towards the "Cheesman," which was now floating slowly down the stream. The terrific fire from the Vicksburg guns was still kept up, and those of the Warrenton batteries were firing red-hot shot. The officers and crew of the "Tigress" got safe on board the "Cheesman," and Toomer, who was a practical engineer, soon repaired the damaged steam-pipe. About this time, the "Empire City" was seen to be floating towards the Vicksburg side in a helpless condition, with a field battery firing into her. At the request of Captain Harrison, Oliver took command of the "Cheesman," and went to the assistance of the "Empire City." Getting a hawser to her, she was towed out into the channel, and for some distance down the stream. The pilot of the "Empire City" was mortally wounded by a flying piece of the smoke-stack. The three remaining

transports were in a disabled condition, and had all they could do to take care of themselves.

Finally, about three o'clock in the morning, the five transports were out of range of the guns, and landed on the Louisiana shore, just above Grand Gulf. They were all in a disabled condition, the "Cheesman" and "Moderator" only being able to make steam.

The "Tigress" received thirty-five shots in her hull alone, besides others almost innumerable that passed through her cabin and upper works, — receiving more in her hull than any other vessel of the fleet, for the reason that she was loaded much lighter, and her hull was more exposed. The other transports were loaded down to the guards. They were all, however, riddled from stem to stern.

Of the six transports and ten barges in tow, which attempted to run by, one transport ("Tigress") and six barges were lost.

General Grant now had below the Warrenton batteries about fifteen or sixteen barges and seven transports, as follows: the "Forest Queen," "Silver Wave," "Empire City," "Moderator," "J. W. Cheesman," "Anglo-Saxon," and "Horizon."

Immediately after running the Vicksburg and Warrenton batteries, the transports and barges were repaired by direction of Admiral Porter, who furnished the material, the army furnishing the mechanics.

On the 29th of April, Admiral Porter began the bombardment of the Grand Gulf batteries with his seven ironclads; but at twenty minutes past one P. M. he withdrew, having been hotly engaged for nearly five and a half hours, and having failed to dismount or silence a single one of the enemy's guns, owing to their elevated position. The same night, the ironclads, the transports, and the barges ran by the Grand Gulf batteries, the wooden vessels receiving no damage, as the ironclads were between them and the batteries.

On the morning of the 30th of April, the Thirteenth Army Corps began crossing the river by means of the transports and barges, followed by the Seventeenth Corps. The landing was made at Bruinsburg, Mississippi, six miles below Grand Gulf.

THE SIEGE.

Over eighteen years have passed, and yet I distinctly recall the scene that burst upon us as we reached the cross-roads near an old log-cabin, where General Sherman, with the Fifteenth Corps, had a few hours before turned to the right, heading for the Yazoo bluffs and Walnut Hills, and feeling for the Mississippi. The sun was almost down, but the last lingering rays shot out brilliantly for a few moments, lighting up with splendid effect the frowning heights before us. The scene is indelibly impressed upon my memory, and it seems but yesterday since that cavalcade, with McPherson at its head, went dashing down the Jackson road at a sharp gallop, crossed a small brook with swift current, gained the summit of a densely wooded ridge, and a moment later emerged from it, struck the open country, and drew rein at the intersection of the Graveyard and Jackson roads, two miles from the enemy's works.

There they lay spread out before us,—a long line of high, rugged, irregular bluffs, clearly cut against the sky, crowned with cannon which peered ominously from embrasures to the right and left as far as the eye could see. Lines of heavy rifle-pits, surmounted with head-logs, ran along the bluffs, connecting fort with fort, and filled with veteran infantry. The line of fortifications covered a city, and both flanks of that line rested on a great river. The approaches were over and across a succession of bluffs lying parallel to each other, or nearly so. The summits of these bluffs were generally quite free from timber or underbrush, but the sides were abrupt, and difficult to scale. Between the bluffs and at their base

whole army, was to be under arms, and ready to move on the works in case the troops of General Logan's division were able to gain possession of and hold the enemy's line, upon the explosion of the mine. The Thirty-first and Forty-fifth Illinois infantry were massed in the approaches and covered way near the mine, and were to charge, the moment the explosion took place.

How well I remember that bright sunny June day, when we crept forward together on our hands and knees from the terminus of the covered way, and fired the dozen strands of safety fuse; and how coolly yet eagerly Hickenlooper watched the burning train until it reached the embankment, and how we hurried back to "Coon Skin Tower," and held our watches and counted the seconds! All was quiet along the entire line from right to left, save a shot at long intervals from some wary sharpshooter on the other side. The Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Thirteenth Corps, and the Fourth Division of the Sixteenth, with General Herron's command, on the extreme left, in fact, Grant's whole army before the fortified lines, at least forty thousand strong, were under arms and ready to assault if ordered, and the explosion of Hickenlooper's mine was to be the signal for the bombardment, and the movement of the attacking column from Logan's division. Two hundred guns, many of them of heavy calibre, were loaded and directed, the gunners, with lanyards in hand, awaiting the signal.

The great redoubt loomed high above all other points on the Rebel centre, and was distinctly visible to the officers and men of the Seventeenth Corps, and could also be seen from many points along the fronts of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Corps. As the hour set for the explosion drew near, the silence became oppressive, almost painful. The eye of every soldier in the besieging army was fixed intently upon Fort Hill, or in that direction. Even the Rebel army seemed conscious that something startling was about to occur, but little dreamed

of what was actually coming. Hundreds of Rebel infantry peered over the line of rifle-pits, as if to unravel the mystery. 3.30 P. M. was the appointed hour,—only thirty seconds more! It seemed an age. The cannoners stood to their pieces; sharpshooters cocked their rifles and settled into easy positions for good shots, with finger on trigger and eye glancing down the sights; cartridge-boxes were shifted to the front, and muskets were grasped with firm hands all along the line.

I looked at Hickenlooper. He was leaning carelessly against the base of Coon Skin Tower, with his eyes intently fixed upon the hands of his watch. His face was white, and there was an anxious expression about his eyes; but I never saw him cooler or more self-possessed. His reputation with that army was at stake, and I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. What if it should fail? Three seconds more,—tick! tick! tick! Then the huge fort, guns, caissons, and Rebel troops inside the curtain were lifted up high into the air; a glimmer, and then a gleam of light—a flash—a trembling of the ground beneath our feet, and great clouds of dense black smoke puffed up from the crater of the mine, like jets from a geyser! The next instant, a sheet of flame eight miles long burst out along our lines from flank to flank, and two hundred guns opened fire on the works of the doomed city. What a glorious sight! It makes the blood fairly dance through my veins now to think of it. How the shot and shell poured over the parapet of the enemy's forts and lines of intrenchments, and ricocheted over and through the city! How magnificently and heroically those superb regiments of Leggett's brigade, Logan's division, the Thirty-first and Forty-fifth Illinois Infantry, stood up against the death-dealing bullets of the enemy, and took possession of and held the crater of the exploded mine! It was a forlorn hope, and everybody knew it; but these splendid regiments claimed the honor of making the attempt to carry

the line by assault upon the explosion of the mine, as Fort Hill was directly in front of the positions occupied by them in the intrenched line of battle.

The explosion failed to make a breach in the main line. It has been claimed that the enemy knew of the construction of this mine, or suspected that our troops would attempt something of the kind, and therefore built a new line for the infantry in rear of the fort. Be that as it may, the fort was manned by a considerable number of Rebel soldiers, who were hurled into the air, and two or three of them came down alive inside the Federal lines. A negro was thrown up to a great height, with a huge mass of earth, and came down near Coon Skin Tower. Captain Steele, one of General McPherson's aides, ran quickly to him and raised him from the ground. He was somewhat bruised and badly shaken up by his rapid transit from the Rebel lines; blood trickled down his forehead from an ugly cut in his head, and his body was smeared with mud. He trembled violently, and was evidently very much frightened. Captain Steele, as he picked the old negro up, asked him how high in the air he thought he was thrown by the explosion. A smile crept over the old darkey's face as he replied, "Dis chile dunno, Massa, but he tinks about free mile." The negro recovered from his injuries, and was for a long time a servant at General Logan's headquarters.

The crater of the mine was cone-shaped, and very much exposed. Sharpshooters at high and commanding points fired into it with deadly accuracy. The enemy, from the new line in rear of the crater, being much higher than the position occupied by the Federal troops, threw over the parapet hand-grenades, and rolled down the embankment a great number of loaded shells, many of which exploded among our men with terrible effect. The cavity made by the explosion was not large enough to hold two regiments, and no formation whatever could be preserved. The men were crowded into this frightful

pit like sheep in a slaughter-pen. Flag after flag was planted on the outer face of the enemy's main line of works, but one after another was cut down, riddled by bullets, and torn to shreds. Colonel Melancthon Smith, the gallant commander of the Forty-fifth, was killed soon after gaining possession of the crater. All that afternoon and night, our troops held their ground. Soon after dark, General Logan drew out portions of the Thirty-first and Forty-fifth Illinois, and sent in the Fifty-sixth Illinois, commanded by Colonel Green B. Raum; and the most desperate efforts were made to hold the crater of the exploded mine. Major C. J. Stolbrand, chief of artillery of General Logan's division, remained in the crater most of the night; and the bravery and reckless daring displayed by him has rarely, if ever, been equalled. Many of the shells and feathered grenades thrown over the parapet by the enemy failed to explode at the instant. Stolbrand would pick them up and hurl them back, and a number of them exploded among the Rebel soldiers with dreadful results. Boxes of cartridges and light field ammunition were placed on the parapet by the Rebels, lighted with port fires, and then pushed and rolled down the embankment. Stolbrand in a number of instances stamped out the fires with his feet, or tore the fuses from the boxes with his hands, thus preventing the explosion and saving many lives. He faced death hundreds of times during that dreadful night, and how he escaped is beyond comprehension. Shells, hand-grenades, and field projectiles burst under his very feet and by his side. Bullets whistled past him, cutting his clothes and grazing his skin. His face, hands, and hair were powder-burnt, but he received no serious wound.

The crater was named by our soldiers "The Death Hole," and the name was significant and appropriate. The horrors of that night no pen can describe. Before daylight of the morning of the 26th the troops were withdrawn.