

command of Toomey's detachment of the Third Maryland Artillery, previously commanded by Lieutenant T. J. Bates, of Waddell's Alabama Artillery. This section, one of Bledsoe's Missouri battery, and one of a Louisiana battery (Lieutenant Cottonham) were all under the command of Lieutenant R. L. Wood, of the Missouri Artillery, and were a part of a force under General Ferguson, which had for several months been operating along the Mississippi River. Their employment was to harrass the enemy by firing into their vessels of war and transports. When, in March, 1863, Porter's fleet of five gunboats entered Black Bayou in order to flank the Confederate batteries at Snyder's Bluff, General Ferguson met him at Rolling Fork and after an engagement lasting three days drove him back, inflicting considerable loss.

The greatest execution in this battle, strange to say, was done, not by the Confederate artillery, whose shot rolled harmlessly upon the backs of the enemy's iron-plated vessels, but by the sharpshooters. These were mainly Texans, who acted with characteristic daring. They approached the very bank of the stream and fired into the portholes of the iron-clads as soon as these were opened by the Federals for a shot at the Confederate artillery. The enemy labored under the additional disadvantage of being unable to depress their pieces sufficiently to reach their antagonists, so that their shell damaged only the tree tops. Harrassed and annoyed past endurance, they at length withdrew.

During April nothing of special note occurred. Steel's command of Federals employed itself in burning dwellings and gin-houses along Deer Creek, in its usual manner.

On the 29th of April Lieutenant Ritter, with his section of the Third Maryland, was ordered to join Major Bridges' force at Fish Lake, near Greenville, Mississippi. He came up with that command on the 1st of May, and the next day proceeded to the river to fire upon the boats, which were continually passing. The object of the Confederates was to prevent, as much as possible, reinforcements from reaching Grant at Vicksburg. Soon after the arrival of the Maryland section a transport appeared in view, ascending the river. Lieutenant Ritter opened fire on her, some of the shell exploding on her deck and others passing through her. She got by, but cast anchor a few miles up the river to repair damages. A swamp prevented further attack on her at her anchorage.

The firing had scarcely ceased when a gunboat hove in sight. The section took position behind the levee, where it would be sheltered somewhat during the engagement which was now anticipated. Lieutenant Ritter had taken the precaution to cut embrasures in the levee, so that he might thus protect his guns in an emergency. Approaching within range, the gunboat proceeded at once to open fire on the Confederates. The latter replied with shot and shell, and the engagement lasted about half an hour, when the enemy steamed away. It was afterward