

ascertained that the vessel was iron-plated only about the portholes for the protection of her gunners, and that some of Ritter's shells passed through the monster. About the 1st of May Lieutenant Cottonham's section was ordered to Vicksburg.

On the morning of the 4th one of Major Bridges' scouts brought the news that a transport heavily laden with stores, was coming down the river. *Here was sport!* Lieutenant Ritter took his guns and masked them at a point where the current ran in near the bank on his side and awaited the vessel's approach. Soon the black smoke of a steamer was seen rising above the tree tops, beyond Carter's Bend, a few miles off, and shortly afterwards she came in sight. On the vessel came, rapidly and quietly, anticipating no danger. The Confederates were ordered to their positions, the guns were loaded, and as the boat came within their range the order "Fire!" was given.

The stillness of the calm summer morning must have seemed to the crew rudely broken, when in quick succession the shrill report of the rifle piece and the loud roar of the twelve-pound howitzer broke upon their ears. The first or second shot cut the tiller rope, and another broke a piston rod of one of the engines. The crew, despairing of escape, hoisted a white flag of surrender, and brought the boat ashore. Major Bridges and Lieutenant Ritter were the first to board the prize, which was found to be the Minnesota. The crew met them at the head of the saloon steps, and politely requested their captors, in true Western style, to "take a drink!" This was as politely declined, but a revolver which one of them wore at his waist was accepted instead — an article of which Lieutenant Ritter was in special need at that time.

The prisoners — seventeen in number — were ordered ashore, and the Confederates took possession. The boat was found to be heavily laden with sutlers' stores — flour, bacon, potatoes, pickles of all sorts, sugar, coffee, rice, ginger-syrup, cheese, butter, oranges, lemons, almonds, preserves, canned oysters, whisky, wines, mosquito nets, clothing, stationery, smokers' articles, etc. To impoverished Confederates no greater mass of wealth could have seemed conceivable. They sat down to a luxurious dinner, which was in preparation at the time of their attack, and relished it, perhaps, more than those for whom it had been intended. Part of the festivities consisted in breaking a bottle of wine over Black Bess, Lieutenant Ritter's iron twelve-pounder, to a shot from which Major Bridges attributed the speedy surrender of the Minnesota. She had long been familiarly known in the battery by this name, but only now at length on this happy occasion received her formal christening. After everything which would be of service was brought ashore, the steamer was fired. Her value was estimated at \$250,000. She was the property of a Yankee speculator.

About 5 P. M. that day the enemy's gunboats appeared, and, without notice to the women and children upon them, began to shell the neighboring plantations.