

port, intending there to cross White River, get in Curtis' front, and dispute the passage of the Black River 3 miles above that place. To delay the enemy and gain time for this movement Sweet's Texas regiment was thrown across White River above Batesville and fell upon his rear, killing, wounding, and capturing over 200 Federals, and taking a number of wagons containing army stores and sutler's goods. He was compelled to retire, however, by the near approach of Washburn's cavalry brigade, marching from Missouri to re-enforce Curtis. General Rust reported it impracticable to cross White River at or near Jacksonport. I then ordered him to Des Arc, 75 miles below, and afterward to cross White River and take position on Cache River, which Curtis must cross in his march southward. This force was increased at Des Arc by the addition of Col. (now Brig. Gen.) D. McRae's regiment of Arkansas infantry, which that indomitable officer had marched to him at the rate of 25 miles a day, arming his men by impressments and purchases on the route. I was enabled to send him a six-gun battery, which just then arrived from General Pike's headquarters, commanded by Capt. (now Maj.) W. E. Woodruff, an officer of tried bravery and skill.

"The order for this battery was given on May 31. It also directed Gen. Pike to send me Dawson's regiment of Arkansas infantry, which might now have been extremely useful. He sent the men, but took away from them their arms. Upon learning this fact I halted them on the march until arms could be procured by purchase or impressment. Three regiments of infantry were being raised east of White River, mounted, to admit of their withdrawal upon any sudden emergency. They were concentrated at Cotton Plant, 15 miles east of Des Arc, and added to General Rust's command. His force amounted to about 5,000 effectives. His instructions were to resist the enemy to the last extremity, blockading roads, burning bridges, destroying all supplies, growing crops included, and polluting the water by killing cattle, ripping the carcasses, and throwing them in. In that country at this season the streams are few and sluggish. No army could march through it so opposed. The only remaining route would be immediately along the bank of White River, crossing Cache at Clarendon. To meet that contingency a gunboat was improvised by Captain Dunnington, by lining the steamer Tom Sugg with cotton bales and mounting an 8-inch columbiad at her bow.

"I proceeded to Devall's Bluff, where the danger seemed greatest, the enemy below making serious demonstrations by land and water daily and the skirmishing being heavy and almost incessant. But after inspecting the work and observing the spirit of the men I decided that a garrison 500 strong could hold out against Fitch, and that I would lead the remainder--about 1,500--to General Ruse, as soon as shotguns and rifles could be obtained from Little Rock, instead of pikes and lances, with which most of them were armed. Two days elapsed before the charge could be effected.

"In that interval Curtis' advance crossed Cache River and attacked General Ruse, whose command, after an engagement of about thirty minutes, retreated in great disorder across White River. Many of his men deserted; both Texans and Arkansians. No report of this affair was ever received, though often called for; consequently I am not able to give any of the details. My instructions for devastating the country were not executed.

"No longer able to prevent the junction of Curtis and Fitch, I withdrew my infantry from White River, evacuating Devall's Bluff without loss of any kind and taking up a new line - that of the Bayou Metre, 12 miles