

CHAPTER XXIV.

VICKSBURG.

High-pressure boilers — A famous battle-ground — Freedom and short commons.

UNPUNCTUALITY is the foible of river steamboats. You think my assertion too sweeping? Well, then, amend it by adding the word Mississippi, and after that listen to reason. The 'Peytona' was behind time when she left Memphis, because a furious head-wind and shoal-water in many places had delayed her so much that she reached the Bluff City six hours later than she was advertised to have quitted it. No fault of the captain's, who was a jolly old fellow, and as anxious as any one else to get forward; nor of the clerk, who did his best to make passengers comfortable. But Mississippi voyages being long voyages, must needs be somewhat uncertain.

Very early on December 3rd we were under way, bound to New Orleans, and by breakfast-time had