

CHAPTER VII.

THE PURSUIT AFTER THE BATTLE—RESULTS OF THE CAMPAIGN.

NIGHT was falling when the victory was complete, and a drenching rain had set in to add to the darkness and confusion. Thomas ordered Wood to pursue by the Franklin road, and the cavalry by the Granny White road, to the intersection with that to Franklin, when Wilson was to take the advance. Smith and Schofield were ordered to follow Wilson on the next day. But few, if any, of the Confederates fled by the Granny White turnpike, for it was commanded by Wilson's cavalry, and the masses streamed through the Brentwood Hills, making the best of their way to the Franklin road. There was hardly the semblance of organization among them till they passed the Harpeth River. Forrest was ordered to retreat on Shelbyville and Pulaski, but he hurried Armstrong's brigade of cavalry across country to get in rear of Hood's routed forces and cover their retreat. Reynolds's and Coleman's brigades had been taken from the line, at the last moment, to cover the passes through the Brentwood Hills from the Granny White road, and had preserved their organization. By delaying the advance of Wilson's horsemen toward the Franklin turnpike, these brigades had saved the larger part of Hood's army from capture. The hospitals at Franklin were abandoned, containing over two thousand wounded. Wilson, with his cavalry, had come

up with the rear guard four miles north of Franklin, at Hollow Tree Gap, and Knipe's division, charging it in front and flank, carried the position, capturing over four hundred prisoners and their colors. At the Harpeth, Johnson's division crossed some distance below, and compelled Hood to abandon the defence of the river at Franklin. At Rutherford Creek, on the 18th, the water was up, the stream was a torrent, and some delay in getting a pontoon train forward gave the enemy a little respite. At Columbia, Forrest rejoined Hood, and his cavalry, with an infantry rear guard under command of Walthall, covered the retreat to the Tennessee. General Walthall's force was made up of the two brigades which had been detached with Forrest, and of three others besides his own division.¹ This force was able to present so strong a front that, aided by the condition of the roads and streams, which retarded pursuit, our advance guard was not able to break through again, and Hood reached the Tennessee, at Bainbridge, by way of Pulaski, on the 26th. Here he was favored by a gleam of good fortune in the arrival of pontoons, which had been floated down from Decatur, where, by some blunder, they had been left by our forces when General Granger had evacuated that post in November.² Their own pontoon train was delayed by the condition of the roads, and part of the defeated army passed the Tennessee before it arrived; but when it came it was laid, and Hood had his shattered forces on the southern bank by the evening of the 27th. A Confederate account

¹ Featherston's brigade of Loring's division, Heiskell's and Field's of Lowry's division, were the three others. Coleman's was now part of Walthall's own division. See Appendix B, II.

² The author learns from officers who were at Decatur that the pontoon bridge had been cut loose, with the expectation that it would be taken in tow by gun-boats; but he is unable to trace the responsibility for the failure either to take it up or to destroy it.

states that soon after the first bridge was down, two National gunboats appeared in the direction of Florence and steamed toward it; but General Stewart opened upon them with a battery of smooth field guns, which was all he then had, and the boats desisted from the attempt to break through the pontoons.¹

From Franklin, on the 17th, Thomas had ordered Steedman to march to Murfreesboro, and thence to proceed by rail to Decatur, occupying the posts in Northern Alabama which had been abandoned earlier in the campaign. At the close of the month Steedman was at Decatur, Wood was near Lexington, in North Alabama, thirty miles southwest of Pulaski, Smith was at Pulaski, and Schofield at Columbia. Thomas issued his orders announcing the close of the campaign, assigning winter quarters to the various corps; but directions were received from Washington to continue operations. The expected march of Sherman northward, from Savannah, made it important that no rest or time for concentration should be given the enemy in the Gulf States, and Thomas prepared for a new campaign.

Among the results of the two days' battle at Nashville had been the capture of about four thousand five hundred prisoners, and fifty-three pieces of artillery, besides small arms in great number. Among the prisoners were Generals Johnson, Smith, Jackson, and Rucker, and a number of regimental officers commanding brigades. The losses in killed and wounded on both sides were small, compared with the material results, though the demoralization of Hood's army, followed so soon by the close of the war, leaves us without the full returns which are necessary to

¹ Sergeant-Major Cunningham's pamphlet. The author has found the statements of Mr. Cunningham so accurate when he has the means of verifying them, that he does not feel at liberty to ignore them in this case.

determine the casualties on the Confederate side. Hood assembled the remnant of his army at Tupelo, Mississippi, and then gave furloughs to part of his men (particularly the Tennesseeans), and asked to be relieved from the command of the army. He does not admit a loss from all causes, from December 15th to 30th, as great as the number of prisoners taken by Thomas's army on the 15th and 16th, and claims that he reassembled at Tupelo an army of 18,500 effective muskets. These figures are nearly worthless for any historical purpose. General Thomas's return of prisoners captured, and deserters received during November and December, show the number to be over thirteen thousand; besides these he reports the capture of 72 cannon and 3,000 muskets. We shall meet with some of the veterans of Hood's army again in the Carolinas, maintaining their old corps organization; but, for the time, they were scattered and demoralized, and seemed almost to lose the character of a disciplined army.

Thomas's losses in the battle of Nashville were 3,057, of which less than four hundred were killed. The analysis of these figures shows that the Fourth Corps suffered a little less than a thousand casualties, of which two-thirds were in the unsuccessful attack upon Overton's Hill. Steedman's losses were over eight hundred, and nearly all of them seem to have occurred in the same assault, those of his second colored brigade (Colonel Thompson's) being fifty per cent. heavier than in any other on the field. The Sixteenth Corps lost 750, which appear to have been pretty evenly divided between the two days. It is noteworthy that the attack upon the angle at Shy's Hill was not a costly one, for the preceding preparation by the enfilading artillery fire, and the shape of the ground, which enabled McMillan to approach closely before exposing his men, show that

success in such cases (when success is possible), follows the use of proper means. The total number of casualties in McMillan's brigade was 118, of which not more than two-thirds occurred in the final assault, and they were less than half of those which occurred in Hubbard's brigade, which went forward on its left against the works in the lower ground, and where Bate's centre and right, holding on with better cover, were able to inflict considerable loss before the crushing of the whole of Hood's left made their position untenable. The Twenty-third Corps was in reserve nearly all of the first day, and its only losses worth mentioning were in Couch's division, when carrying the hill close to Shy's in the evening. The position was of inestimable importance for one so cheaply gained, for the casualties were only 150. Those of the other division in the final assault were less than twenty. As nearly always happens in a panic, the break of the enemy's line was so sudden and complete that the loss was almost wholly on one side. The loss in the cavalry corps was 329, and when distributed among the three divisions, it must also be regarded as trifling, and the larger part, even of this, undoubtedly occurred in carrying the redoubts on the 15th.

These considerations show that the success was due chiefly to the tactical combination of a superior force, and that moral causes, growing out of the preceding part of the campaign, must have had a great effect in producing discouragement among Hood's men, and predisposing them to panic when the break in the line occurred. Hood was evidently in fault, as a tactician, on the 15th, when he allowed Thomas to array his whole force diagonally beyond his left flank, and awaited an attack in such a position. His only hope was to have drawn back to the Brentwood Hills at once, without allowing his troops to become engaged. He

would thus have saved them from the demoralizing effect of being driven from position after position on the first day, and from the conviction (which was partly the cause of its own fulfilment), that they were wholly unable to cope with the National army. On the morning of the 16th he issued orders to his subordinates to prepare for a retreat in the evening; but he could not withdraw under fire, and the decision was reached too late to be of successful accomplishment. The evening found his routed army a disorganized crowd flying from the lost battle-field.

Hood's retreat from Nashville to the Tennessee and Thomas's pursuit were almost equally laborious for their armies, though very different in their effect upon the spirits of the troops. The roads were in horrible condition, even those which had been macadamized being almost impassable. The ordinary country roads were much worse, and, after passing Pulaski, till the Tennessee was reached, the wrecks of wagons and the carcasses of animals filled the way. Hood had been forced to destroy ammunition to get teams to take forward his pontoons, and Wilson and Wood in pursuit had been obliged to leave most of their cannon, and double the teams of the rest. On getting orders from Washington to resume the campaign, Thomas ordered Wood to assemble the Fourth Corps at Huntsville, Ala., Schofield, Smith, and Wilson to concentrate at Eastport, Mississippi. Schofield marched the Twenty-third Corps to Clifton on the Tennessee, preparatory to taking boats up the river, but other orders met him there, transferring him to a distant field upon the sea-coast.

The completeness of the victory at Nashville caused a joyful revulsion of feeling throughout the Northern States. The impatience of the President and of General Grant had only been the expression of a feeling which all the country

had shared. The conviction was general that Hood ought to have been met much nearer the Tennessee River, and the fear that he would be allowed to march to the Ohio was all but universal. Now, however, all vied in giving honor to the successful general, and not a few were ready to blame the authorities at Washington for having doubted, even for a day, the wisdom of Thomas's management of the early campaign. The President, the Secretary of War, and General Grant were not slow or stinting in their congratulations, and between the chief actors in the scene a cordial good understanding was at once established. On the one hand, it was ungrudgingly conceded that the final battle had been skilfully delivered and crowned with the most satisfactory results; on the other, it was felt that the anxiety of the early December days was reasonable, and that the demand for prompt action was such a stimulus to great exertion as the responsible authorities of a government may apply to its most trusted officers in such a crisis, without giving cause for lasting chagrin. In such a time, the reward for success and the responsibility for ill-fortune may neither of them be quite justly proportioned to real desert, and both are apt to be exaggerated. In war, more than in anything else, the proverb "all's well that ends well" is the popular one, and the popular sympathy was evidently with the hero of the great victory.

Few men have the qualities which deserve public confidence in greater measure than General Thomas. He was a patriot whose love of his country was greater than his attachment to a province; a Virginian who refused to follow the example of Lee in taking arms against the National Government which Washington had founded. He was a man of large mould in body and mind, of a quiet, modest dignity, who hated pretence, and avoided notoriety. He was transparently true to his superiors, and kindly consid-

erate to his subordinates. He had the personal courage which would be ashamed of its own display as much as of a cowardice, but which seemed simply oblivious of danger when duty required a risk to be taken. These qualities made him always a trusted lieutenant to his chief, and were the basis of an affectionate and respectful attachment in his own army which was peculiar. His real and unaffected aversion to taking the chief responsibility of command had kept him in secondary positions when his rank in both the regular and volunteer armies would have made him the head of a separate army in the field. In this respect he was not unlike Hardee, in the Confederate Army, who also steadily refused a supreme command. The duties of the soldier, and the exhibition of courage and skill in making the details of a campaign successful, were easy to him; but to become the theme of discussion in Congress and in the newspapers, to be the butt of ten thousand public critics, and to carry the burden of plans whose failure might be ruin to the country—this he hated so heartily and shrank from so naturally, that, after all his long experience, we have seen him protesting that the position assigned him in this last campaign was “the one thing he did not want.” That these qualities in some degree unfitted him for an independent command cannot be questioned. The very anxiety to be right, if it is excessive, produces hesitation in action and timidity in plan. Under such conditions the stimulus from without, coming in the form of urgency from the Government and command from the General-in-Chief, may not have been wholly unwelcome, and unquestionably added vigor to the final movements.

It is, however, in the earlier part of the campaign that the steps taken were most open to question, though very few of the officers and men who served there had any exact knowl-

edge of the means which were at General Thomas's disposal, or of the manner in which they were used. The magnitude of the final success was so splendid, that it seemed to prove each step toward it the best possible; and it is only when we examine the official evidence of the number and position of the troops in Tennessee that we are able to apply to the events which followed the tests afforded by the rules of military art.¹

General Thomas tells us in his official report that, had Hood delayed his advance from Florence ten days longer, he would have met him at Columbia, or some other point south of the Duck River. An early concentration in front of the enemy is thus indicated as the controlling purpose, and Hood's march on Nashville is recognized as the result only of the unforeseen delays in the arrival of General Smith with his divisions. The military student of the campaign is therefore led to inquire whether a concentration of the means at hand would not have opposed to Hood a force which would have kept him at least south of Duck River till Smith could have arrived.

Communication with Sherman was broken on November 12th, and Hood began his advance from Florence on the 20th, though it was not till the 26th that his infantry was all assembled in front of Columbia, Schofield having abandoned Pulaski on the 22d. A fortnight was thus unexpectedly given for concentration, and the resources of the railways were at Thomas's disposal. His tri-monthly return of November 20th shows a force in Tennessee of 59,534 officers and men "present for duty equipped." To determine the deductions necessary for smaller garrisons and bridge

¹ The author has been led by this examination to conclusions quite different from his own predilections. He had assumed, in common with most of his comrades in that campaign, that the Fourth and Twenty-third Corps were the only forces available to oppose Hood until the arrival of Major-General A. J. Smith with the Sixteenth Corps.

guards, no better method can be used than to make them the same as was actually done when the battle of Nashville was imminent. Add to these a garrison of 2,500 for Nashville and Chattanooga each, and we shall find still remaining a force of 47,000 infantry and artillery, and about six thousand cavalry, which there could have been no difficulty in assembling at Columbia before Hood reached there. After Sherman started from Rome, it was known that Wheeler's cavalry had hastened after him. The raid of Breckenridge into East Tennessee was a feeble diversion which the troops in that part of Schofield's department were quite able to meet. Roddey's division of cavalry was the only Confederate force in North Alabama, and gave no trouble during the campaign. Everything combined, therefore, to point to an immediate concentration in front of Hood, as the true policy on our side. General R. S. Granger was at Decatur on November 1st with over five thousand men. Steedman could have joined him there with the five thousand which he subsequently took to Nashville. The bridge and trestle between Pulaski and Athens could have been rebuilt, and if demonstrations on the south of the Tennessee did not keep Hood from committing himself to a campaign north of the river, the divisions of Steedman and Granger could have joined Schofield at Pulaski. If Thomas had joined them there or at Columbia with the remainder of his available force, he would have been superior to Hood in everything but cavalry from the beginning, and would have been able himself to dictate whether a battle should be fought before the arrival of Smith's corps.¹ From the knowledge of the facts we now have, it would seem that Thomas gave undue importance to the necessity of having

¹ See tables in Appendix A.

the Sixteenth Corps present before decisive operations against Hood. When the battle of Nashville was fought, Rousseau's eight thousand or more at Murfreesboro were as wholly out of the account as if they had been north of the Ohio, and nearly five thousand of Cruft's division, besides the post garrison, were kept in the works at the city with General Donaldson's employés, and were not brought into the action. The battle was fought, therefore, with a force numerically less than it would have been if Smith's corps had been entirely absent, and Rousseau and Cruft had been in line instead. It is true that a good many new regiments had taken the place of old ones; but these were not what is commonly meant by raw recruits. They were always officered by men of experience, and many veterans were in the ranks. Four thousand of them swelled the old divisions of the Fourth Corps, and there was no complaint that they did not fight well. As to the provisional organization of convaleseents and furloughed men of the different corps with Sherman, their conduct in Grosvenor's brigade in this action, and subsequently on the North Carolina coast, proved they were scarcely distinguishable from veteran troops under their accustomed flags. But if the troops had not been of the best quality, there would be no less need of handling them according to the principles which military experience has established, and a rapid concentration would still be proper.

When Hood began the campaign in earnest, the first movements of our forces were the reverse of concentric. Granger, instead of joining Schofield, was sent a hundred miles to the east, and the garrison at Johnsonville was taken to the rear of Nashville. This would seem to have been with the idea that it was necessary to protect the rail-ways against expected raids. If so, it was an error, for had

Hood been unwise enough to have detached Forrest for such a purpose, he would have been at the same disadvantage he subsequently was at Nashville, where the absence of the hostile cavalry made the opportunity which resulted so gloriously for our arms. No raid of Forrest's could have done more damage to the Chattanooga Railroad than the forced retreat from Pulaski did to an equally important line, to say nothing of the damage actually done to the former while Hood lay in front of Nashville.

The delay in concentration was also fraught with the very gravest perils to the portion of the army under Schofield. It was Hood's policy to force the fighting with this, in the hope of destroying or capturing it before it could be aided, yet nothing was farther from Thomas's wish than that it should make a precipitate retreat. Had it reached Nashville a single day sooner, Thomas would have been wholly unprepared to meet his adversary, and Steedman's reinforcements would have been cut off. To save time, Schofield took the gravest risks; but as he well said, the slightest mistake on his part, or the failure of a subordinate, might have proved disastrous. The misconduct of Wagner at Franklin would certainly have proved so, but for the heroism of Opdycke and White and the brave men of their commands.

A consideration of all the facts, therefore, seems to show that Thomas should have concentrated every available man in front of Hood before the latter moved; and that the great success of the closing part of the campaign was in spite of this error in its beginning, and by no means because of it. The difficulties had certainly been very great, and to an ordinary man they would have been overwhelming. There was a great scarcity of animals for the cavalry, for the artillery, for the pontoons, and for the wagon trains, while

the season was such as to use up the animals with double rapidity. The army was new to its organization, and though it did all that an army could do, Thomas could hardly have full faith in it till it had been proven. But through all these difficulties a triumph was achieved which has been rarely equalled, and without which even Sherman's position in the heart of the Confederacy and on the communications of its only remaining great army must have lost half its significance.

CHAPTER VIII.

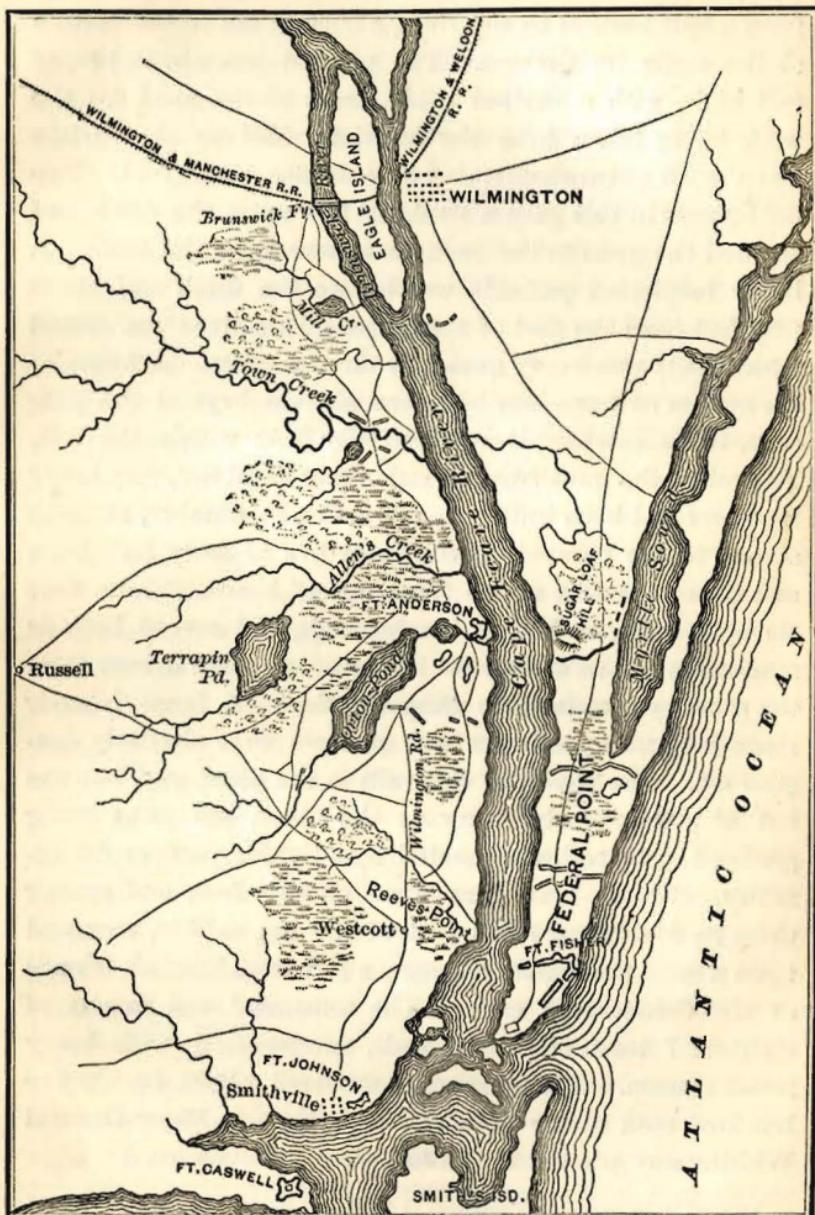
FORT FISHER.

THE subsidiary operations which were intended to co-operate with Sherman's march northward from Savannah were two. First, the capture of Fort Fisher at the mouth of Cape Fear River in North Carolina, and second, the transfer of Schofield from Middle Tennessee to the Carolina coast, where, with the Tenth Corps under Major-General A. H. Terry and the Twenty-third under Major-General Cox, he was to reduce Wilmington and advance upon two lines from that city and from Newbern to Goldsboro, at which place it was expected a junction with Sherman would be made. The attack upon Fort Fisher was practically simultaneous with Sherman's departure from Savannah and with Schofield's from Clifton on the Tennessee River; and the result of all, accomplished two months later, was the reunion at Goldsboro of the army which Sherman had led at Atlanta, except that the Tenth Corps was substituted for the Fourth, which still remained at the West.

The city of Wilmington, which had been one of the principal ports of the Confederacy, is on the left bank of Cape Fear River, about thirty miles from the ocean. The river, near its mouth, runs parallel to the sea-coast, the sandy tongue between, called Federal Point, being hardly more than a mile wide for the last five or six miles of its length.

Fort Fisher was upon the southern point of this, and consisted of sand parapets sodded with marsh grass on the slope, and revetted with the same. The land face extended across the tongue, from the sea-beach to the river, something over a mile from the point, and the parapet was about five hundred yards in length. The sea-face was thirteen hundred yards long from the bastion where it joined the land front to a work known as the mound battery at its southern end. On the extreme point was a smaller detached work known as Fort Buchanan, mounting four heavy guns. Smith Island lies opposite the mouth of the river, giving two channels from the sea into the harbor. Fort Fisher with Fort Buchanan commanded the northern entrance, called New Inlet, and on the main land south of the entrance, two other forts, Caswell and Johnson, protected the principal channel. A village of pilots and fishermen, called Smithville, lay under the guns of Fort Johnson, a quaint little place embowered in live-oaks, where the daring men lived who chose the stormiest nights and the foggiest days for piloting in the blockade runners upon which the South was dependent for its commerce.

Fort Fisher not only commanded New Inlet where the turns of the channel brought every entering vessel under its guns, but the narrowness of Federal Point gave it control of the river also ; and when it should once be in our possession the port would be closed. It had been constructed in accordance with its situation and use, with the two long faces described, but open at the back upon the river and having only a light rifle trench extending from the mound battery to the river, facing Fort Buchanan. As any military force intending to attack the place would necessarily land out of cannon range to the northward, the land face of the fort was the most elaborately built. Starting



Fort Fisher and Wilmington, N. C.

from a half bastion on the river, a curtain ran to the bastion at the angle on the sea. The parapet was about twenty feet high, with a shallow ditch, most of the sand for the work being taken from the interior. Midway the curtain was a small outwork covering an entrance to the fort. Two field-pieces in this gave a flanking fire upon the ditch and assisted the guns in the bastions in sweeping the front. A heavy loopholed palisade was before the ditch and about fifty feet from the foot of the slope. This front was armed with twenty-one heavy guns and three mortars. A formidable system of torpedoes had been planted beyond the palisade, to be discharged by electricity from within the fort. To protect the guns from an enfilading naval fire, very heavy traverses had been built, about a dozen in number, at right angles to the parapet, from twenty-five to forty feet long, and rising ten feet above the gunners' heads. These were strongly built, as hollow bomb-proofs, and served both as magazines and as shelter for the garrison when driven from the guns by a cannonade from the fleet. A large interior magazine and some stores and quarters were similarly constructed. The sea-front was built in the same way, but was not so continuously heavy as the other, the guns being grouped in batteries connected by a lighter parapet for infantry. Twenty-four guns were on this face, and among them an Armstrong rifled gun of 150 lbs. calibre, mounted upon a solid mahogany carriage, a gift from English friends of the Confederate cause. The armament was mostly of eight- and ten-inch columbiads, interspersed with heavy rifled cannon. The garrison numbered about twenty-five hundred men under Colonel Lamb, though Major-General Whiting was present in the fort when it surrendered.¹

General Terry reports his prisoners at 2,083, but does not state the casualties among the Confederates.

An attempt to take the fort in December had been fruitless, but the strong opinion of Rear-Admiral Porter and of some of the army officers that it could be taken, led to the speedy renewal of the effort. General Terry was put in command of Ames's division and Abbott's brigade of the Twenty-fourth Corps, and Paine's division of the Twenty-fifth Corps, with two light batteries. A fleet of transports conveyed them and a siege-train to the rendezvous on the North Carolina coast, where they met Admiral Porter's fleet. Storms delayed the landing, which was effected January 13th, upon the beach about five miles north of the fort and under cover of the fire of the fleet. The shore there is a mere key of sand a few hundred yards wide, and separated from the mainland by Myrtle Sound, a long and shallow bay of which the outlet is at Masonboro Inlet, a few miles further north. Nearly two hundred small boats from the navy, besides steam-tugs were employed in taking the troops from the transports to the shore, and the whole was done between eight in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon, though a heavy surf beat continuously upon the open coast.

After several reconnoissances, it was determined to establish a line of contravallation across the point about two miles from the fort, which should protect Terry's camp from any attack in rear during his operations. This line was established and occupied by Paine's division and Abbott's brigade. The interior of Federal Point and the part of the peninsula along the river is a shallow fresh-water swamp, overgrown with pines, and with a thicket of smaller trees and shrubs. The first efforts were aimed at establishing the line farther away from the fort, with its flanks resting upon the swamps; but these were found to be so shallow as to make no protection, and the trench was therefore put where it could reach from river to the sea. Under cover of

the fire of the fleet, Curtis's brigade of Ames's division was moved down along the river toward the fort, and reached a small unfinished outwork in front of the west end of the land face, while Terry, with General Curtis and Colonel Comstock of General Grant's staff (who accompanied the expedition as chief engineer), made a reconnaissance within six hundred yards of the works. Curtis had approached the fort at this place on the former expedition, and the result of the reconnaissance confirmed his opinion that it was the proper point for an assault, which it was determined to make the next day. Admiral Porter was requested to maintain a steady fire of the fleet upon the works, and to destroy the palisade in front of the ditch, so as to prevent delay when the attacking force should move forward. After consultation, the hour of 3 P.M. of the 15th was fixed for the assault, which General Ames was ordered to make with his division, and the Admiral ordered a party of sailors and marines, under Commander Breese, to land and attack the bastion at the sea-angle at the same time with Ames's assault upon the other end of the land front.

Admiral Porter had maintained an occasional fire on the fort during the night, and at an early hour in the morning of the 15th, sixty men-of-war and gunboats, arranged in a great curve off the shore, opened a steady and systematic cannonade upon it. The method adopted was to fire slowly and with great care to get the range accurately, taking the traverses in regular order, and endeavoring to dismount the guns between them. A designated section of the fleet directed their fire upon the palisade. A steady rain of great projectiles was thus kept up upon the fort, many of them eleven and thirteen inch shells, driving the infantry of the garrison to their bomb-proofs. The Confederate artillerists vainly tried to match the persistent cannonade of the ships.

One by one their guns were silenced, many were dismounted and broken, till, by the time fixed for the assault, hardly any of the larger cannon were in condition to be used.

Ames had kept Curtis's brigade in the advanced work it had occupied the evening before, with Pennypacker's and Bell's in supporting distance. At two o'clock a line of sharpshooters, provided with shovels, ran forward and established themselves in pits a hundred and seventy-five yards from the fort. The infantry of the garrison now began to man the parapet, and opened with their muskets upon Curtis's line, which advanced to a point about four hundred yards in rear of the sharpshooters, when they also quickly covered themselves with a shallow trench in the sand. Again Curtis was moved forward to the cover of a little ridge in the sands much nearer the enemy, while Pennypacker's brigade occupied the trench he had left, and Bell's brigade came to the advanced work, which had been Curtis's first position. The signal was now given to the fleet to change the direction of its fire, and Curtis's brigade rushed at the end of the half-bastion next the river. The ground along the river bank was marshy, and the palisades were standing in some places; but a party of axemen with the head of the column quickly cleared the way of obstructions, and there was no halt till the men swarmed over the parapet, and took it in reverse as far as the first traverse. At the same time Commander Breese's storming party from the ships charged upon the bastion at the sea-angle, but the enemy ran forward a light gun or two in the bastion, and another in the outwork at the middle of the curtain opened on them, while they were met with a steady musketry fire from the parapet. Their position had none of the advantages of Ames's, and they were soon driven back with considerable loss.

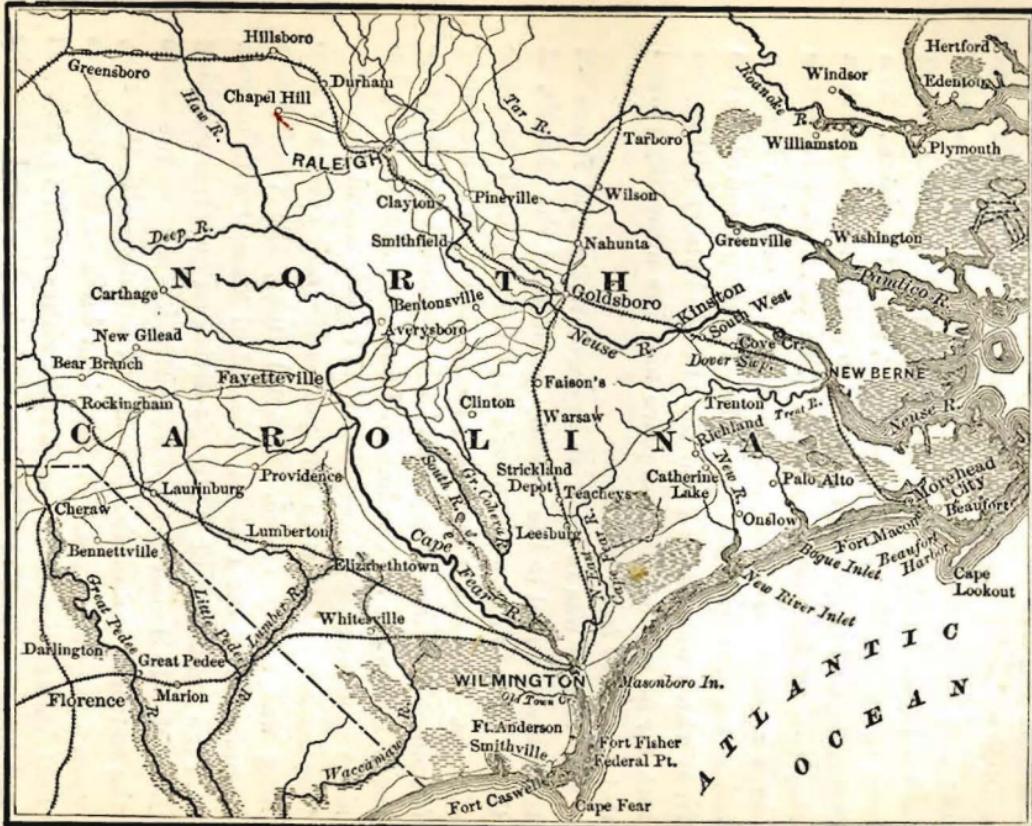
At the river side Pennypacker's brigade went forward to

Curtis's support, and carried the palisade reaching from the end of the earthwork to the water, taking a number of prisoners. A hand-to-hand conflict began, in which the garrison were slowly driven back from one traverse to another. In carrying the third traverse, Colonel Pennypacker fell badly wounded; Bell's brigade was ordered up and formed along the river within the fort, but the interior was full of trenches from which sand for the parapet had been dug, and the magazines and the ruins of barracks and storehouses made tenable defences for the garrison, so that the progress was slow. By six o'clock nine traverses had been carried, and Terry now ordered to Ames's assistance Abbott's brigade and the Twenty-seventh colored regiment from Paine's division. Abbott was able to complete the occupation of the land front, and Ames directed a general advance upon the reverse of the sea front, which cleared the works and took full possession of the fort. In the final effort Curtis had been wounded in the head by a canister-ball, and Colonel Bell received a fatal shot while leading forward his brigade.

The garrison retreated precipitately to the shelter of Fort Buchanan, where, upon the advance of Abbott's brigade against them, they were surrendered late in the evening by General Whiting and Colonel Lamb, their commanders. While the attack upon the fort was going on, General Hoke had made some demonstrations of attack upon the line of General Paine, and Commander Breese's sailors and marines were sent, after their repulse, to strengthen that line; but a slight skirmish was all that followed, and Hoke retired, leaving the garrison to its fate. The fighting along the parapet had been obstinate, and the losses were severe in proportion to the numbers engaged, especially in officers, of whom fifty were killed and wounded. The casualties in the rank and file were about six hundred.

From the time the assault began the ships could give no further assistance, and the advantages for defence which the traverses and the obstructions within the fort gave, were such as to make the work of Ames and his brigade commanders hardly less difficult than the assault of a well-manned field fortification. The assault of the detachment from the ships, though unsuccessful, was of assistance as a diversion, and enabled the infantry to get forward faster than they could otherwise have done. The cannonade from the ships appears to have destroyed the connection between the torpedoes which had been placed in the ground along the front which was assailed and the electric battery within the fort, for no explosions took place and the attacking parties did not suffer from this cause.

The victory was in itself an important one, and it was all the more grateful to the country because of the chagrin at the so recent failure of Butler's expedition against the same fortress. The other forts near Smithville were immediately abandoned by the enemy, and their armament also was captured, making in all one hundred and sixty-nine cannon, besides small arms and stores, and over two thousand prisoners. The harbor was now in our possession and blockade running was nearly ended. General Hoke, the Confederate commander of the District, intrenched himself with his own and the remainder of Whiting's divisions, on a line reaching from Myrtle Sound to Cape Fear River, a mile or two above the southern end of the Sound. Nearly opposite this line, upon a projecting point of the right bank of the river, was Fort Anderson, a heavy earthwork, either built or enlarged and strengthened at this time. From this point also, the channel was planted with torpedoes, and full use was made of all the means for obstructing the passage of the fleet which the ingenuity of the Confederates had devised.



Map of North Carolina.

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTURE OF WILMINGTON—BATTLE OF KINSTON.

THE orders which had been sent General Schofield to move the Twenty-third Corps eastward reached him on January 14th. River transports took the troops down the Tennessee and up the Ohio to points where railway transportation could be got, and the transfer to Washington and Alexandria was then completed by rail. The distance travelled was fourteen hundred miles, and the corps was ready to take ship before February 1st; but the unusual severity of the winter weather had frozen the Potomac River, and it was not till the 4th that the first detachments of the troops sailed. Meanwhile Schofield had joined General Grant at Fortress Monroe and had accompanied him to the mouth of Cape Fear River to hold a consultation with General Terry and Admiral Porter with regard to future operations in the Department of North Carolina, as the new command was designated. The result was the decision to make Wilmington the first objective point of the campaign, so that a new base might be secured for Sherman if circumstances should oblige him to concentrate his army south of Goldsboro. The first step accomplished, Schofield's task would be to open the route from Newberne to Goldsboro, rebuilding the railway, and uniting both his corps there in time to meet Sherman for the final operations of the general campaign when the concentration of the grand army should be complete.

Returning to Washington, Schofield, embarked with Cox's division on February 4th, leaving the rest of the corps to fol-

low as fast as ships could be procured. A gale off Cape Hatteras delayed the transports for a day or two, but the division landed safely at Fort Fisher on the 9th. The fort still bore evidence of the extraordinary bombardment it had undergone, and its broad sandy interior was thickly strewn with great shells rusted red in the weather, and resembling nothing so much as a farmer's field strewn with pumpkins. On the 11th Terry's line was advanced close enough to that of the enemy to compel him to hold it in force. The next night the attempt was made to convey pontoons up the coast by the navy, while Cox's and Ames's divisions marched along the beach to receive the boats, haul them over the sands and lay a bridge across Myrtle Sound in a narrow place in rear of Hoke. The weather became so stormy, however, that the boats could not be brought to the rendezvous and the infantry marched back to their camps before morning. The night was dark but intensely cold, and the gale from the ocean seemed to find every button-hole in the men's clothing, and to chill them to the marrow. A severe northeaster swept the coast for several days, but on the night of the 14th a new attempt was made to move the pontoons to the selected place. This time the boats were put on their wagons and all the scanty supply of horses and mules was used to haul them forward along the beach. The high tide and surf proved too great a hindrance; the sand, where not washed by the water, was too deep and soft for the teams, and where the waves broke, the sea was too much for them; so this also had to be given up. Before they reached the appointed position the moon rose, revealing the naval squadron in the offing, and revealing also the marching troops to the enemy, who were put upon the alert to defeat the effort to cross the Sound.

Schofield now determined to try the right bank of the

river, where there was at least room for manœuvre, although the country was very swampy and filled with ponds and lakes. Cox's and Ames's divisions were ferried to Smithville, where they were joined by Moore's brigade of Couch's division, just landed, and the whole, under command of General Cox, was directed to advance upon Fort Anderson and attempt to turn it. The vessels of the fleet had from time to time engaged the fort at long range, and Admiral Porter ordered a section of them to renew the fire when the land forces should advance. General Schofield made his headquarters temporarily upon a steamer, passing from one bank to the other as circumstances required.

The 16th was used in getting the troops over the bay with a few field pieces and a small train of wagons. Cox's division marched on the morning of the 17th, meeting the enemy's cavalry within two or three miles of the village, and pressing them back by a continuous skirmish till within two miles of the fort, established a line with the right flank resting on the river, and opened communication with the fleet, having marched ten miles during the day. Next morning the advance was resumed and the enemy driven within the fortifications. A reconnaissance showed that besides the principal fort upon the river, a line of infantry trench ran at right angles from the bank to the foot of Orton Pond, a lake several miles long, giving it a front which could not be turned except by a long detour. The line was protected by abatis, and epaulements for field artillery were seen in places along it, from which a rapid fire with shrapnel was opened as the National forces came within range. In accordance with his orders, Cox intrenched two brigades to invest the fort on this side, and with two others marched for the head of Orton Pond, sending directions to Ames's division to join him there. The detour required a march of

about fifteen miles, and it was almost night when the cause-way through the marsh at the head of the pond was reached. The enemy made a sharp resistance with cavalry, but by sending detachments on the flanks to pass the swamps by wading, the crossing was forced and high ground beyond was occupied. During the day the fleet had continued a cannonade of the fort, and demonstrations had been kept up by the two brigades in position. In the night the enemy abandoned the place, and the troops hastening forward by the west side of Orton Pond to complete their work, were met by the news that the fort was in our possession, with ten pieces of heavy ordnance which made its armament.

On the right bank of the river the enemy retreated to Town Creek, destroying bridges and obstructing the road. On the other side of the river he fell back to a strong position opposite the mouth of Town Creek, covered by swamps on the east. General Terry followed Hoke's retreat up the left bank, and it appearing that the greater part of Hoke's force was in his front, Ames's division was taken back to that side on the 19th, while Cox continued his advance to Town Creek, eight miles above the fort, driving a rear guard before him. Town Creek is a deep, unfordable stream, with marshy banks, which, near the river, had been dyked and cultivated as rice-fields. A strong line of earthworks had been built on the north bank of the stream before the evacuation of Fort Anderson, and in them were a Whitworth rifled cannon and two smooth twelve-pounder field pieces. Hagood's brigade, of Hoke's division, strengthened by another Confederate regiment, held the works, and had removed the planking from the bridge. The artillery swept the long causeway through the marsh by which the bridge must be approached.

Henderson's brigade was advanced to the edge of the low

ground, and a strong line of skirmishers worked their way through the marsh to the edge of the stream. Careful reconnoissance was made above and below, and during the night a small flat-boat, of the kind used for collecting the rice crop, was found a mile or two down the creek, and was secured and guarded. The north bank, occupied by Hagood, was a bluff near the bridge, rising twenty or thirty feet from the water. Farther below the ground falls off into marsh and rice fields, bordered by forest, which hid them from view. The situation was reported to General Schofield, with Cox's purpose to cross part of his force at the place below the bridge, by means of the flat-boat, in the morning. The vessels of the navy had ascended the river, keeping pace with the troops on the shore, removing torpedoes and obstructions as they advanced, and prepared to assist the army by shelling any of the enemy's positions they could reach. The Confederates were careful, however, to select their points of defence out of range from the river after the evacuation of Fort Anderson.

Early in the morning of the 20th Henderson's brigade renewed active demonstrations on Hagood's front, while the slow work of ferrying the other brigades went on. The boat would carry only fifty men, and the marshes and dykes were impassable for animals, so that the mounted officers left their horses behind. Casement's and Sterl's brigades were all the morning getting over. Henderson's sharpshooters had succeeded in getting cover so close to the creek as to prevent any of the enemy from showing themselves above the parapet. The Whitworth gun had also been disabled by our artillery fire. Moore was now ordered to cross his brigade, and about the middle of the afternoon Cox assembled the three brigades on the north edge of the swamp, which they had succeeded in wading. The impracticability

of the country had been so relied upon by the enemy that no pickets were found posted, and the division was marched rapidly to the west till it crossed the road leading to Wilmington, about two miles in rear of the Confederate position. Moore was ordered to march still farther westward to reach a parallel road, and prevent escape in that direction. Casement and Sterl were formed facing toward the creek, and marching rapidly forward, made the attack. The brigade, commanded by Colonel Simonson in Hagood's absence, made a brave resistance, but was broken by a charge. Simonson had begun a line of breastworks facing to the rear, upon hearing of the presence of the National troops, and leaving a small force to hold the dismantled bridge, he had formed here; but the charge swept everything away, and he himself, with three hundred and seventy-five of his men and both his cannon, were captured. The rest of the brigade fled by the "old public road" toward which Moore had been sent; but the latter did not reach it in time to intercept them.

The bridge was repaired during the night, and Cox resumed his march in the morning. Hoke held stubbornly to his position in front of Terry, and the column on the right bank of the river was therefore directed by Schofield to proceed cautiously toward Wilmington, to ascertain the condition of the Wilmington and Manchester Railway, and take advantage of any opportunity to get possession of the crossing of Brunswick River, which is the name given to the west channel of Cape Fear River, where it passes around Eagle Island, in front of the city. About noon Mill Creek was reached, six miles from the last camp, and the bridge was found to be burned. This caused a couple of hour's delay till it could be repaired so that the artillery could pass. The negroes of a large plantation there made the most extravagant jubilation over the advent of the National troops.

The forage and provisions were, as usual, applied to military use, but the recent slaves assumed ownership of the household goods in the deserted plantation homestead, and comical disputes were witnessed among the women, as they claimed title to a bed or a table because they had long since mentally appropriated it, and inwardly determined to make it theirs when this eagerly expected day should come. This novel administration upon an estate was conducted as if the world could never have another dark day for them; but it was followed, within twenty-four hours, by a serious revolution of feeling, when they learned that, in a country eaten up by an army, it became a troublesome question to tell how even they could live.

By the time the bridge was rebuilt the troops had eaten their noon meal and marched more rapidly to Brunswick ferry. The ruins of the railway bridge were still smoking, for it had been burned only that morning. A pontoon bridge had been at the ferry, and in the hasty retreat the order to scuttle and destroy the boats had been so incompletely carried out that more than half of them were uninjured, and many of the rest could be quickly repaired. This work was immediately begun, while some of the boats were used to ferry a detachment over to the island, which was about a mile wide, but an almost unbroken marsh. A causeway led to the city ferry, but an epaulement had been made across this near the further end, and a cannon or two swept the narrow road. The advanced guard was ordered to deploy skirmishers in the swamp and drive off the gunners if possible. A field battery of rifled guns was put in position, on a rise of ground on the west bank, to cover the detachment on the island, and the explosion of some of its shells in the city helped to hasten matters by showing that the town was within range. Meanwhile the work of repair-

ing the pontoons was hurried, and reconnoissances made in the vicinity. Some railway employés came into camp and from them was learned the falsity of a rumor that General Hardee had brought his Charleston troops to Wilmington. Great columns of smoke soon began to ascend in the city, telling of the destruction of naval stores, and of preparation to evacuate the town.

Late in the afternoon a despatch was received from General Schofield, stating that Terry had been unable to make progress, and had evidence, which seemed reliable, that Hoke had been largely reinforced. Cox was therefore ordered to return down the river, and be ferried over to the left bank. Sure that the evidence before him made the immediate evacuation of the city certain, he put only one brigade in motion, and reported fully the circumstances. The great difficulty couriers found in reaching the points on the swamp-lined river, where they could communicate with the fleet and get a boat to put them over, made it midnight before a mutual understanding could be reached and different directions from Schofield could be received; but the latter warmly approved his subordinate's exercise of discretion, in remaining with the greater part of the division in apparent disobedience of reiterated orders. Hoke's appearance of resuming the aggressive proved to have been a demonstration to cover his retreat during the night, and the city was entered without opposition at daybreak next morning, thus celebrating Washington's birthday by the completion of another important step in the campaign.

Several things combined to make Newberne a more useful base of supply for Sherman than Wilmington. The harbor at Morehead City and Fort Macon was a better one than that at the mouth of Cape Fear River, and would admit vessels of deeper draught. The railway, between the harbor

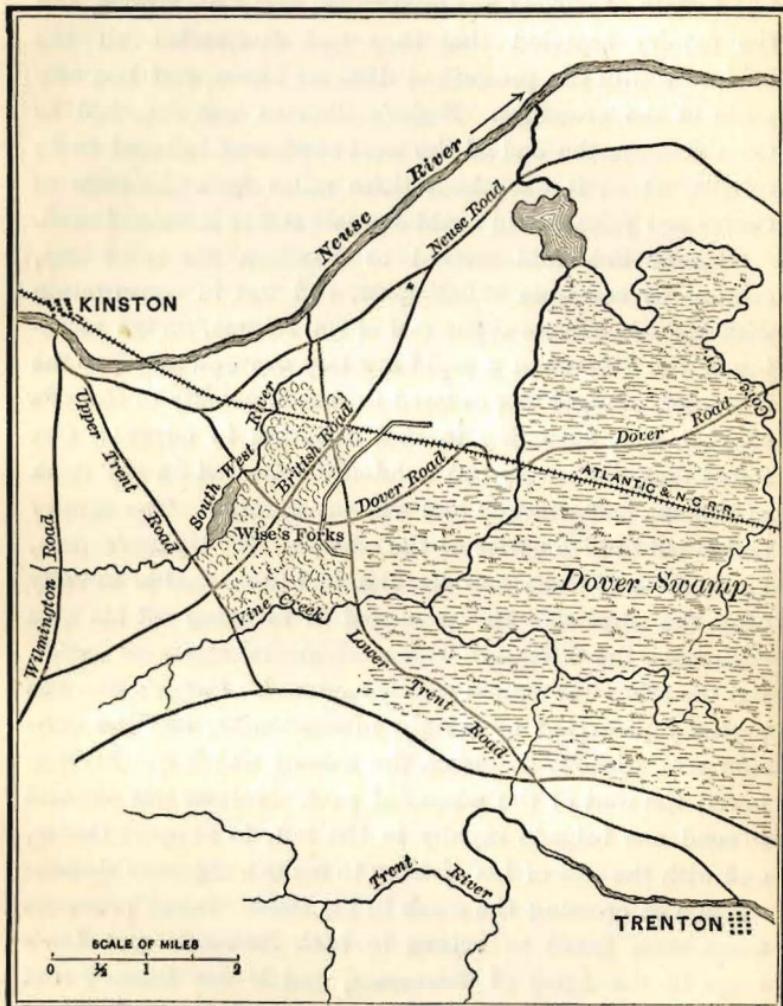
and Newberne, some forty miles long, was in operation, with some locomotives and cars already there, while nothing of the kind was at Wilmington, the enemy having carefully removed all railway rolling stock on that line. From Newberne, much of the way to Kinston through the Dover Swamp, the iron was not so injured that it might not be used again, and the reconstruction of the railway by that route would be both easier and more economical. As, therefore, a safe base for Sherman was assured at Wilmington in case of need, Schofield turned his attention to the work of preparing a still better line of communication from Newbern to Goldsboro.

Several thousand convalescents returning to Sherman's army had been sent from Washington to Newbern, and a division of new troops, under General Ruger, assigned to the Twenty-third Corps, had also been ordered to proceed to that place. The old garrisons of the district would furnish another division. On February 26th General Cox was detached from his command at Wilmington, and ordered by sea to Newbern to carry out the purposes described. Colonel Wright, Sherman's Chief Engineer of Railways, was ordered to the same point to take charge of the railway rebuilding. Reaching Newbern on the last day of February, the organization of forces was immediately made. The convalescents were formed into temporary battalions, with as much reference to their former associations as practicable, and these were distributed among the brigades of the properly organized troops. In this way two divisions were formed, and Generals I. N. Palmer and S. P. Carter were, respectively, assigned to their command. Ruger's division arrived a little later. On March 1st Classen's brigade, of Palmer's division, was sent to Core Creek, sixteen miles, to be followed next day by Carter's division, so that the me-

chanical work might begin at once. At that time only one Confederate brigade (Whitford's) was known to be in the vicinity; but the almost total lack of wagons made it necessary to limit operations to the covering of the railway work. The whole number of wagon-teams in the district was fifty, and the utmost these could do was to supply the divisions at points near the end of the completed railway.

About three miles below Kinston a considerable stream, known as Southwest Creek, crosses the railway and wagon-roads leading to Newbern. The upper course of this stream is nearly parallel to the Neuse River, and almost the whole country between the Neuse and Trent Rivers, thirty miles long, is a great marsh, called the Dover Swamp in the lower part, and Gum Swamp in the upper. It was important to get control of the position along Southwest Creek as soon as possible, for the slight ridge on the hither side of that stream was the only dry land in the vicinity, and upon it were the principal roads of the Neuse Valley. Information had been received that Hoke had reached Kinston with a large division, and rumors of still further reinforcements to the enemy were rife. It was also known that a Confederate iron-clad steamer was at Kinston, and it was desirable to get positions on the Neuse where batteries could be placed. At the risk, therefore, of being short of rations, Cox advanced two divisions on the March 7th to the upper margin of the swamp at Wise's Forks, Palmer's on the right, covering the railroad, and Carter's on the left, covering the Dover Road, with an interval of nearly a mile between them. The Twelfth New York Cavalry, the only mounted men in the command, were used to patrol the roads to the left, and watch the crossings of Southwest Creek for five or six miles above, the stream being unfordable at this season. An old road, known as the British Road, ran parallel to the creek a

mile in front of the position, and Colonel Upham, of Carter's division, was placed with two regiments at its inter-



Map of Battle of Kinston.

section with the Dover Road, to cover approaches from the left. Some artillery fire had been drawn from the enemy

on the other side of Southwest Creek in taking these positions, both at the railway crossing and at the Dover Road; but a chain of pickets was established along the stream, and the cavalry reported that they had dismantled all the bridges within the prescribed distance above, and had outposts at the crossings. Ruger's division was marched to Gum Swamp, the end of the next section of railroad to be rebuilt, where it was about three miles from the lines of Carter and Palmer, and could support either in case of need.

General Schofield arrived at Newbern the same day, coming by sea from Wilmington, and was in consultation with his subordinate at the end of the railway, on the morning of the 8th, when a rapid artillery fire was heard at the left front. Ruger was ordered to march quickly to Carter's support, and, hastening in that direction in advance, Cox found that the enemy had suddenly appeared on the flank of Upham, and attacked him without warning. The cavalry had failed to give notice of the advance, and Upham's men, being most of them new recruits, had been unable to rally after the surprise. He succeeded in bringing off his own regiment—the Fifteenth Connecticut—in tolerable order, but the other was almost wholly captured. Carter's line was partially protected by a light intrenchment, and the division met, without flinching, the assault which quickly followed the rout of the advanced post. Palmer was ordered to send one brigade rapidly to the left, to support Carter, and with the rest of his division to make a vigorous demonstration of crossing the creek in his front. Some prisoners taken were found to belong to both Stewart's and Lee's corps of the Army of Tennessee, and it was learned that General Bragg was commanding the Confederate forces in person, with the troops of the North Carolina district under Hoke, strengthened by that part of Hood's Army of Tennes-

see which had reached North Carolina, under Clayton and D. H. Hill.

The fact was that as Sherman was rapidly approaching from the South, Johnston, who had just been assigned to the command of all the forces opposing him, had authorized Bragg to take the troops the latter had assembled at Goldsboro, with the available part of Hood's army, which had reached Smithfield, and with these strike fiercely at the National column coming from Newbern, in the hope of routing and driving it back in time to make a new concentration of the whole in front of Sherman before he should reach the Cape Fear River. The success, however, was limited to the surprise of Upham's little command. Carter's division, at Wise's Forks, aided by the brigade sent from Palmer, maintained the fight till Ruger arrived, when his division filled the space between the two wings, and speedily making a barricade with fallen timber and other material at hand, a connected line of breastworks soon covered the whole front. The country was of tangled wood and swamp, which impeded movement and prevented either side from seeing far. The success of Bragg's first onset led him to think he had the whole of Cox's command broken, though the principal line had not been reached and was never shaken. Learning the mistake, the Confederate General adjusted his lines anew and advanced again, but was easily repulsed.

As the information received from prisoners showed at least three divisions of the enemy engaged, Schofield directed Cox to maintain a watchful defensive till the arrival of the remainder of the Twenty-third Corps, which was marching across the country from Wilmington, and might be expected in a day or two. He himself returned to Newberne to get into more immediate communication with other portions of the Department. During the 9th lively

skirmishing continued : Bragg rebuilt the bridges over the creek behind him, and endeavored to push detachments beyond Palmer's right flank, between it and the river. This was prevented without much difficulty, though it kept Palmer harassed. On the morning of the 10th a serious attack was made upon Carter's front and left flank. Anticipating this, Carter's line of breastworks had been extended a long distance on the left, recurving to the rear, and these had been occupied by a skirmish line. As soon as the attack came (which proved to be by Hoke's division) McQuiston's brigade, of Ruger's division, which had been placed in reserve, was ordered at double quick step to Carter's left. Hoke was met by a severe fire of canister and shrapnel from the artillery, as well as by a steadily sustained infantry fire, and after a vain but strenuous effort to carry the line he was forced to withdraw. McQuiston was ordered to charge after him from the flank and did so, capturing several hundred prisoners. But the advance of the enemy upon Ruger now came, and McQuiston was not allowed to follow Hoke far, but was quickly recalled to support the centre, where the line was very thin. Palmer was also called upon for several battalions from the right, and Ruger was made strong enough to repulse Hill's and Clayton's men in their turn. During the progress of this latter attack, General Schofield arrived again from Newbern, and learning the persistent character of Bragg's effort, sent urgent messages to Couch to hasten the marching of his command. Bragg, however, had become convinced that he could make no farther impression on the line before him, and retreated in the night to Kinston, where a small detachment was left, and the rest of his forces were moved rapidly through Goldsboro, to join in the concentration which Johnston was making in front of Sherman.

The question of numbers, whether of those engaged or of the casualties, in this, as in all the later engagements of the war, is not easy to solve. The best Confederate authorities speak of the forces under Bragg, which properly belonged to the North Carolina district, as about eight or ten thousand men.¹ The number of the Army of Tennessee, who were reported as being with Bragg at Smithfield a week later, was 3,950. It is probable that these were the same who had been in the engagement at Kinston, diminished by their losses in that action ; and as the well-known method of the Confederate officers, in reporting their "effective" force, always reduced it ten or fifteen *per cent.* and often much more below our "present for duty," the figures given represent a total force of thirteen to fifteen thousand. Certainly Bragg thought they were enough to "enable him to win a victory," as he wrote Johnston, over the three divisions advancing from Newbern, and the recent experience of the enemy in attacking Schofield's troops, either at the west or east, had not warranted him in hoping much from an assault with inferior force, even if he had been aware of the irregular nature of the organizations which made up the provisional command.

The losses on the National side were 1,257, of which 935 were captured from Colonel Upham's advanced post. The remaining 322 were killed and wounded in defending our breastworks from the assaults of Bragg's troops. No part of the principal line was for a moment in his possession, and the character of the engagement was the oft-repeated one of a destructive repulse from a stoutly held intrenchment. The prisoners taken by the sally from our left were 266, and the overwhelming presumption is that Bragg's total

¹ Johnston's narrative, p. 378, says they were "supposed to amount to six or eight thousand men." Beauregard put them at ten thousand, and the Army of Tennessee at six thousand. See Appendix E, II.

loss must have equalled or exceeded that of Schofield's troops, including what resulted from the surprise of the advanced guard, and which was primarily occasioned by the inadequate performance of outpost duty by the cavalry.

After Bragg's retreat, Schofield steadily pressed the work of rebuilding the railway. Kinston was occupied on March 14th, and a large force was set at work to build a wagon-bridge over the Neuse River there, as well as in assisting Colonel Wright in renewing the railway bridge and completing the railroad to that point. The iron-clad steamer which had been at Kinston was burned and sunk when Bragg retreated, and its remains were among the last traces of the navy which at one time had swarmed in the Southern bays and rivers.

On reaching Kinston, Schofield had ordered Terry to advance from Wilmington along the line of the railroad toward Goldsboro. This was done, reaching Faison's Station, twenty miles south of the Neuse, on the 20th, and Terry now came within communicating distance of Sherman, by whose directions he marched upon Cox's bridge on the 22d, and secured for the army that crossing of the river. The obstructions in the Neuse River below Kinston were removed, and steamboats reached Schofield's camp on the 18th. A day or two was spent in the accumulation of supplies, and, during the 19th, the dull pounding of a distant cannonade was heard, which proved to be the Battle of Bentonville, nearly fifty miles away. On the 20th, Schofield marched toward Goldsboro, which he entered with little opposition on the 21st, and there, in a couple of days more, was reassembled the grand army under Sherman, whose march from Savannah had been quite as remarkable as the former one from Atlanta to the sea, and the outline of which we have now to trace.

CHAPTER X.

SAVANNAH TO COLUMBIA.

THE occupation of Savannah brought with it many questions of administration of a semi-political character, which Sherman was glad to turn over to the civil officers of the Government as quickly as possible. Secretary Stanton visited the city as soon as its capture was known, and authoritatively announced the action of the President in regard to the captured cotton and other stores, the abandoned lands, and the refugee negroes. In his consultations with Sherman, the latter learned what was then the purpose of the Government regarding terms of peace if symptoms of a desire to submit to the National Constitution should be shown by any of the States in rebellion. The General, however, as far as he could, avoided all affairs that were not strictly military, and devoted himself to preparations for an early renewal of the campaign. The men were clothed and shod, the artillery and wagon-trains were overhauled and repaired, and supplies were collected and distributed. The experience of the march through Georgia was turned to the best account in determining what stores should be taken with the columns, and what could probably be obtained from the country.

Sherman's plan of campaign was fixed early in January, and preliminary movements were immediately begun. General Howard concentrated most of the right wing at Beau-

fort, S. C., by means of transport vessels, part of one corps being ordered to march from Savannah by the Union Causeway in the same direction. The left wing, under General Slocum, was directed to move up both banks of the Savannah about forty miles, then to unite at Robertsville in South Carolina, while Howard should advance from Beaufort to Pocotaligo, driving Hardee's forces over the Combahee River, and occupying the country between that stream and the Coosawhatchie. Howard's movement to Beaufort would thus seem to threaten Charleston, while Slocum's looked toward Augusta; and the enemy would be left in doubt as to Sherman's purpose, though the positions of his troops would be the best possible for the advance upon Columbia, which was the objective for the first stage of the campaign. At Pocotaligo, Howard would be fifty miles on his way, yet he would still be near a water base for supplies until the moment of beginning the long march into the interior. The same would be true of Slocum, for Robertsville was near Sister's Ferry, on the Savannah, and the wagons of all the columns could therefore be full when communication with Savannah should be broken. An interior line of defences about the city was prepared by Colonel Poe, Chief Engineer, and a garrison was assigned from General Foster's department, so that the army in the field might not be diminished. A few changes were made in the organization of the corps. Logan returned and resumed the command of the Fifteenth; in the divisions and brigades a few officers were relieved and went north by sea, while others, who had been wounded or ill, rejoined the army.

Sherman's purpose was to feint on both Augusta and Charleston, but to march directly upon Columbia and thence to Goldsboro, where he hoped to open communication with Newbern and Beaufort, N. C. The capture of

Fort Fisher just before he began the campaign, and the transfer of General Schofield with the Twenty-third Corps to the Department of North Carolina were steps determined upon by General Grant to facilitate his work, and gave him greater assurance of success. His plans had been settled, however, before he knew of either of these auxiliary movements. He felt sure that no sufficient force could be brought by the Confederate Government to oppose him till he should reach the Cape Fear River. There, the contingency to be provided for was that Lee might break away from Richmond, and throw himself upon his army before Grant could overtake him with the Army of the Potomac. To guard against this, Grant redoubled his efforts to extend his left to the westward of Petersburg, so that no direct Southern route could be open to Lee; but the latter, forced to move westward before turning south, might be no nearer to Sherman than himself. If this should not prove true, Sherman would still be abundantly strong to make a dilatory defensive contest with the combined Confederate forces in the East till Grant could reach him. The controlling policy of this campaign, therefore, was activity in marching, with great caution in fighting any considerable bodies of the enemy until a new base were established and rapid communication opened with the General-in-Chief.

The route for the march was practically determined by the topography of the country, which, like all the Southern seaboard, is low and sandy, with numerous extensive swamps and deep rivers widely swamp-bordered, only approachable by long causeways on which the narrow head of a column may be easily and long resisted by a small force. The rivers of South Carolina are nearly parallel to the Savannah, and, to avoid frequent and difficult crossings, it would be necessary to march into the interior upon the ridges be-

tween two or more streams, till the upper and narrower waters were reached, and then cross to the watersheds which lay most nearly in the proper direction. Another important object was to cut the railway system of South Carolina in a way similar to the work done in Georgia, so as to cripple the transportation resources of the country and prevent the easy concentration of Confederate troops. An examination of the map will quickly show that Sherman's easiest way to accomplish his purpose was to march northwestward between the Combahee (or Salkehatchie, as its upper course is called) and the Savannah, as if going to Augusta, till more than half that distance is made, then passing the Salkehatches, Big and Little, strike the Charleston and Augusta Railway near its crossing of the Edisto River. After destroying a section of this road, the south fork of the Edisto could be crossed, and no other deep river would be met till the Saluda is reached at the capital of the State. This was the route Sherman adopted, making only the deviation by which he reached the Columbia branch of the railway at Orangeburg, and destroyed a portion of it for twenty miles north of that place.

The report which Generals Taylor and Hardee made to the Confederate Government at the beginning of December has already been mentioned, and shows that the principal military officers in the theatre of operations made a good forecast of Sherman's purposes and of the probable results. Upon the news of the great disaster to Hood at Nashville, Beauregard asked to be relieved of the care of South Carolina and Southern Georgia, so that he might give his exclusive attention to the Army of Tennessee and the Gulf States. He suggested that Augusta naturally belonged to Hardee's command, and, in a letter of final instructions to the latter, written on December 31st, he indicated the prob-

able necessity, at an early day, of evacuating Charleston, and uniting all the available troops in Hardee's department to oppose Sherman's advance. He directed all the cotton to be removed, and if any remained in the city at the time of evacuation, it should be burned. This was in accordance with the general policy of the Confederates in regard to the great Southern staple; that of the National armies, in like manner, was to save for the public treasury all that was captured in seaports or in territory likely to remain under our control, but to destroy that which, by the passage of our armies, could fall again into the enemy's hands. It often happened, therefore, that both armies were co-operating in the destruction of cotton when both were in doubt whether their opponents might not gain something by its preservation. In this way Wheeler had offered to spare the cotton in the Georgia march if Sherman would give assurances as to other property; but Sherman had answered: "If you don't burn it, I will."

The evacuation of Charleston was so grave a question of public policy for the Confederate Government that it could not be determined as a purely military problem. Beauregard had said, in the letter just referred to, "The fall of Charleston would necessarily be a terrible blow to the Confederacy, but its fall, with the loss of its brave garrison, would be still more fatal to our cause."¹ Knowing the opinions of all the Confederate generals, as we now do, we must conclude that the Richmond authorities delayed the abandonment of the city until it was too late to concentrate in Sherman's front. It is true, however, that the National commander surprised all of his opponents by the speed at which he forced his way northward, and that Hardee had

¹ Jones's Chatham Artillery, p. 210.

reported the Salkehatchie swamps to be entirely impassable at the time Sherman's army was marching through them at the regular pace of ten or twelve miles daily, making corduroy road for his trains nearly every mile of the way.¹

Sherman had hoped that he might rely upon fair weather after the middle of January, and had planned his march to begin at that time. The season disappointed him, for it proved to be a winter of almost continuous rains. The Savannah rose so that, at Sister's Ferry, forty miles up the river, where Slocum laid his bridge, the stream was three miles wide, and long trestle bridges had to be made to connect the ends of the pontoon bridge with the shores. It was also almost impossible to protect the structure against the force of the current and of the drift-wood brought down by the freshet. The Union Causeway, on which one or two divisions attempted to march from Savannah to join General Howard at Pocotaligo, was under water, and the whole region was more like a great lake than a habitable land. On the last day of January, Howard had concentrated at Pocotaligo the right wing, except Corse's division of Logan's corps, which had been forced by the high water to join Slocum and cross the Savannah at his bridge, awaiting an opportunity to rejoin the corps some days later. This concentration had been effected with but little fighting, for Hardee had evidently determined to take up the line of the Combahee and Salkehatchie, and to make no serious defence west of it. Force's division, of Blair's corps, was sent to make a demonstration as if to cross the Combahee ten miles below the railroad bridge, and so to create the impression that

¹ At the time of paroling the Confederate Army at Greensboro, N. C., speaking of this part of Sherman's march, and of the combination of physical labor with military hardihood, General Johnston said, in the hearing of the author, that, when he heard of it, "he made up his mind that there had been no such army since the days of Julius Caesar."

Charleston was aimed at. This done, the order was given to march northward on the route already described, in the expectation that Slocum and Kilpatrick's cavalry would be over Sister's Ferry, and ready to join the movement by the time Howard should be opposite that crossing.

It happened that simultaneously with the beginning of the new campaign by Sherman, a conference of Confederate officers was held near Augusta to arrange the details of their own plans. Beauregard, Hardee, D. H. Hill, and G. W. Smith were all there, and a careful estimate was made of the effective force they hoped to combine against Sherman. Of 18,000 men under Hardee's command in South Carolina, they reckoned 14,500 as available for concentration, while the heavy artillery and some other troops would garrison Charleston and other points along the coast. Beauregard promised 11,000 infantry and artillery from Hood's army, though only half of these were then present. Wheeler's cavalry was 6,700 strong, besides Butler's division which has been counted among Hardee's men. The Georgia militia and reserves were 1,450. A total of 33,450 was the force they agreed they could concentrate by February 4th or 5th, though about three thousand from the Army of Tennessee were not expected to reach Augusta till the 10th or 11th.¹ It was not expected that the State Militia would serve far outside their own States, nor does there seem to have been any hope that new recruits could be added to their army. The conscription had exhausted itself, and the population not already in the ranks was paralyzed rather than stimulated to exertion by the presence of the National army. As Hardee afterward expressed it, they knew that it was now only a question of the time it would take to use up

¹ See Appendix E, II.

the military force already organized, for the politicians could not face the thought of surrender.¹

The outlook was surely far from encouraging, but Beauregard, as the superior officer present, though sick in body and in mind, was forced to assume command, and make such dispositions as he could to obstruct Sherman's march. But while their somewhat tardy consultation was going on, the opportunity for an effectual concentration, even of the little force at their disposal, had passed, for Sherman was in motion. On February 7th, General Howard was upon the line of the Charleston and Augusta Railway at Midway, and on the 12th he had crossed both forks of the Edisto and had broken the Columbia branch of the road at Orangeburg. Butler's division of cavalry, a light battery or two, and some small detachments of infantry were all of Hardee's that succeeded in getting in front of Sherman. These joined Wheeler, and did what they could to burn bridges and hold the long causeways through the swamps; but the leading division of a column was usually strong enough to outflank them and drive them off with little loss, so that the laying of the corduroy road never ceased, and Sherman's twenty-five hundred wagons rolled on unchecked. Leaving the Georgia militia to garrison Augusta, where they were useless, Beauregard could only lead the remnants of the Army of Tennessee by the country roads and by a long detour through Newberry and Chester to Charlotte in North Carolina, while Hardee at Charleston was awaiting the inevitable day when he must abandon Sumter and the cradle of the rebellion, to make haste by his only remaining railway through Florence to Cheraw, that the concentration talked of at Augusta might be finally made near the capital

¹ This was said by Hardee to the author after the close of hostilities.

of North Carolina. General Wade Hampton had been sent from Virginia to command the cavalry in South Carolina, in the hope that his great personal influence would rouse the people from their despair, and do what proclamations and levies-in-mass had so signally failed to do in Georgia; but the only result was to lay the foundation of a somewhat bitter dispute whether he or the National soldiery caused the burning of Columbia, the beautiful city of his home.

An itinerary of the march through South Carolina would furnish interesting daily illustrations of the expedients by which an army of expert woodsmen can overcome difficulties in logistics commonly thought insurmountable. In a country where many of the rivers are known by the name of swamps, continuous rains so raised the waters that scarce a stream was passed without deploying the advanced guard through water waist deep, and sometimes it reached even to their armpits, forcing them to carry the cartridge-box at the neck and the musket on the head. The fitness of the name swamp for even the rivers will be felt when it is remembered that at the crossing of the Salkehatchie at Beaufort's Bridge the stream had fifteen separate channels, each of which had to be bridged before Logan's corps could get over. Whoever will consider the effect of dragging the artillery and hundreds of loaded army wagons over mud roads in such a country, and of the infinite labor required to pave these roads with logs, levelling the surface with smaller poles in the hollows between, adding to the structure as the mass sinks in the ooze, and continuing this till the miles of train have pulled through, will get a constantly growing idea of the work, and a steadily increasing wonder that it was done at all. Certainly he will not wonder that the Confederate generals believed they could count upon Sherman's remaining at his base till the rains ceased

and the waters subsided. If the march through Georgia remained pictured in the soldiers' memories as a bright, frolicsome raid, that through South Carolina was even more indelibly printed as a stubborn wrestle with the elements, in which the murky and dripping skies were so mingled with the earth and water below as to make the whole a fit type of "chaos come again;" but where, also, the indomitable will of sixty thousand men, concentrated to do the inflexible purpose of one, bridged this chaos for hundreds of miles, and, out-laboring Hercules, won a physical triumph that must always remain a marvel. And mile by mile as they advanced, the General and his men were equally clear in the conviction he had expressed to Grant before starting, that every step they took was "as much a direct attack upon Lee's army as though I were operating within the sound of his artillery."

Sixteen days' marching, working, and skirmishing brought the army to the Saluda River, just above Columbia. The Augusta Railway had been destroyed from the Edisto nearly to Aiken, some fifty miles. The Columbia branch had been ruined from a point five or six miles south of Orangeburg to the Congaree River, about thirty miles. These great gaps in the interior lines of communication effectually separated the Confederate forces, and were by far too great to be repaired during the campaign. A few hours were enough to secure the crossings of the Saluda and Broad Rivers, which unite just above Columbia to form the Congaree. This was easier than to cross the latter stream, for it is bordered by the wide Caw-caw swamp, and the approaches were very difficult.

On the approach of the National troops, the Confederate cavalry burned the bridges, sprinkling them first with resin and tar, so as to make a quick fire: indeed, it was so quick

that some of the rear guard could not pass, and had to gallop off by a long circuit to escape capture. In Columbia they burned the two railway stations and dépôt buildings, one at the south and the other at the north of the place. Long, narrow piles of cotton bales were made along the middle of the streets, and these were cut open and fired. Some of Wheeler's cavalry, acting upon the rule they had often avowed, that it was not worth while to leave what they wanted for an enemy to take, broke open the shops and pillaged them.¹

Before entering the city, Sherman issued orders that private dwellings and property, colleges, libraries, charitable institutions, and the like, should be respected, but that the arsenals, foundries, machine-shops, and public workshops should be destroyed. The order was in substance the same as he had issued at Savannah, and was appropriate both because Columbia was the first city of any considerable size the army occupied after leaving the coast, and because the long continuance of a march in which the troops were living on the country had gradually increased the number of stragglers, and relaxed the bands of discipline in portions of the command. General C. R. Wood's division of Logan's corps entered the city, Stone's brigade being the advanced guard. The other troops passed on and encamped beyond. A strong wind from the northwest was blowing, scattering the loose cotton about, and Colonel Stone directed his men to assist the citizens, who, with a wretched hand-engine and buckets, were trying to quench the fire in the cotton, which the wind was making dangerous. Sherman himself entered the town soon after the advanced guard, with Howard and Logan. The mayor presented himself, and was informed of the orders for the protection of private property. Some

¹ Testimony before Mixed Commission on American and British Claims. See also Appendix C.

foolish persons, thinking to please the soldiers, brought out whiskey by pailfuls, and before the superior officers were aware of it, a good many men of Stone's brigade were intoxicated. Woods immediately ordered the brigade relieved, and that of W. B. Woods¹ was substituted as provost guard. All the whiskey that could be found was emptied on the ground, and the intoxicated men were put in arrest. The wind continued to rise, and before night was blowing a gale. The cotton bales, tenacious of fire, were smoldering. It would seem that a flake from one of these set fire to a shed or building near by, and the flames soon spread. Sherman himself gave prompt orders to do all that could be done to conquer the fire, and the whole division was put at work to quench or to girdle it. The houses of the city were built of pine wood, and, from the place of starting, the south-eastern part of the town was soon a roaring, leaping mass of flame, utterly beyond control. But there were not wanting intoxicated men among the soldiers, and others equally excited by the tales of horror which the escaped military prisoners had to tell of their cruel sufferings in a prison pen near the city, where they had been exposed to the weather and forced to burrow in the ground for their only shelter. These seized upon the idea that the destruction of the capital of South Carolina was a fit retribution upon the State for its leadership in the great rebellion, and carried the fire to windward of its starting-place to make the destruction more complete. Drunken soldiers, camp followers, and escaped convicts from the penitentiary, made a dangerous mob, and the fire which began by accident was becoming the occasion of mischiefs of other kinds. Noticing this, Howard ordered a brigade from Hazen's division to be deployed as skirmish-

¹ Now Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court.

ers, to sweep through the town, arresting all disorderly persons, citizens and soldiers, white and black, and to hold them under guard. After midnight the gale subsided and the progress of the fire was stopped, but the greater part of the city was in ashes.

Sherman was sincerely grieved at the misfortune of Columbia, and did what he could to lighten the trouble of the citizens. He gave them a large herd of cattle and other provisions to supply their immediate wants, and directed the issue of these to be made by the city authorities to the destitute. No one was more unbending than he in the destruction of whatever could be of military assistance to the enemy; but no one drew more clearly the line between the destruction which was useful to a cause and that which would merely make private suffering and irritation. The Confederate authorities made haste to proclaim the burning of Columbia as a deliberately planned and ordered piece of incendiarism; but no event was ever more fully investigated, and no conclusion can well be more solidly established by testimony than that which is given in the foregoing narrative of the occurrence. Orangeburg had been partly burned by fire, set by an exasperated resident trader in revenge for the destruction of his cotton by the Confederate cavalry, and this too was loudly charged to the National army. An even-handed justice will, however, admit that the stragglers from the army were increasing in number and in familiarity with pillage, through the natural education of such a war, and that there were some officers among the infantry who were not unwilling to compete with Kilpatrick in his effort to leave the route marked by "chimney-stacks without houses, and the country desolate."¹ Some careless expressions of

¹ In the "Ninety-second Illinois," commonly attributed to General Atkins who was one of Kilpatrick's brigade commanders (p. 211), it is said that on the evening

Sherman, in a letter to General Halleck, have been seized upon as evidence of his approval of lawless pillaging; but the consistent character of his commands to his subordinates from the beginning of the campaign, and the treatment of all the cities on the line of his march from Atlanta to Savannah, and from Savannah to Raleigh, show that his policy was one of mildness to the individual citizen and of destruction only to the public resources of the country. The city of Atlanta is to-day proof, to him who cares to see, that the far-echoed assertions that it was destroyed are consistent with the continued existence of its original buildings, except the depots, machine-shops, and military factories, with a very few houses that were immediately contiguous to them. War cannot be other than a fearful scourge, but the assertion that the late civil war surpassed others of modern times in wanton destruction or cruelty is the reverse of true.

In Columbia there were factories of powder and fixed ammunition, an arsenal, armory and machine-shops, and an establishment for the engraving and manufacture of Confederate paper money. All these were destroyed on the 18th and 19th of February, for their detached positions about the town had saved them from the general conflagration. On the 20th the army resumed its march, leaving behind it a community overwhelmed with its losses, almost stupefied by the terrible change a few days had wrought, and only saved from starvation by the store of food which the National commander took from his army supplies to give them.

of January 27th, near Savannah, "General Kilpatrick gave a party to the officers of his command, and in his speech said, 'In after years, when travellers passing through South Carolina shall see chimney-stacks without houses, and the country desolate, and shall ask, Who did this? some Yankee will answer, Kilpatrick's cavalry.'" The same narrative, pp. 212, 215, seems to claim for the cavalry the burning of the villages of Barnwell, Lexington, and Monticello, beside the destruction of plantation houses.

CHAPTER XI.

AVERASBORO AND BENTONVILLE.—REUNION OF THE GRAND ARMY.

THE military operations in the first part of the campaign had not cost many lives, though the skirmishing had been incessant. Occasionally a determined stand would be made, as at Rivers' Bridge on the Salkehatchie, where, in a cannonade upon our advanced guard, Colonel Wager Swayne, an esteemed and valuable officer, lost a leg. More commonly, the trees and thickets made safe cover for the troops, and detachments sent a mile or two above or below would gain the farther bank of the stream by ferrying men over in pontoons, and the enemy would retreat as soon as this was done. After passing Columbia the face of the country changed. It became more rolling, the streams were narrower and less difficult, the plantations were more numerous and richer, and the foragers collected more abundant supplies. The Fifteenth Corps (Logan's) returned upon the line of the Charleston Railway to Cedar Creek, destroying about twenty miles of the road on the left bank of the Congaree, in addition to the injury already done it on the other side of the river. Howard then turned this column northward to overtake Blair's (Seventeenth) Corps, which had marched along the railroad toward Charlotte, and had torn it up almost to Winnsboro, forty miles from Columbia. The only other railway running out of Columbia was a branch road going

westward to Abbeville, and this was committed to General Slocum with the left wing and the cavalry, who ruined it for a distance about equal to that destroyed by Blair on the Charlotte road. This part of the army then turned toward Winnsboro, where they supplemented Blair's work by tearing up ten or fifteen miles more of the Northern line. While Sherman's chief purpose in making this strong demonstration northward was to make thorough work of the interruption of the railway communications between Beauregard's and Hardee's forces, it also had the effect of creating the impression that he would continue his march on Charlotte, and delayed any concentration of the enemy toward Raleigh. The National columns were now turned sharply to the east, crossing the Catawba River and making for the Great Peechee at Cheraw, while the cavalry kept well out on the left flank. The extreme right visited Camden, and while moving between the two rivers, the flanks of the army were often forty miles apart. There was scarcely any cessation of rain, and the marching was hardly less laborious than before, though the swamps were not so continuous.

As soon as Hardee knew of Sherman's occupation of Columbia, he evacuated Charleston, moving his troops by rail to Cheraw, where great quantities of stores, both public and private, had been sent. The cotton, which was stored in the city in large quantities, he burned in the warehouses, and the fire, spreading, did a good deal of mischief to the city. A great store of powder and ammunition blew up, killing two hundred of the citizens who were crowding about the conflagration.¹ Admiral Dahlgren and General Foster had kept up active demonstrations along the coast, and occupied the city on February 18th, the day after its evacuation.

¹ Pollard's Southern Hist. of the War, Vol. IV., pp. 150, 151.

Hardee had constructed strong works at the Pedee, behind Cheraw, but they met the usual fate of fortifications made by a very inferior force. The advance of Slocum with the left wing turned the position, and the right wing, under Howard, entered Cheraw on March 3d, capturing 28 pieces of artillery, 3,000 stands of small arms, and an immense quantity of ammunition and stores.¹ Hampton, with the Confederate cavalry, at first moved off toward Charlotte, but making a wide circuit, he joined Hardee again before the latter crossed the Cape Fear River at Fayetteville, on the 11th, retreating before Slocum, who entered that place with the Fourteenth (Davis's) Corps on that day. Hampton appears to have been deceived regarding Sherman's intended line of march, and to have thought he was aiming at Charlotte, where Hood's Army of Tennessee was assembling; and in the effort to return to his place in front of the National army, he unexpectedly ran into Kilpatrick's cavalry, in the night of the 9th, not far from a hamlet called Solemn Grove. Kilpatrick had assigned to his three brigades halting places at the corners of a triangle, where they would hold different cross-roads and mutually protect each other, but Atkins and his brigade were anticipated by the Confederates at his intended position, and notwithstanding the most industrious efforts to reach Spencer's brigade by a circuit in the night, he was unable to do so in time to warn it of an attack by Hampton from the side supposed to be covered. Kilpatrick was with Spencer, and Hampton having, as he thought, made dispositions of his force to assure success, charged, with Butler's division, upon the camp a little before daybreak. It was a complete surprise. A house in which Kilpatrick and Spencer were sleeping was surrounded; a battery near headquarters was in the

¹ Howard's official report.

duced in Richmond the belief that Sherman meant to follow the line of the railway through Charlotte. Every effort had been made by the Confederate Government to accumulate army supplies along that, its only remaining available line, and nearly four months' food and clothing for Lee's army was collected in its dépôts. The Confederate Congress had, in the emergency, made Lee General-in-Chief of all their armies, and he had called Johnston from the retirement in which he had lived since the preceding July to assume the direction of the forces which were trying to prevent Sherman from closing in upon the rear of Richmond. Mr. Davis, the President of the Confederacy, had openly declared that he would never give Johnston a military command again, but the responsibility was now with Lee, and Mr. Davis could only acquiesce.

It is not overstating the truth to say that the news of Johnston's assignment was received throughout Sherman's army as a note of warning to be prepared for more stubborn and well-planned resistance to their progress. Officers and men were agreed in the opinion that the Richmond Government had at last taken a wise step, though they were quite sure it was too late for even Johnston to save the campaign. Sherman's estimate of the forces Johnston might concentrate to meet him was about forty-five thousand men of all arms; and reckoning those under Bragg in North Carolina at ten thousand, his figures will be found to be almost exactly those which the Confederate generals had set down in their conference near Augusta at the beginning of the campaign.¹ But Hardee's eighteen thousand had dwindled rapidly since the evacuation of Charleston, the militia of South Carolina and Georgia had gone home, the cavalry had suffered con-

¹ See Appendix E, II.

siderable losses, the remnants of Hood's army had grown less as they travelled northward, and when Beauregard submitted his estimates to Johnston at Charlotte in the beginning of March, about twenty-six thousand infantry and artillery, and about six thousand cavalry, was the extent of the army on which they could depend.

Johnston soon satisfied himself that Sherman's course lay toward Fayetteville, and leaving Beauregard with some force at Charlotte to protect the railway to Danville, went in person to Fayetteville to meet Hardee and Hampton, giving orders for the concentration of other troops near Smithfield. It was at this time that he authorized Bragg to take the troops of Stewart's and Lee's corps to unite with Hoke's and make the movement against Schofield near Kinston, calculating that there would still be time to reassemble in front of Sherman before he could reach the Nense River. It would be difficult to better his plan, but his numbers were not enough to make either part of it successful, though he did everything that courage and activity could do.

Sherman had waited at Fayetteville a day or two, in the hope of receiving from Wilmington some shoes and clothing of which his men were almost destitute, but no supply of these could yet be got, and he pushed forward. Slocum's columns with the cavalry crowded Hardee closely on the 15th of March, capturing Colonel Rhett, the commander of the brigade acting as rear guard. They approached Averasboro on the 16th, where Hardee had intrenched on a narrow ridge between the river and swamp, and Slocum ordered Jackson's and Ward's divisions of the Twentieth (Williams') Corps to be deployed, Kilpatrick's cavalry being on the right flank. Sherman, being present, directed a brigade of infantry to be sent well to the left to attack the line in flank. This was vigorously done by Case's brigade,

and Taliaferro's division was routed, falling back in haste upon a line about a third of a mile in rear, where Hardee had intrenched McLaws' division. The chief weight of the stroke fell upon Rhett's brigade, which had lost its commander the day before, and it fled with a loss of over a hundred left dead upon the field, and more than two hundred captured. A battery of three field guns was also among the trophies of this brilliant affair. Williams's divisions pressed on, found Hardee's lines again intrenched, and a warm engagement began; but darkness put an end to the day's operations. Hardee retreated during the night, and Sherman's movements were resumed in the morning.¹ The National loss in the affair at Averasboro had been seventy-seven killed and nearly five hundred wounded. Hardee admitted a loss of about the same number. Seriously encumbered with his own injured men, Sherman directed the Confederate wounded, who numbered about seventy, to be left in a field hospital in charge of an officer and some of their own men, after proper surgical attention had been given them.

The two or three days that followed are remembered by the officers and men of that army as among the most wearisome of the campaign. Incessant rain, deep mud, roads always wretched but now nearly impassable, seemed to cap the climax of tedious, laborious marching. Sherman had changed his order of movement at Fayetteville, directing four divisions of each wing to march light, and the remainder to accompany the trains and assist them forward. By this arrangement he reckoned upon having a force ready for battle on either flank, large enough to hold at bay the whole of Johnston's army if the Confederate commander

¹ Rhett's brigade, which suffered so severely, was an organization of heavy artillery at Charleston, and had been the garrison of Sumter. It took the field as infantry when Charleston was evacuated.

should suddenly assail one wing. In spite of every exertion, however, the columns were a good deal drawn out, and long intervals separated the divisions. On the morning of the 19th, two divisions of Davis's corps (Fourteenth) were about eight miles from Bentonville, a hamlet on the south-east side of Mill Creek, a small tributary of Neuse River, where the north and south road from Smithfield to Clinton crosses one leading from Averasboro to Goldsboro. Two divisions of Williams's (Twentieth) corps were eight miles farther at the rear. Kilpatrick with his cavalry had followed the retreat of Hardee to the north, and was at the left and rear of Williams, making his way back to the principal column. Howard with the four light divisions of the right wing was upon parallel roads to the southward, if they can be called parallel when they were sometimes six miles apart and sometimes ten or twelve. The trains with their guards were toiling along, somewhat farther back, taking intermediate roads when they could.

Sherman reasoned that Hardee's affair at Averasboro had been made to delay his approach to Raleigh till Johnston could unite his forces in front of the State capital, and the fact that battle was given with only Hardee's command seemed to prove that his adversary would be in no condition to venture south of the Neuse River before his own concentration at Goldsboro could be made. He did not know, however, that Johnston had just struck fiercely at the column advancing from Newbern, and that Hardee's stand at Averasboro had been made to give time to get Bragg's forces back and deliver him a blow before his junction with Schofield could be made. The Confederate commander, from his central position, was in telegraphic communication with his subordinates, and knew better than Sherman on the morning of the 19th what progress

Schofield's two columns were making. He could therefore make his combinations knowingly, while the National commander was still left to conjecture. If Johnston meant to do anything more than make a purely defensive retreat, it was essential to him to gather his forces and strike quick; twenty-four hours later would have been too late, for Slocum and Howard would have been together at Cox's bridge, and Terry would have joined with the two fresh divisions. Johnston was now giving good proof that if he could not be made to fight unless he chose, he could assume the most active offensive when it was necessary. He knew on the 17th that Sherman had turned off from Averasboro toward Goldsboro, and that Hardee was resting at Elevation about two-thirds of the way on the road from his late battle-ground to Smithfield. Bragg had reached the last-named place, and the information from Hampton was that Slocum's two corps were nearly a day's march apart, and as far from Howard's. They must pass by the flank three miles in front of Bentonville, the little village whose position has already been described. He saw that this was the only opportunity likely to occur for fighting Sherman's several corps in detail, and gave orders to concentrate everything at Bentonville on the 18th.

Sherman had been loth to widen the lines of his march, but to do so was the condition of feeding his men on the country as he still had to do, and for the same reason he must keep moving till he should get upon a railway line of communication with the base Schofield was establishing. But he frankly tells us, also, that the evidence before him induced a confident belief that Johnston would hold to the north line of the Neuse and dispute its passage. This belief induced him to leave Slocum's line early in the morning of the 19th, and make his way across to Howard's.

In accordance with his habit, he had remained with the exposed flank till he thought the point of danger passed, and now went to the right wing because he would thus get quickest into communication with Schofield, and be nearer to the point where he meant to cross the Neuse and reach Goldsboro. His reasoning was strictly in accord with sound principles, but as constantly happens in war, the facts which he did not know were essential to a right conclusion. It would, however, have been more prudent to have delayed Slocum's advance with the two divisions of Davis's corps till Williams with the Twentieth should have come nearer, and a little carelessness in this respect must be attributed to over-confidence in the belief that Johnston would not now take the aggressive.

But Johnston also found his calculations fail in some respects. He intended to have his troops ready to attack the head of Slocum's column early in the morning, but the maps were wrong, as they uniformly were, and Hardee's road to Bentonville proved to be too long to be marched by daylight after his orders were received. Consequently Hampton was directed to obstruct Slocum's advance, and prevent his reaching the cross-roads before Hardee. The Confederate cavalry under Wheeler was therefore close in front of Davis's corps when his march began on the 19th, and had made breastworks at some points, behind which they offered an unusually stubborn resistance.¹ Carlin's division had the lead, and as his men went forward the foragers were found on right and left of the road, having been unable to drive off

¹ The first prisoners captured were from Dibrell's division. Johnston says (Narrative, p. 392) that Butler's division was in front of Howard, yet he also says that Wheeler's command was not engaged on the 19th. There must be error in this, unless the organization of Wheeler's corps had recently been changed. Slocum was certainly fighting *some* mounted force, which resisted stubbornly all day.

the enemy or get out beyond his flanks. This was an ominous sign, for where these enterprising skirmishers could not go, the opposition must be stronger than a cavalry rear guard usually was. As Carlin pushed on, however, Hampton gave way slowly, and it was seen that the opposition came from horsemen only. On this report, Sherman started on his ride to the right wing. About noon, he was overtaken by a messenger from Slocum, who still announced that they were resisted by nothing but cavalry; but the firing of artillery now began to be more rapid, and to indicate more serious work.

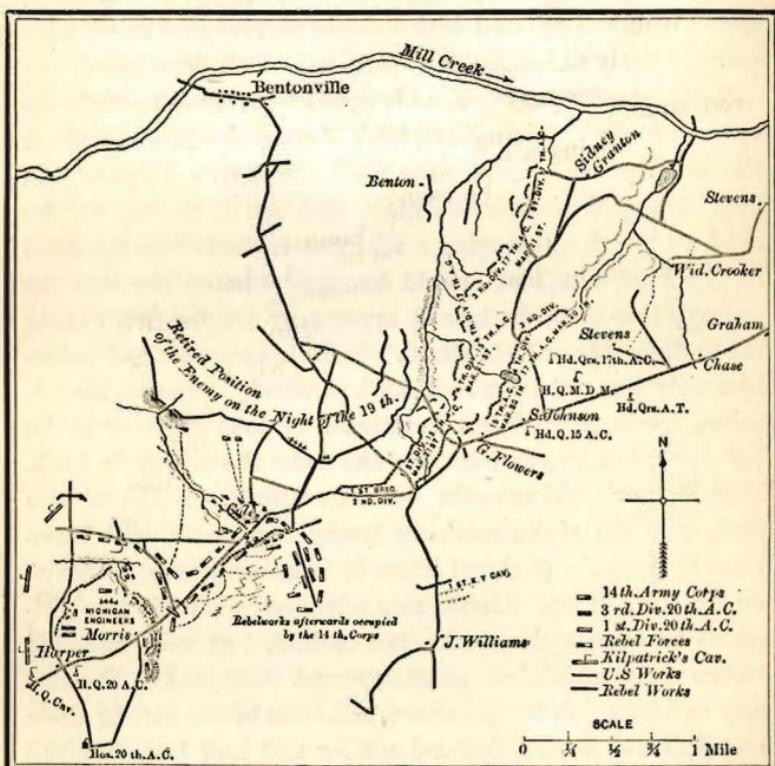
As one goes southward from Bentonville, a country road forks to the right from the Clinton road, about half a mile before the crossing of the Goldsboro road is reached. This turns toward Averasboro, and a triangle of roads is thus made having sides of half a mile. Hoke's division of the Confederate forces was first on the ground, and was ordered to take this route, cross the Averasboro road and continue seven or eight hundred yards farther. Here he halted and intrenched, his line slightly recurved, but still at an acute angle to the road on which Davis was advancing. Stewart with the troops of his own and Lee's corps of Hood's army, came next and intrenched the line of the road they had travelled, showing a front of four or five hundred yards. From this point the right was swung forward along the margin of woods looking into the open farm-lands of Cole's farm. Hardee, when he came up, found General Bate with two divisions of Cheatham's corps (his own and Smith's, formerly Cleburne's) placed on the extreme right, and put Talliaferro's division in reserve in support of Bate: his other division (McLaw's) was ordered by Johnston to the left wing. The centre of Johnston's position, therefore, was not on the Averasboro road, but at the corner of Cole's fields, a quarter of a mile north.

The two wings went forward from this point, the left crossing diagonally the road on which Davis's corps was advancing, and the right, hidden in the thicket, reached forward ready to envelop any force that might attempt to pass to the west of the Cole farm. The country, except at the farm mentioned, was covered with a dense thicket and wood, with marshes from which small streams ran in all directions.

It was nearly noon when General Davis, with Carlin's division slowly driving Hampton's cavalry back, came upon the breastworks crossing the road. Hobart's brigade had been deployed some time before, and was in line across the road, on which was moving a four-gun battery. To the right of the road but little could be seen; but on the left the enemy's line could be traced, apparently bending back along the farther side of Cole's field. Still thinking he had before him only the cavalry which he had slowly followed for five miles, Davis ordered Buell's brigade to make a detour to the left around the open farm lots and take the enemy in flank. But Hobart's skirmishers were developing a line of fire farther to the right, reaching toward our flank, and Hambright's brigade (Colonel Miles in command) was deployed on Hobart's right. Carlin now advanced with his two brigades to charge the works before him, but soon recoiled before a fire which had another sound than that of the cavalry carbines. A few prisoners had been taken, among them one who had been a national soldier and had been induced to enlist to escape from a Confederate prison. From him the fact that Johnston was present in person with his whole army was learned. Slocum had come up, and after consultation with Davis, Morgan's division was ordered to deploy forward on the right of Carlin, with Mitchell's and Vandever's brigades in front and Fearing's in second line. Heavy lines of skirmishers engaged the enemy, while the troops of

the deployed lines hastened to cover themselves with a breastwork.

It was now about two o'clock, and Sloewm wrote a dispatch to Sherman telling of the situation, and sent Colonel Mc-



Battle of Bentonville.

Clurg, of his staff, to hasten up the divisions of Williams's corps. Buell's brigade was making its way slowly through the marsh and thicket on the left, when the crash of musketry there gave warning of an assault. Hardee had sent Talliaferro's division still beyond Bate's right upon the flank

of Buell's brigade, and Bate, now attacking in both front and flank, that single brigade was overwhelmed, and driven to the rear in confusion. The attack was taken up in turn by Stewart's divisions, sweeping across the Cole farm diagonally upon Davis's left, taking Carlin's brigades successively in flank and rear, and pushing them back. But this took time, for there was no panic, and our men were not used to be beaten. The enemy suffered terribly as he crossed the fields, played upon by the battery in the road near Cole's house, and cut down by Hobart's infantry fire. Step by step they advanced, each regiment of Hobart's, as it found itself attacked in rear, retreating and fighting, forming a new line of its own, and again making a stand, till all of this brigade also had thus been pushed off in detachments, and the left was curved a full mile to the rear. Now a rush upon the road captured the battery. Miles's brigade was also driven from its line, and all connection between Carlin and Morgan was broken. Davis, whose soldierly qualities came out brilliantly in the trial, now rode rapidly to Morgan and ordered Fearing to move his brigade toward the left, deploying parallel to the road as he went, and to charge headlong upon the flank of the enemy, who was following Carlin. The work could not have been put into better hands than those of the unfearing descendant of Israel Putnam. He changed front upon the run, swept everything before him at the point of the bayonet till the road was reached, and forming there, his destructive volleys drove the Confederate centre in confusion upon its right and into the swamp.

At the sound of fighting, Williams had hurried forward the troops of his corps. Robinson's brigade, of his own division, was the first to arrive, and it formed across the road in front of the Morris farmhouse, about a mile from Cole's house. The ground here was a little higher, and the Twen-

tieh Corps artillery was put in position as it came up. Robinson connected with Fearing's left, and Carlin's brigades were rallied upon this line, still farther to the left. A country road ran along this point, and Bate attacked the line again and again, now advancing, now driven back, until Hardee withdrew him some distance in consequence of the rout of the troops in the centre.

The rest of Morgan's division had not been idle while Fearing's brigade had been so sharply engaged. Their first assault upon Hoke's division had been a vigorous one, and Bragg, who commanded that wing, had called for reinforcements. Hardee was just coming on the field, and Johnston ordered McLaws' division to the support of Hoke, while Talliaferro took the position in rear of Bate already indicated.¹ Morgan had not been able to break through the enemy's left, and had resumed his own line and strengthened it during the lull which followed the severe check given to Stewart's advance in the centre.

Coggswell's brigade, of Williams's corps, came up about four o'clock, and formed on Fearing's right, though the line was still too short to reach to Mitchell, whose left was a little refused, so as not to present an uncovered flank. Soon after five a general attack on our lines was again made, and was persistently kept up till night. Hoke's division charged upon Morgan's works, but was again repulsed, and Vandever's brigade made a return charge, capturing the colors of the Fortieth North Carolina Regiment. But the Confederates had found the gap between Morgan and the rest of the line, and pushed fiercely upon Coggswell, who stoutly held his ground; but some of them, passing through the interval,

¹ Johnston says that he yielded "very injudiciously" to Bragg's call for help. The effect of strengthening Hardee's right by another division might well have been fatal to Slocum's defence under the circumstances.

tried to take Morgan in reverse. Colonel McClurg, of Davis's staff, who was taking a warning of this to Morgan, narrowly escaped capture by them. Mitchell and Vandever now faced to the rear and quickly routed these, the Fourteenth Michigan Regiment, the same which had taken the colors in the preceding charge, now capturing those of the Fifty-fourth Virginia in the charge to the rear. The Confederate troops had exhausted their power upon Davis's corps, and Johnston, knowing well that by this time heavy reinforcements were approaching, directed Hardee and Bragg to recall their men as soon as the wounded could be carried from the field. Even after dark a detachment, seeking its way back, came again in rear of Mitchell's brigade, but was received with a volley which made them drop their arms and fly precipitately. Hardee's wing reoccupied the line along the north of the Cole farm, but early next morning Bragg was drawn back till the angle at the centre was salient instead of re-entrant, and the left flank rested near Mill Creek facing toward the East, whence Sherman was to be looked for with Howard's troops.

Slocum's dispatch of two o'clock, which seems to have reached his commander about five, was written before the battle was fairly opened; and Sherman, while determining to concentrate upon Johnston next day unless he retreated, made no immediate change in his dispositions, except to direct Kilpatrick's cavalry to remain with Slocum instead of passing to the right flank, as had been intended. At two in the morning of the 20th, however, Sherman was roused by a message from Slocum, dated at eight o'clock, telling of the hard fighting of the latter part of the day. A courier was at once sent to Hazen's division (which was with Howard's trains, and nearest Slocum) to hasten instantly to his assistance. The other divisions of Logan's corps were at

Falling Creek Church, where the roads the two wings were upon crossed, about three miles from Cox's bridge. These were directed to march at break of day, and Blair's corps, which had gone further on the Wilmington road, was recalled.

Hazen reached Slocum at dawn, and found that the whole of the left wing was up, and a good defensive line had been made to connect the position so stubbornly held by Morgan with that which Carlin reformed upon before night. By noon Sherman himself had come with the head of Logan's column, and the rest of the day was fully occupied with deployments in the woods and swamps, and a sharp skirmishing fight, while communication was made with Slocum and the lines adjusted. Hazen had been placed by Slocum on the right of Morgan, so that he was in line with his own corps when Logan approached. The whole of Johnston's left flank was covered by a brook running through a very difficult swamp, and, under his skilful direction, his men had built intrenchments covered by abatis of the formidable sort with which he had made us familiar in Georgia. His position was in the nature of a bridge-head covering Bentonville and the bridge over Mill Creek, which he only intended to hold till he could carry off his wounded and prepare a safe retreat to Smithfield.

Sherman found that Slocum's wounded men were numerous enough to fill his ambulance train, and that Johnston's line was one to manœuvre against rather than to attack in front. He contented himself, therefore, with pushing his lines close to his adversary's, especially on the right, where Blair's corps extended Logan's deployment. Orders were sent by courier to Schofield to march at once from Kinston upon Goldsboro. Terry was directed to move from Faison's Depot to Cox's bridge, and make a strong effort to secure a

crossing of the Neuse River there. Shortly after noon on the 21st, General Mower, who had the extreme right of the line, managed to thread the swamp before him, and finding but a weak force opposing, advanced rapidly with two brigades till he was within musket range of the bridges behind Johnston. The movement was made without concert with the rest of the corps, and was not known to Howard till the rapid firing, as Mower was met by Johnston's reserves, told of his position. It was one of peril for the division as well as of possibilities of great results had Mower's movement been made by understanding with his superior officers. Johnston first threw Wheeler's cavalry against this division, following it with Lowry's (formerly Cheatham's) division of the Army of the Tennessee, which had just arrived. Howard ordered General Blair to support Mower, and directed an advance of Logan's line by way of a strong demonstration. A line of rifle-pits for skirmishers was taken and Logan's men intrenched within fifty yards of Bragg's front. The topography, however, was so blind and unknown that full advantage could not be taken of Mower's partial success. He was recalled by Sherman's order, the National commander preferring to rest for the present upon the certainty that Johnston must retreat, and that he himself could unite his whole army in the open country north of the Neuse, rather than rush blindly into a general engagement in the thickets and swamps about him.

He afterward blamed himself for not following up Mower's movement, and with more knowledge of the ground he would no doubt have done so; but with his lack of information of the topography as well as of the force before him, his prudence was wiser than impetuosity. His game was a perfectly sure one with patience, and unless Johnston's rout had been complete, the sacrifice of life in a general and des-

perate charge upon the intrenchments would have been frightful and unjustifiable. The Confederate army had preserved the organization of the troops which had come from Hood, and down to the time of the surrender, a month later, Cheatham's, Stewart's, and Lee's corps kept their complete roster of divisions and brigades, notwithstanding the very great reduction of their numbers. The common method of judging of the enemy's force by the number of brigades represented by captured prisoners, is one of the most trustworthy; but in this instance it was misleading, as it was no doubt intended to be. Sherman, therefore, from this and other causes which have already been mentioned, somewhat overestimated Johnston's army, and was the more inclined to leave nothing to hazard, but to hasten the concentration which would give him an overwhelming force, and which in fact enabled him to close the campaign and the war without another sanguinary engagement.

Johnston retreated in the night, and Sherman resumed his march on the 22d. Schofield had entered Goldsboro on the preceding day, placing Cox's corps on the north of the town, covering the Smithfield road. Terry's corps reached the Neuse at Cox's bridge at the same time, and laid a pontoon bridge there, so that, on the 23d, Sherman rode with the head of his column into the place, bringing together his whole army, now nearly ninety thousand strong. The casualty lists were heavy for the numbers engaged. On the National side the total loss was 1,604, of which 1,196 were in Slocum's command. Among them was General Fearing, who was severely wounded in his charge upon the Confederate centre. Of the Confederates, 267 dead and 1,625 prisoners fell into Sherman's hands. Johnston states the number of his wounded at 1,467, but puts the dead and missing at only 876, which is 1,000 less than the number in

our possession. A similar discrepancy is found in the statements of numbers engaged. Johnston states Slocum's force in the battle on the 19th as 35,000, and his own at about 14,100 infantry and artillery. Slocum's troops on the field during the action of the 19th, were two out of three divisions of Davis's corps, and two brigades of Williams's. The casualty lists show that none others arrived in time to take part in the fight. Their numbers were therefore about 1,000 less than those of the whole Fourteenth Corps, which numbered 13,000 when it left Savannah, infantry and artillery. Johnston's official report for 31st March shows 22,000 of these arms present, besides 5,500 cavalry.¹ As the army was freshly assembled, his sick who were present when this report was made up must represent his wounded men; and when his trains were parked, most of his "extra-duty" men must be supposed to be at the breastworks. Letting the dead and prisoners in our hands offset the detachments which joined him afterward, and it would appear that about 22,000 men, besides the cavalry, will fairly represent the force with which he attacked Slocum's 12,000.

In Slocum's disposition of his troops the only point open to criticism is suggested by the question, whether it was wise to deploy both of Davis's divisions upon the line of the advanced brigade when it came in contact with an intrenched infantry line, and when the best information showed all of Johnston's army present. It would seem to be better to have placed Morgan's division and two of Carlin's brigades upon the line near the Morris house, where Carlin's men rallied in the afternoon, and to have withdrawn Hobart's brigade to the same point. Johnston would then have had to move in line over a mile of swamps and thickets, to be

¹ See Appendix E, III.

received at a barricade which would by that time have been strong, while his own attack would be disjointed by such a march. To rush against an unknown line, without full reconnaissance, is always full of risk, and in such a marshy wilderness is much like falling into an ambuscade. Johnston had intrenched to receive an attack, and would have been somewhat slow to move out in the presence of an active skirmishing reconnaissance. This would have gained time, both for intrenching Slocum's rear line and for Williams to approach. The situation, however, was full of difficulty, and the left wing came off with honors of which it had a right to be proud.

CHAPTER XII.

STONEMAN'S AND WILSON'S CAVALRY EXPEDITIONS.

BEFORE resuming the narrative of the closing events of the war in North Carolina, let us go back to the portion of Sherman's territorial command which General Thomas was now directing, and trace briefly the current of events there, so that the general relation of the final movements may be clearly understood.

It had been part of the plan, both of Grant and of Sherman, that the battle of Nashville should be followed by an active winter campaign in Mississippi and Alabama, pressing the defeated army of Hood and giving it no rest or time to reorganize. The natural plan of this campaign would have been for Thomas to march through Alabama as Sherman had done through Georgia, reaching Mobile as Savannah had been reached, and uniting forces with Canby, who would have been prepared to establish a new base of supplies upon the Gulf. The belief of General Thomas that his army was not prepared for this work brought General Grant to the conclusion that the plan which promised results most nearly equal, would be to send General A. J. Smith's corps with Knipe's division of cavalry to reinforce General Canby at New Orleans for a decisive campaign against Mobile, to transfer Schofield to the seaboard, and to limit the aggressive movements of Thomas's department to cavalry expeditions to be made by Generals Stoneman and Wilson,

