

more accurately, more persistently misunderstood, than any other engagement between National and Confederate troops during the entire rebellion. Correct reports of the battle have been published, notably by Sherman, Badeau and, in a speech before a meeting of veterans, by General Prentiss; but all of these appeared long subsequent to the close of the rebellion and after public opinion had been most erroneously formed.

I myself made no report to General Halleck, further than was contained in a letter, written immediately after the battle informing him that an engagement had been fought and announcing the result. A few days afterwards General Halleck moved his headquarters to Pittsburg landing and assumed command of the troops in the field. Although next to him in rank, and nominally in command of my old district and army, I was ignored as much as if I had been at the most distant point of territory within my jurisdiction; and although I was in command of all the troops engaged at Shiloh I was not permitted to see one of the reports of General Buell or his subordinates in that battle, until they were published by the War Department long after the event. For this reason I never made a full official report of this engagement.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HALLECK ASSUMES COMMAND IN THE FIELD—THE
ADVANCE UPON CORINTH—OCCUPATION OF COR-
INTH—THE ARMY SEPARATED.

GENERAL HALLECK arrived at Pittsburg landing on the 11th of April and immediately assumed command in the field. On the 21st General Pope arrived with an army 30,000 strong, fresh from the capture of Island Number Ten in the Mississippi River. He went into camp at Hamburg landing five miles above Pittsburg. Halleck had now three armies: the Army of the Ohio, Buell commanding; the Army of the Mississippi, Pope commanding; and the Army of the Tennessee. His orders divided the combined force into the right wing, reserve, centre and left wing. Major-General George H. Thomas, who had been in Buell's army, was transferred with his division to the Army of the Tennessee and given command of the right wing, composed of all of that army except McClernand's and Lew. Wallace's divisions. McClernand was assigned to the command of the reserve, composed of his own and Lew. Wallace's divisions. Buell

commanded the centre, the Army of the Ohio; and Pope the left wing, the Army of the Mississippi. I was named second in command of the whole, and was also supposed to be in command of the right wing and reserve.

Orders were given to all the commanders engaged at Shiloh to send in their reports without delay to department headquarters. Those from officers of the Army of the Tennessee were sent through me; but from the Army of the Ohio they were sent by General Buell without passing through my hands. General Halleck ordered me, verbally, to send in my report, but I positively declined on the ground that he had received the reports of a part of the army engaged at Shiloh without their coming through me. He admitted that my refusal was justifiable under the circumstances, but explained that he had wanted to get the reports off before moving the command, and as fast as a report had come to him he had forwarded it to Washington.

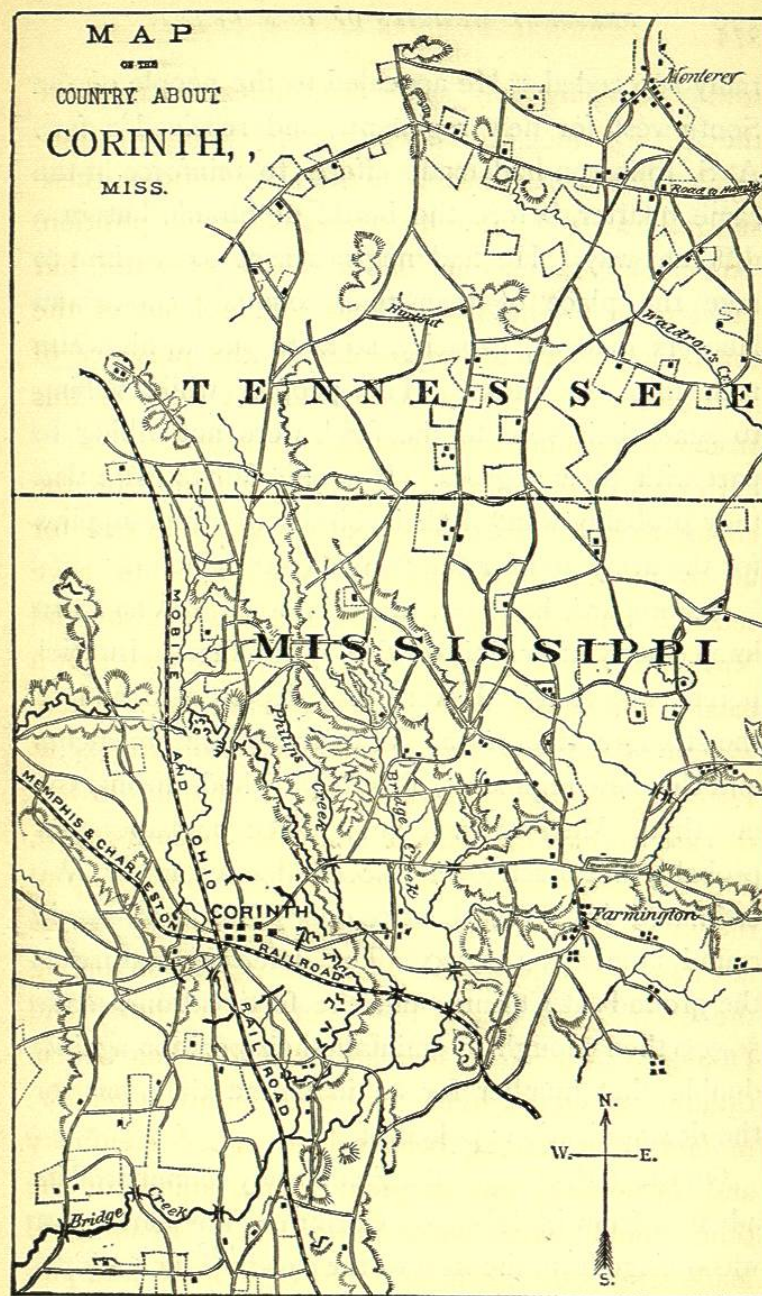
Preparations were at once made upon the arrival of the new commander for an advance on Corinth. Owl Creek, on our right, was bridged, and expeditions were sent to the north-west and west to ascertain if our position was being threatened from those quarters; the roads towards Corinth were corduroyed and new ones made; lateral roads were also constructed, so that in case of necessity troops march-

ing by different routes could reinforce each other. All commanders were cautioned against bringing on an engagement and informed in so many words that it would be better to retreat than to fight. By the 30th of April all preparations were complete; the country west to the Mobile and Ohio railroad had been reconnoitred, as well as the road to Corinth as far as Monterey twelve miles from Pittsburg. Everywhere small bodies of the enemy had been encountered, but they were observers and not in force to fight battles.

Corinth, Mississippi, lies in a south-westerly direction from Pittsburg landing and about nineteen miles away as the bird would fly, but probably twenty-two by the nearest wagon-road. It is about four miles south of the line dividing the States of Tennessee and Mississippi, and at the junction of the Mississippi and Chattanooga railroad with the Mobile and Ohio road which runs from Columbus to Mobile. From Pittsburg to Corinth the land is rolling, but at no point reaching an elevation that makes high hills to pass over. In 1862 the greater part of the country was covered with forest with intervening clearings and houses. Underbrush was dense in the low grounds along the creeks and ravines, but generally not so thick on the high land as to prevent men passing through with ease. There are two small creeks running from north of the

town and connecting some four miles south, where they form Bridge Creek which empties into the Tuscumbia River. Corinth is on the ridge between these streams and is a naturally strong defensive position. The creeks are insignificant in volume of water, but the stream to the east widens out in front of the town into a swamp, impassable in the presence of an enemy. On the crest of the west bank of this stream the enemy was strongly intrenched.

Corinth was a valuable strategic point for the enemy to hold, and consequently a valuable one for us to possess ourselves of. We ought to have seized it immediately after the fall of Donelson and Nashville, when it could have been taken without a battle, but failing then it should have been taken, without delay, on the concentration of troops at Pittsburg landing after the battle of Shiloh. In fact the arrival of Pope should not have been awaited. There was no time from the battle of Shiloh up to the evacuation of Corinth when the enemy would not have left if pushed. The demoralization among the Confederates from their defeats at Henry and Donelson; their long marches from Bowling Green, Columbus, and Nashville, and their failure at Shiloh; in fact from having been driven out of Kentucky and Tennessee, was so great that a stand for the time would have been impossible. Beauregard made strenuous efforts to reinforce himself and par-



tially succeeded. He appealed to the people of the South-west for new regiments, and received a few. A. S. Johnston had made efforts to reinforce in the same quarter, before the battle of Shiloh, but in a different way. He had negroes sent out to him to take the place of teamsters, company cooks and laborers in every capacity, so as to put all his white men into the ranks. The people, while willing to send their sons to the field, were not willing to part with their negroes. It is only fair to state that they probably wanted their blacks to raise supplies for the army and for the families left at home.

Beauregard, however, was reinforced by Van Dorn immediately after Shiloh with 17,000 men. Interior points, less exposed, were also depleted to add to the strength at Corinth. With these reinforcements and the new regiments, Beauregard had, during the month of May, 1862, a large force on paper, but probably not much over 50,000 effective men. We estimated his strength at 70,000. Our own was, in round numbers, 120,000. The defensible nature of the ground at Corinth, and the fortifications, made 50,000 then enough to maintain their position against double that number for an indefinite time but for the demoralization spoken of.

On the 30th of April the grand army commenced its advance from Shiloh upon Corinth. The movement was a siege from the start to the close. The National

troops were always behind intrenchments, except of course the small reconnoitring parties sent to the front to clear the way for an advance. Even the commanders of these parties were cautioned, "not to bring on an engagement." "It is better to retreat than to fight." The enemy were constantly watching our advance, but as they were simply observers there were but few engagements that even threatened to become battles. All the engagements fought ought to have served to encourage the enemy. Roads were again made in our front, and again corduroyed; a line was intrenched, and the troops were advanced to the new position. Cross roads were constructed to these new positions to enable the troops to concentrate in case of attack. The National armies were thoroughly intrenched all the way from the Tennessee River to Corinth.

For myself I was little more than an observer. Orders were sent direct to the right wing or reserve, ignoring me, and advances were made from one line of intrenchments to another without notifying me. My position was so embarrassing in fact that I made several applications during the siege to be relieved.

General Halleck kept his headquarters generally, if not all the time, with the right wing. Pope being on the extreme left did not see so much of his chief, and consequently got loose as it were at times. On the 3d of May he was at Seven Mile Creek

with the main body of his command, but threw forward a division to Farmington, within four miles of Corinth. His troops had quite a little engagement at Farmington on that day, but carried the place with considerable loss to the enemy. There would then have been no difficulty in advancing the centre and right so as to form a new line well up to the enemy, but Pope was ordered back to conform with the general line. On the 8th of May he moved again, taking his whole force to Farmington, and pushed out two divisions close to the rebel line. Again he was ordered back. By the 4th of May the centre and right wing reached Monterey, twelve miles out. Their advance was slow from there, for they intrenched with every forward movement. The left wing moved up again on the 25th of May and intrenched itself close to the enemy. The creek, with the marsh before described, separated the two lines. Skirmishers thirty feet apart could have maintained either line at this point.

Our centre and right were, at this time, extended so that the right of the right wing was probably five miles from Corinth and four from the works in their front. The creek, which was a formidable obstacle for either side to pass on our left, became a very slight obstacle on our right. Here the enemy occupied two positions. One of them, as much as two miles out from his main line, was on a command-

ing elevation and defended by an intrenched battery with infantry supports. A heavy wood intervened between this work and the National forces. In rear to the south there was a clearing extending a mile or more, and south of this clearing a log-house which had been loop-holed and was occupied by infantry. Sherman's division carried these two positions with some loss to himself, but with probably greater to the enemy, on the 28th of May, and on that day the investment of Corinth was complete, or as complete as it was ever made. Thomas' right now rested west of the Mobile and Ohio railroad. Pope's left commanded the Memphis and Charleston railroad east of Corinth.

Some days before I had suggested to the commanding general that I thought if he would move the Army of the Mississippi at night, by the rear of the centre and right, ready to advance at daylight, Pope would find no natural obstacle in his front and, I believed, no serious artificial one. The ground, or works, occupied by our left could be held by a thin picket line, owing to the stream and swamp in front. To the right the troops would have a dry ridge to march over. I was silenced so quickly that I felt that possibly I had suggested an unmilitary movement.

Later, probably on the 28th of May, General Logan, whose command was then on the Mobile and

Ohio railroad, said to me that the enemy had been evacuating for several days and that if allowed he could go into Corinth with his brigade. Trains of cars were heard coming in and going out of Corinth constantly. Some of the men who had been engaged in various capacities on railroads before the war claimed that they could tell, by putting their ears to the rail, not only which way the trains were moving but which trains were loaded and which were empty. They said loaded trains had been going out for several days and empty ones coming in. Subsequent events proved the correctness of their judgment. Beauregard published his orders for the evacuation of Corinth on the 26th of May and fixed the 29th for the departure of his troops, and on the 30th of May General Halleck had his whole army drawn up prepared for battle and announced in orders that there was every indication that our left was to be attacked that morning. Corinth had already been evacuated and the National troops marched on and took possession without opposition. Everything had been destroyed or carried away. The Confederate commander had instructed his soldiers to cheer on the arrival of every train to create the impression among the Yankees that reinforcements were arriving. There was not a sick or wounded man left by the Confederates, nor stores of any kind. Some ammunition had been

blown up—not removed—but the trophies of war were a few Quaker guns, logs of about the diameter of ordinary cannon, mounted on wheels of wagons and pointed in the most threatening manner towards us.

The possession of Corinth by the National troops was of strategic importance, but the victory was barren in every other particular. It was nearly bloodless. It is a question whether the *morale* of the Confederate troops engaged at Corinth was not improved by the immunity with which they were permitted to remove all public property and then withdraw themselves. On our side I know officers and men of the Army of the Tennessee—and I presume the same is true of those of the other commands—were disappointed at the result. They could not see how the mere occupation of places was to close the war while large and effective rebel armies existed. They believed that a well-directed attack would at least have partially destroyed the army defending Corinth. For myself I am satisfied that Corinth could have been captured in a two days' campaign commenced promptly on the arrival of reinforcements after the battle of Shiloh.

General Halleck at once commenced erecting fortifications around Corinth on a scale to indicate that this one point must be held if it took the whole National army to do it. All commanding points two

or three miles to the south, south-east and south-west were strongly fortified. It was expected in case of necessity to connect these forts by rifle-pits. They were laid out on a scale that would have required 100,000 men to fully man them. It was probably thought that a final battle of the war would be fought at that point. These fortifications were never used. Immediately after the occupation of Corinth by the National troops, General Pope was sent in pursuit of the retreating garrison and General Buell soon followed. Buell was the senior of the two generals and commanded the entire column. The pursuit was kept up for some thirty miles, but did not result in the capture of any material of war or prisoners, unless a few stragglers who had fallen behind and were willing captives. On the 10th of June the pursuing column was all back at Corinth. The Army of the Tennessee was not engaged in any of these movements.

The Confederates were now driven out of West Tennessee, and on the 6th of June, after a well-contested naval battle, the National forces took possession of Memphis and held the Mississippi river from its source to that point. The railroad from Columbus to Corinth was at once put in good condition and held by us. We had garrisons at Donelson, Clarksville and Nashville, on the Cumberland River, and held the Tennessee River from its mouth to East-

port. New Orleans and Baton Rouge had fallen into the possession of the National forces, so that now the Confederates at the west were narrowed down for all communication with Richmond to the single line of road running east from Vicksburg. To dispossess them of this, therefore, became a matter of the first importance. The possession of the Mississippi by us from Memphis to Baton Rouge was also a most important object. It would be equal to the amputation of a limb in its weakening effects upon the enemy.

After the capture of Corinth a movable force of 80,000 men, besides enough to hold all the territory acquired, could have been set in motion for the accomplishment of any great campaign for the suppression of the rebellion. In addition to this fresh troops were being raised to swell the effective force. But the work of depletion commenced. Buell with the Army of the Ohio was sent east, following the line of the Memphis and Charleston railroad. This he was ordered to repair as he advanced—only to have it destroyed by small guerilla bands or other troops as soon as he was out of the way. If he had been sent directly to Chattanooga as rapidly as he could march, leaving two or three divisions along the line of the railroad from Nashville forward, he could have arrived with but little fighting, and would have saved much of the loss of life which was afterwards incurred

in gaining Chattanooga. Bragg would then not have had time to raise an army to contest the possession of middle and east Tennessee and Kentucky; the battles of Stone River and Chickamauga would not necessarily have been fought; Burnside would not have been besieged in Knoxville without the power of helping himself or escaping; the battle of Chattanooga would not have been fought. These are the negative advantages, if the term negative is applicable, which would probably have resulted from prompt movements after Corinth fell into the possession of the National forces. The positive results might have been: a bloodless advance to Atlanta, to Vicksburg, or to any other desired point south of Corinth in the interior of Mississippi.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HEADQUARTERS MOVED TO MEMPHIS—ON THE ROAD TO MEMPHIS—ESCAPING JACKSON—COMPLAINTS AND REQUESTS—HALLECK APPOINTED COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF—RETURN TO CORINTH—MOVEMENTS OF BRAGG—SURRENDER OF CLARKSVILLE—THE ADVANCE UPON CHATTANOOGA—SHERIDAN COLONEL OF A MICHIGAN REGIMENT.

MY position at Corinth, with a nominal command and yet no command, became so unbearable that I asked permission of Halleck to remove my headquarters to Memphis. I had repeatedly asked, between the fall of Donelson and the evacuation of Corinth, to be relieved from duty under Halleck; but all my applications were refused until the occupation of the town. I then obtained permission to leave the department, but General Sherman happened to call on me as I was about starting and urged me so strongly not to think of going, that I concluded to remain. My application to be permitted to remove my headquarters to Memphis was, however, approved, and on the 21st of June I started for that point with my staff and a cavalry escort of only a part of one