

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

ADVANCE OF VAN DORN AND PRICE—PRICE ENTERS  
IUKA—BATTLE OF IUKA.

AT this time, September 4th, I had two divisions of the Army of the Mississippi stationed at Corinth, Rienzi, Jacinto and Danville. There were at Corinth also Davies' division and two brigades of McArthur's, besides cavalry and artillery. This force constituted my left wing, of which Rosecrans was in command. General Ord commanded the centre, from Bethel to Humboldt on the Mobile and Ohio railroad and from Jackson to Bolivar where the Mississippi Central is crossed by the Hatchie River. General Sherman commanded on the right at Memphis with two of his brigades back at Brownsville, at the crossing of the Hatchie River by the Memphis and Ohio railroad. This made the most convenient arrangement I could devise for concentrating all my spare forces upon any threatened point. All the troops of the command were within telegraphic communication of each other, except those under Sherman. By bringing a portion of his command to Brownsville, from which point there was a railroad

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and telegraph back to Memphis, communication could be had with that part of my command within a few hours by the use of couriers. In case it became necessary to reinforce Corinth, by this arrangement all the troops at Bolivar, except a small guard, could be sent by rail by the way of Jackson in less than twenty-four hours; while the troops from Brownsville could march up to Bolivar to take their place.

On the 7th of September I learned of the advance of Van Dorn and Price, apparently upon Corinth. One division was brought from Memphis to Bolivar to meet any emergency that might arise from this move of the enemy. I was much concerned because my first duty, after holding the territory acquired within my command, was to prevent further reinforcing of Bragg in Middle Tennessee. Already the Army of Northern Virginia had defeated the army under General Pope and was invading Maryland. In the Centre General Buell was on his way to Louisville and Bragg marching parallel to him with a large Confederate force for the Ohio River.

I had been constantly called upon to reinforce Buell until at this time my entire force numbered less than 50,000 men, of all arms. This included everything from Cairo south within my jurisdiction. If I too should be driven back, the Ohio River would become the line dividing the belligerents west of the Alle-

ghanies, while at the East the line was already farther north than when hostilities commenced at the opening of the war. It is true Nashville was never given up after its first capture, but it would have been isolated and the garrison there would have been obliged to beat a hasty retreat if the troops in West Tennessee had been compelled to fall back. To say at the end of the second year of the war the line dividing the contestants at the East was pushed north of Maryland, a State that had not seceded, and at the West beyond Kentucky, another State which had been always loyal, would have been discouraging indeed. As it was, many loyal people despaired in the fall of 1862 of ever saving the Union. The administration at Washington was much concerned for the safety of the cause it held so dear. But I believe there was never a day when the President did not think that, in some way or other, a cause so just as ours would come out triumphant.

Up to the 11th of September Rosecrans still had troops on the railroad east of Corinth, but they had all been ordered in. By the 12th all were in except a small force under Colonel Murphy of the 8th Wisconsin. He had been detained to guard the remainder of the stores which had not yet been brought in to Corinth.

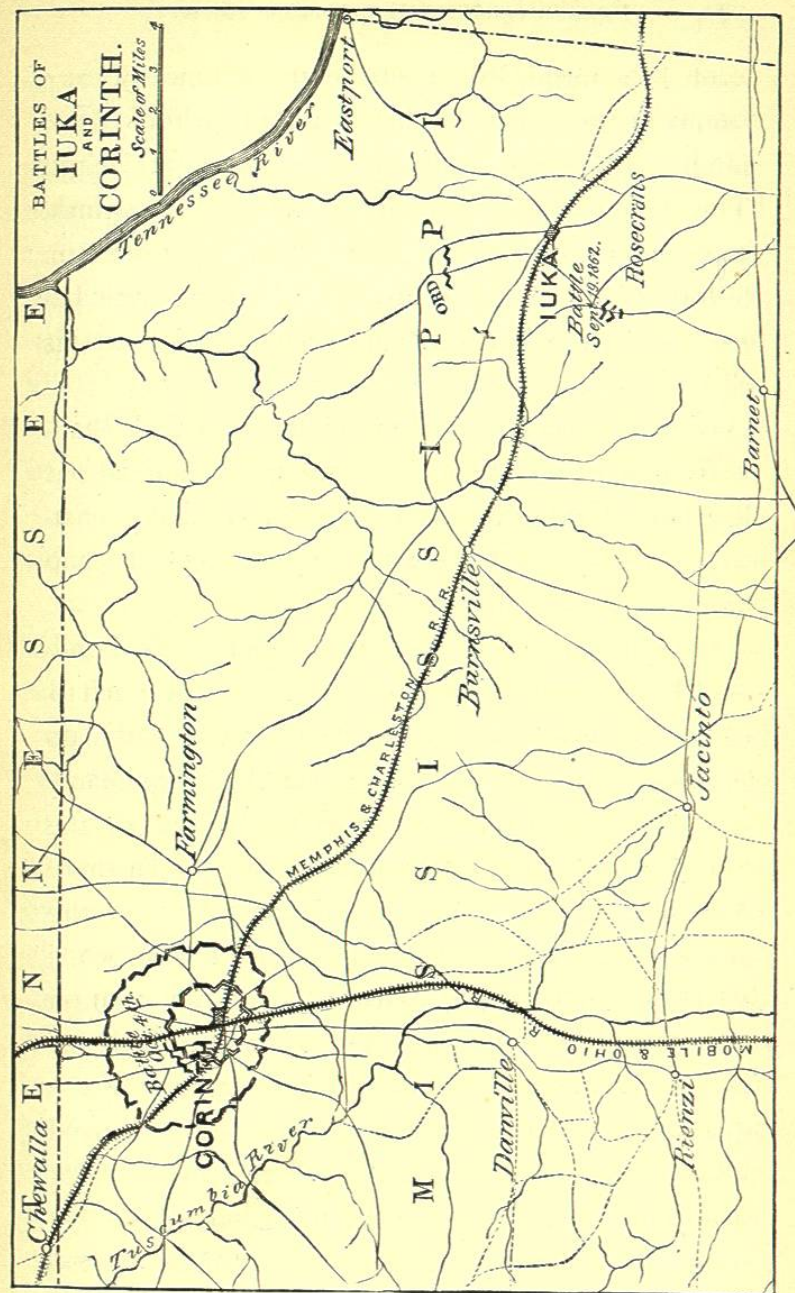
On the 13th of September General Sterling Price

entered Iuka, a town about twenty miles east of Corinth on the Memphis and Charleston railroad. Colonel Murphy with a few men was guarding the place. He made no resistance, but evacuated the town on the approach of the enemy. I was apprehensive lest the object of the rebels might be to get troops into Tennessee to reinforce Bragg, as it was afterwards ascertained to be. The authorities at Washington, including the general-in-chief of the army, were very anxious, as I have said, about affairs both in East and Middle Tennessee; and my anxiety was quite as great on their account as for any danger threatening my command. I had not force enough at Corinth to attack Price even by stripping everything; and there was danger that before troops could be got from other points he might be far on his way across the Tennessee. To prevent this all spare forces at Bolivar and Jackson were ordered to Corinth, and cars were concentrated at Jackson for their transportation. Within twenty-four hours from the transmission of the order the troops were at their destination, although there had been a delay of four hours resulting from the forward train getting off the track and stopping all the others. This gave a reinforcement of near 8,000 men, General Ord in command. General Rosecrans commanded the district of Corinth with a movable force of about 9,000, independent of the garrison

deemed necessary to be left behind. It was known that General Van Dorn was about a four days' march south of us, with a large force. It might have been part of his plan to attack at Corinth, Price coming from the east while he came up from the south. My desire was to attack Price before Van Dorn could reach Corinth or go to his relief.

General Rosecrans had previously had his headquarters at Iuka, where his command was spread out along the Memphis and Charleston railroad eastward. While there he had a most excellent map prepared showing all the roads and streams in the surrounding country. He was also personally familiar with the ground, so that I deferred very much to him in my plans for the approach. We had cars enough to transport all of General Ord's command, which was to go by rail to Burnsville, a point on the road about seven miles west of Iuka. From there his troops were to march by the north side of the railroad and attack Price from the north-west, while Rosecrans was to move eastward from his position south of Corinth by way of the Jacinto road. A small force was to hold the Jacinto road where it turns to the north-east, while the main force moved on the Fulton road which comes into Iuka further east. This plan was suggested by Rosecrans.

Bear Creek, a few miles to the east of the Fulton



road, is a formidable obstacle to the movement of troops in the absence of bridges, all of which, in September, 1862, had been destroyed in that vicinity. The Tennessee, to the north-east, not many miles away, was also a formidable obstacle for an army followed by a pursuing force. Ord was on the north-west, and even if a rebel movement had been possible in that direction it could have brought only temporary relief, for it would have carried Price's army to the rear of the National forces and isolated it from all support. It looked to me that, if Price would remain in Iuka until we could get there, his annihilation was inevitable.

On the morning of the 18th of September General Ord moved by rail to Burnsville, and there left the cars and moved out to perform his part of the programme. He was to get as near the enemy as possible during the day and intrench himself so as to hold his position until the next morning. Rosecrans was to be up by the morning of the 19th on the two roads before described, and the attack was to be from all three quarters simultaneously. Troops enough were left at Jacinto and Rienzi to detain any cavalry that Van Dorn might send out to make a sudden dash into Corinth until I could be notified. There was a telegraph wire along the railroad, so there would be no delay in communication. I detained cars and locomotives enough at Burnsville to trans-

port the whole of Ord's command at once, and if Van Dorn had moved against Corinth instead of Iuka I could have thrown in reinforcements to the number of 7,000 or 8,000 before he could have arrived. I remained at Burnsville with a detachment of about 900 men from Ord's command and communicated with my two wings by courier. Ord met the advance of the enemy soon after leaving Burnsville. Quite a sharp engagement ensued, but he drove the rebels back with considerable loss, including one general officer killed. He maintained his position and was ready to attack by daylight the next morning. I was very much disappointed at receiving a dispatch from Rosecrans after midnight from Jacinto, twenty-two miles from Iuka, saying that some of his command had been delayed, and that the rear of his column was not yet up as far as Jacinto. He said, however, that he would still be at Iuka by two o'clock the next day. I did not believe this possible because of the distance and the condition of the roads, which was bad; besides, troops after a forced march of twenty miles are not in a good condition for fighting the moment they get through. It might do in marching to relieve a beleaguered garrison, but not to make an assault. I immediately sent Ord a copy of Rosecrans' dispatch and ordered him to be in readiness to attack the moment he heard the sound of guns to the south or south-east. He was instructed

to notify his officers to be on the alert for any indications of battle. During the 19th the wind blew in the wrong direction to transmit sound either towards the point where Ord was, or to Burnsville where I had remained.

A couple of hours before dark on the 19th Rosecrans arrived with the head of his column at Barnets, the point where the Jacinto road to Iuka leaves the road going east. He here turned north without sending any troops to the Fulton road. While still moving in column up the Jacinto road he met a force of the enemy and had his advance badly beaten and driven back upon the main road. In this short engagement his loss was considerable for the number engaged, and one battery was taken from him. The wind was still blowing hard and in the wrong direction to transmit sound towards either Ord or me. Neither he nor I nor any one in either command heard a gun that was fired upon the battle-field. After the engagement Rosecrans sent me a dispatch announcing the result. This was brought by a courier. There was no road between Burnsville and the position then occupied by Rosecrans and the country was impassable for a man on horseback. The courier bearing the message was compelled to move west nearly to Jacinto before he found a road leading to Burnsville. This made it a late hour of the night before I learned of the battle that had taken

place during the afternoon. I at once notified Ord of the fact and ordered him to attack early in the morning. The next morning Rosecrans himself renewed the attack and went into Iuka with but little resistance. Ord also went in according to orders, without hearing a gun from the south of town but supposing the troops coming from the south-west must be up by that time. Rosecrans, however, had put no troops upon the Fulton road, and the enemy had taken advantage of this neglect and retreated by that road during the night. Word was soon brought to me that our troops were in Iuka. I immediately rode into town and found that the enemy was not being pursued even by the cavalry. I ordered pursuit by the whole of Rosecrans' command and went on with him a few miles in person. He followed only a few miles after I left him and then went into camp, and the pursuit was continued no further. I was disappointed at the result of the battle of Iuka—but I had so high an opinion of General Rosecrans that I found no fault at the time.