

CHAPTER LXII.

SHERMAN'S MARCH NORTH—SHERIDAN ORDERED TO LYNCHBURG—CANBY ORDERED TO MOVE AGAINST MOBILE—MOVEMENTS OF SCHOFIELD AND THOMAS—CAPTURE OF COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA—SHERMAN IN THE CAROLINAS.

WHEN news of Sherman being in possession of Savannah reached the North, distinguished statesmen and visitors began to pour in to see him. Among others who went was the Secretary of War, who seemed much pleased at the result of his campaign. Mr. Draper, the collector of customs of New York, who was with Mr. Stanton's party, was put in charge of the public property that had been abandoned and captured. Savannah was then turned over to General Foster's command to hold, so that Sherman might have his own entire army free to operate as might be decided upon in the future. I sent the chief engineer of the Army of the Potomac (General Barnard) with letters to General Sherman. He remained some time with the general, and when he returned brought back letters, one of which contained suggestions from Sherman as to

what ought to be done in co-operation with him, when he should have started upon his march northward.

I must not neglect to state here the fact that I had no idea originally of having Sherman march from Savannah to Richmond, or even to North Carolina. The season was bad, the roads impassable for anything except such an army as he had, and I should not have thought of ordering such a move. I had, therefore, made preparations to collect transports to carry Sherman and his army around to the James River by water, and so informed him. On receiving this letter he went to work immediately to prepare for the move, but seeing that it would require a long time to collect the transports, he suggested the idea then of marching up north through the Carolinas. I was only too happy to approve this; for if successful, it promised every advantage. His march through Georgia had thoroughly destroyed all lines of transportation in that State, and had completely cut the enemy off from all sources of supply to the west of it. If North and South Carolina were rendered helpless so far as capacity for feeding Lee's army was concerned, the Confederate garrison at Richmond would be reduced in territory, from which to draw supplies, to very narrow limits in the State of Virginia; and, although that section of the country was fertile, it was already well ex-

hausted of both forage and food. I approved Sherman's suggestion therefore at once.

The work of preparation was tedious, because supplies, to load the wagons for the march, had to be brought from a long distance. Sherman would now have to march through a country furnishing fewer provisions than that he had previously been operating in during his march to the sea. Besides, he was confronting, or marching toward, a force of the enemy vastly superior to any his troops had encountered on their previous march; and the territory through which he had to pass had now become of such vast importance to the very existence of the Confederate army, that the most desperate efforts were to be expected in order to save it.

Sherman, therefore, while collecting the necessary supplies to start with, made arrangements with Admiral Dahlgren, who commanded that part of the navy on the South Carolina and Georgia coast, and General Foster, commanding the troops, to take positions, and hold a few points on the sea coast, which he (Sherman) designated, in the neighborhood of Charleston.

This provision was made to enable him to fall back upon the sea coast, in case he should encounter a force sufficient to stop his onward progress. He also wrote me a letter, making suggestions as to

what he would like to have done in support of his movement farther north. This letter was brought to City Point by General Barnard at a time when I happened to be going to Washington City, where I arrived on the 21st of January. I cannot tell the provision I had already made to co-operate with Sherman, in anticipation of his expected movement, better than by giving my reply to this letter.

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
WASHINGTON, D. C., Jan. 21, 1865.

MAJOR-GENERAL W. T. SHERMAN,

Commanding Mil. Div. of the Mississippi.

GENERAL :—Your letters brought by General Barnard were received at City Point, and read with interest. Not having them with me, however, I cannot say that in this I will be able to satisfy you on all points of recommendation. As I arrived here at one P.M., and must leave at six P.M., having in the meantime spent over three hours with the Secretary and General Halleck, I must be brief. Before your last request to have Thomas make a campaign into the heart of Alabama, I had ordered Schofield to Annapolis, Md., with his corps. The advance (six thousand) will reach the seaboard by the 23d, the remainder following as rapidly as railroad transportation can be procured from Cincinnati. The corps numbers over twenty-one thousand men. I was induced to do this because I did not believe Thomas could possibly be got off before spring. His pursuit of Hood indicated a sluggishness that satisfied me that he would never do to conduct one of your campaigns. The command of the advance of the pursuit was left to subordinates, whilst Thomas followed far behind. When Hood had crossed the Tennessee, and those in pursuit had reached it, Thomas had not much more than half crossed

the State, from whence he returned to Nashville to take steamer for Eastport. He is possessed of excellent judgment, great coolness and honesty, but he is not good on a pursuit. He also reported his troops fagged, and that it was necessary to equip up. This report and a determination to give the enemy no rest determined me to use his surplus troops elsewhere.

Thomas is still left with a sufficient force surplus to go to Selma under an energetic leader. He has been telegraphed to, to know whether he could go, and, if so, which of the several routes he would select. No reply is yet received. Canby has been ordered to act offensively from the sea-coast to the interior, towards Montgomery and Selma. Thomas's forces will move from the north at an early day, or some of his troops will be sent to Canby. Without further reinforcements Canby will have a moving column of twenty thousand men.

Fort Fisher, you are aware, has been captured. We have a force there of eight thousand effective. At New Bern about half the number. It is rumored, through deserters, that Wilmington also has fallen. I am inclined to believe the rumor, because on the 17th we knew the enemy were blowing up their works about Fort Caswell, and that on the 18th Terry moved on Wilmington.

If Wilmington is captured, Schofield will go there. If not, he will be sent to New Bern. In either event, all the surplus forces at the two points will move to the interior toward Goldsboro' in co-operation with your movements. From either point, railroad communications can be run out, there being here abundance of rolling-stock suited to the gauge of those roads.

There have been about sixteen thousand men sent from Lee's army south. Of these, you will have fourteen thousand against you, if Wilmington is not held by the enemy, casualties at Fort Fisher having overtaken about two thousand.

All these troops are subject to your orders as you come in communication with them. They will be so instructed. From

about Richmond I will watch Lee closely, and if he detaches much more, or attempts to evacuate, will pitch in. In the meantime, should you be brought to a halt anywhere, I can send two corps of thirty thousand effective men to your support, from the troops about Richmond.

To resume: Canby is ordered to operate to the interior from the Gulf. A. J. Smith may go from the north, but I think it doubtful. A force of twenty-eight or thirty thousand will co-operate with you from New Bern or Wilmington, or both. You can call for reinforcements.

This will be handed you by Captain Hudson, of my staff, who will return with any message you may have for me. If there is anything I can do for you in the way of having supplies on shipboard, at any point on the sea-coast, ready for you, let me know it.

Yours truly,

U. S. GRANT,

Lieut.-General.

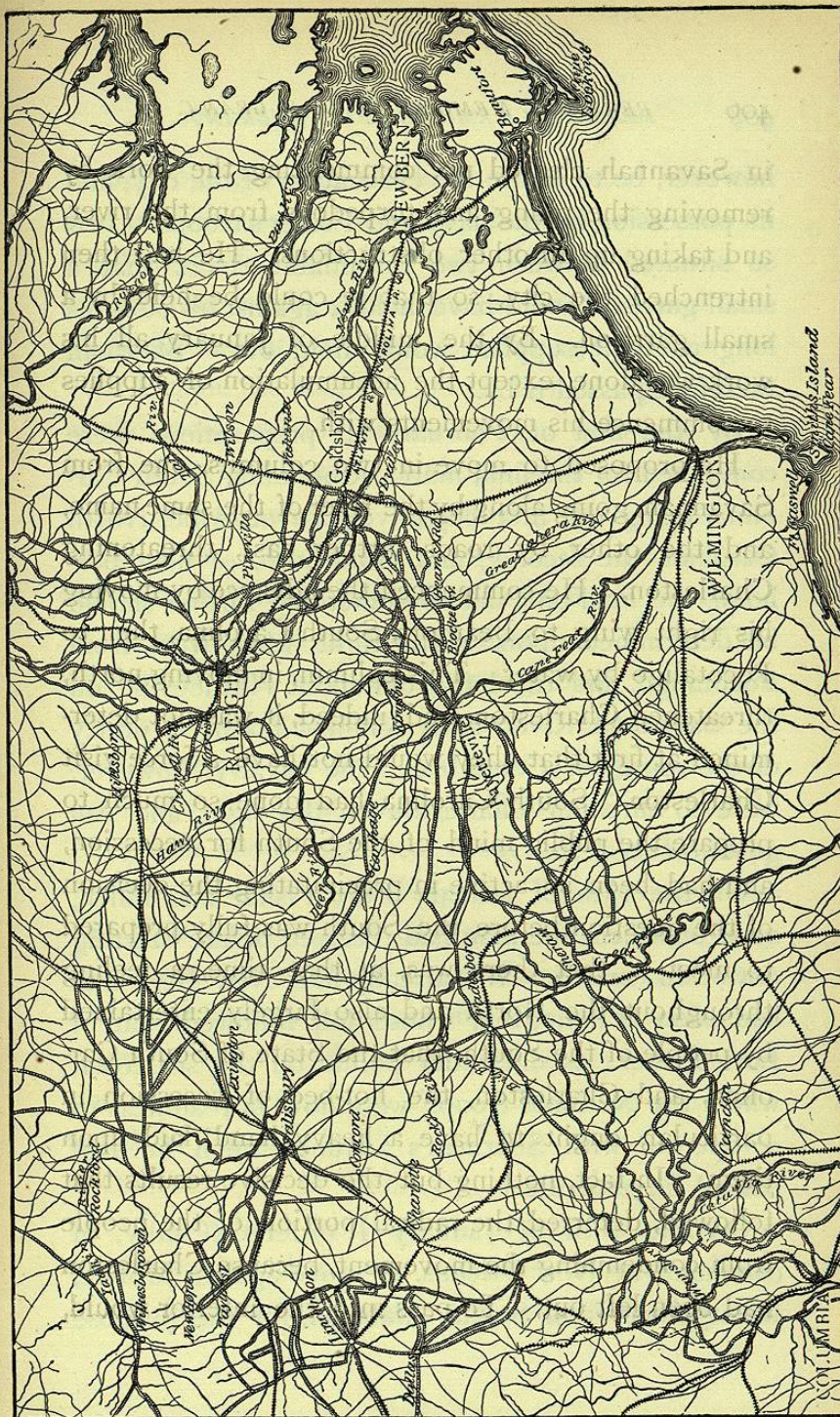
I had written on the 18th of January to General Sherman, giving him the news of the battle of Nashville. He was much pleased at the result, although, like myself, he had been very much disappointed at Thomas for permitting Hood to cross the Tennessee River and nearly the whole State of Tennessee, and come to Nashville to be attacked there. He, however, as I had done, sent Thomas a warm congratulatory letter.

On the 10th of January, 1865, the resolutions of thanks to Sherman and his army passed by Congress were approved.

Sherman, after the capture, at once had the *débris*

in Savannah cleared up, commencing the work by removing the piling and torpedoes from the river, and taking up all other obstructions. He had then intrenched the city, so that it could be held by a small garrison. By the middle of January all his work was done, except the accumulation of supplies to commence his movements with.

He proposed to move in two columns, one from Savannah, going along by the river of the same name, and the other by roads farther east, threatening Charleston. He commenced the advance by moving his right wing to Beaufort, South Carolina, then to Pocotaligo by water. This column, in moving north, threatened Charleston, and, indeed, it was not determined at first that they would not have a force visit Charleston. South Carolina had done so much to prepare the public mind of the South for secession, and had been so active in precipitating the decision of the question before the South was fully prepared to meet it, that there was, at that time, a feeling throughout the North and also largely entertained by people of the South, that the State of South Carolina, and Charleston, the hot-bed of secession in particular, ought to have a heavy hand laid upon them. In fact, nothing but the decisive results that followed, deterred the radical portion of the people from condemning the movement, because Charleston had been left out. To pass into the interior would,



however, be to insure the evacuation of the city, and its possession by the navy and Foster's troops. It is so situated between two formidable rivers that a small garrison could have held it against all odds as long as their supplies would hold out. Sherman therefore passed it by.

By the first of February all preparations were completed for the final march, Columbia, South Carolina, being the first objective; Fayetteville, North Carolina, the second; and Goldsboro, or neighborhood, the final one, unless something further should be determined upon. The right wing went from Pocotaligo, and the left from about Hardeeville on the Savannah River, both columns taking a pretty direct route for Columbia. The cavalry, however, were to threaten Charleston on the right, and Augusta on the left.

On the 15th of January Fort Fisher had fallen, news of which Sherman had received before starting out on his march. We already had New Bern and had soon Wilmington, whose fall followed that of Fort Fisher; as did other points on the sea coast, where the National troops were now in readiness to co-operate with Sherman's advance when he had passed Fayetteville.

On the 18th of January I ordered Canby, in command at New Orleans, to move against Mobile, Montgomery and Selma, Alabama, for the purpose

of destroying roads, machine shops, etc. On the 8th of February I ordered Sheridan, who was in the Valley of Virginia, to push forward as soon as the weather would permit and strike the canal west of Richmond at or about Lynchburg; and on the 20th I made the order to go to Lynchburg as soon as the roads would permit, saying: "As soon as it is possible to travel, I think you will have no difficulty about reaching Lynchburg with a cavalry force alone. From there you could destroy the railroad and canal in every direction, so as to be of no further use to the rebellion. * * * This additional raid, with one starting from East Tennessee under Stoneman, numbering about four or five thousand cavalry; one from Eastport, Mississippi, ten thousand cavalry; Canby, from Mobile Bay, with about eighteen thousand mixed troops—these three latter pushing for Tuscaloosa, Selma and Montgomery; and Sherman with a large army eating out the vitals of South Carolina—is all that will be wanted to leave nothing for the rebellion to stand upon. I would advise you to overcome great obstacles to accomplish this. Charleston was evacuated on Tuesday last."

On the 27th of February, more than a month after Canby had received his orders, I again wrote to him, saying that I was extremely anxious to hear of his being in Alabama. I notified him, also, that

I had sent Grierson to take command of his cavalry, he being a very efficient officer. I further suggested that Forrest was probably in Mississippi, and if he was there, he would find him an officer of great courage and capacity whom it would be difficult to get by. I still further informed him that Thomas had been ordered to start a cavalry force into Mississippi on the 20th of February, or as soon as possible thereafter. This force did not get off however.

All these movements were designed to be in support of Sherman's march, the object being to keep the Confederate troops in the West from leaving there. But neither Canby nor Thomas could be got off in time. I had some time before depleted Thomas's army to reinforce Canby, for the reason that Thomas had failed to start an expedition which he had been ordered to send out, and to have the troops where they might do something. Canby seemed to be equally deliberate in all of his movements. I ordered him to go in person; but he prepared to send a detachment under another officer. General Granger had got down to New Orleans, in some way or other, and I wrote Canby that he must not put him in command of troops. In spite of this he asked the War Department to assign Granger to the command of a corps. Almost in despair of having adequate service

rendered to the cause in that quarter, I said to Canby: "I am in receipt of a dispatch * * * informing me that you have made requisitions for a construction corps and material to build seventy miles of railroad. I have directed that none be sent. Thomas's army has been depleted to send a force to you that they might be where they could act in winter, and at least detain the force the enemy had in the West. If there had been any idea of repairing railroads, it could have been done much better from the North, where we already had the troops. I expected your movements to be co-operative with Sherman's last. This has now entirely failed. I wrote to you long ago, urging you to push promptly and to live upon the country, and destroy railroads, machine shops, etc., not to build them. Take Mobile and hold it, and push your forces to the interior—to Montgomery and to Selma. Destroy railroads, rolling stock, and everything useful for carrying on war, and, when you have done this, take such positions as can be supplied by water. By this means alone you can occupy positions from which the enemy's roads in the interior can be kept broken."

Most of these expeditions got off finally, but too late to render any service in the direction for which they were designed. The enemy, ready to intercept his advance, consisted of Hardee's troops and Wheeler's cavalry