

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SHERMAN'S MERIDIAN CAMPAIGN.

Object of the Meridian Expedition.—Condition of the Confederate Commissary.—Sherman's Plan.—Co-operative Column under W. S. Smith.—Sherman starts from Vicksburg February 3d, 1864.—His third Visit to Jackson.—The Confederate Forces, under Polk, in the Department of Mississippi.—Polk retires into Alabama.—Sherman's March unopposed.—He enters Meridian on the 14th.—Defeat of Smith's Column by General Forrest.—Sherman's Return to Vicksburg.—Forrest's Raid into Tennessee.—The Fort Pillow Massacre.—Expeditions sent against General Forrest from Memphis, under Sturgis and A. J. Smith.

SINCE the capture of Vicksburg there had been no important military movements in Mississippi during 1863. About the middle of August a small force of 1600 men, sent from General Hurlbut's command, had penetrated through the northern portion of the state to Grenada, where it captured and destroyed over 50 locomotives and about 500 cars. General McPherson two months later, with about 8000 men, comprising Logan's and Tuttle's divisions, and Colonel Winslow's cavalry, pushed out from Vicksburg nearly to Canton, driving back Wirt Adams's cavalry and three brigades of Confederate infantry. Finding himself confronted by a superior force of the enemy, he retreated to Vicksburg.

After Bragg's defeat a more formidable expedition was organized by General Sherman, having for its object the completion of the work which had been begun by the reduction of Vicksburg and Port Hudson. By the capture of those strong-holds the river itself had been conquered, and Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee had been cut off from any possible connection with the main theatre of the war, which was now confined to Virginia, the two Carolinas, Georgia, Northern Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. Winter had proclaimed a truce, so far as conflicts between the main armies were concerned. But the possession by the national troops of the east bank of the Mississippi furnished a convenient basis for a winter campaign in Mississippi and Alabama. Such a campaign would be an important preparation for the advance upon Atlanta in the following spring. If the reader will examine the map he will observe that, by the successful issue of the Chattanooga campaign, the entire network of railroads north of and including the road running from Memphis eastward to Virginia, had been secured by the national government. By General Grant's victory not only had Bragg's army been defeated and driven, but had been deprived of one of the chief sources upon which it had relied for subsistence.¹ It was forced

¹ Says the *Knoxville Register* (published at Atlanta, Georgia, after the Federal occupation of East Tennessee), "If any one doubts the necessity which would compel President Davis to sacrifice Richmond, Charleston, and Mobile, all to reacquire East Tennessee, he need only ask the commissary general by what agencies and from what sources the armies of the South have been sustained during the first years of the war. East Tennessee furnished the Confederate States with 25,000,000 pounds of bacon. Last year the State of Tennessee fed the army." The *Richmond Examiner* of October 31st corroborates this testimony in the following terms: "Except what was furtively obtained from Kentucky, the whole army supply of pork came from East Tennessee, and the contiguous counties of the adjoining states. The product of corn in that region was very heavy, and no portion of the Confederacy, equal in extent, afforded as large a supply of forage and winter pasturage."

The following circular, issued in November, 1863, from the office of the chief commissary in Florida, indicates the beginning of a sad era for the armies of the Confederacy:

"Office of Chief Commissary, Quincy, Fla., November 2, 1863.

"It has been a subject of anxious consideration how I could, without injury to our cause, expose to the people throughout the state the present perilous condition of our army. To do this through the public press would point out our source of danger to our enemies. To see each one in person, or even a sufficient number to effect the object contemplated, is impossible; yet the necessity of general and immediate action is imperative to save our army, and with it our cause, from disaster. The issues of this contest are now transferred to the people at home. If they fail to do their duty and sustain the army in its present position, it must fall back. If the enemy break through our present line, the wave of desolation may roll even to the shores of the Gulf and Atlantic. In discipline, valor, and the skill of its leaders, our army has proven more than a match for the enemy. But the best-appointed army can not maintain its position without support at home. The people should never suffer it to be said that they valued their cattle and hogs, their corn and money, more than their liberties and honor, and that they had to be compelled to support an army they had sent to battle in their defense. We hope it will not become necessary to resort to impressments among a people fighting for their existence, and in defense of their homes, and country, and institutions. We prefer rather to appeal to them by every motive of duty and honor—by the love they bear their wives and daughters—by the memory of the heroic dead, and the future glory and independence of their country, to come to its rescue in this darkest hour of its peril.

"A country which can afford to send forth in its defense the flower of its youth, and the best of its manhood, can afford, and are in honor bound to sustain them at any cost and sacrifice of money and property. They have sacrificed home and ease, and suffered untold hardships, and with their lives are now defending every thing we hold most sacred. Florida has done nobly in this contest. Her sons have achieved the highest character for their state, and won imperishable honors for themselves. These brave men are now suffering for want of food. Not only the men from Florida, but the whole army of the South, are in this condition. Our honor as a people demands that we do our duty to them. They must be fed. The following extracts from official letters in my possession do but partially represent the present condition of the armies of Generals Bragg and Beauregard, and their gloomy prospect for future supplies:

"Major J. F. Cumming, who supplies General Bragg's army, writes, 'It is absolutely and vitally important that all the cattle that can possibly be brought here shall be brought as promptly as possible.' And again, on the 5th of October, he says, 'I can not too strongly urge upon you the necessity, yes, the urgent necessity, of sending forward cattle promptly. It appears that all other sources are exhausted, and that we are now dependent upon your state for beef for the very large army of General Bragg. I know you will leave no stone unturned, and I must say all is now dependent on your exertions, so far as beef is concerned. In regard to bacon, the stock is about exhausted—hence beef is our only hope. I know the prospect is very discouraging, and it only remains with those of us having charge of this important work to do all we can to exhaust our resources; and when we have done this, our country can not complain of us. If we fail to do all that can be done, and our cause shall fail, upon us will rest the responsibility; therefore let us employ every means at our command.' Again, on the 6th, he says, 'Major A. can explain to you the great and absolute necessity for prompt action in the matter; for, major, I assure you that nearly all now depends on you.' And on the 19th of October he says, 'Captain Townsend, A. C. S., having a leave of absence for thirty days from the Army of Tennessee, I have prevailed on him to see you and explain to you my straitened condition, and the imminent danger of our army suffering for the want of beef.' And on the 20th of October he wrote, 'The army to-day is on half-rations of beef, and I fear within a few days will have nothing but bread to eat. This is truly a dark hour with us, and I can not see what is to be done. All that is left for us to do is to do all we can, and then we will have a clear conscience, no matter what the world may say.'

"Major Locke, Chief Commissary of Georgia, wrote, 'I pray you, major, to put every agency in motion that you can to send cattle without a moment's delay toward the Georgia borders. The troops in Charleston are in great extremity. We look alone to you for cattle; those in Georgia are exhausted.'

"Major Guerin, Chief Commissary of South Carolina, wrote, 'We are almost entirely dependent on Florida, and it is of the last importance, at this time, that the troops here should be subsisted.' Again he says, 'As it is, our situation is full of danger from want of meat, and extraordinary efforts are required to prevent disaster.' And on the 9th of October he says, 'We have now 40,000 troops and laborers to subsist. The supply of bacon on hand in the city is 20,000 pounds, and the cattle furnished by this state is not one tenth of what is required. My anxieties and apprehensions, as you may suppose, are greatly excited.'

"Major Millen, of Savannah, on the 10th of October says, 'I assure you, major, that the stock of bacon and beef for the armies of the Confederate States is now exhausted, and we must depend

to mainly depend upon Florida for its meat, while its supply of corn was principally derived from the rich valleys of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. The Confederate Army of the West was already cut off from the immense cattle-growing region west of the Mississippi, and from the corn and bacon of Tennessee. It was proposed to still farther restrict its dependencies by operations, during the winter of 1863-4, directed against the railroads leading to Atlanta from Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. Thus the campaigns undertaken in the beginning of 1864 by Seymour in Florida, and Sherman in Mississippi, were calculated to have an important bearing upon the progress of the main Federal army southward in the spring and summer.

Probably the principal object of Sherman's expedition against the railroads west of Atlanta was to prevent the possibility of the future concentration of a Confederate army on the east bank of the Mississippi. The destruction of these railroads would render it impossible for the enemy to approach the river with artillery and trains, and the occupation of prominent points in the interior would subject any Confederate infantry column, seeking to gain a position on the river, to an attack in its rear. In this way Sherman's army would be liberated from the necessity, hitherto imposed upon it, of remaining in strong force at Vicksburg, or some other point on the Mississippi.

The plan adopted by General Sherman was the following: He was himself to move from Vicksburg with four divisions of infantry—two of McPherson's and two of Hurlbut's corps—and Colonel Winslow's cavalry brigade, and, advancing westward, was to destroy the Southern Mississippi Railroad. At Meridian, General William Sooy Smith, General Grant's chief of cavalry, was to meet him with all the cavalry of the department, having advanced along the line of the Mobile and Ohio Railroad from Memphis, destroying the road as he moved. General Smith had a long ride of 250 miles, which he was expected to accomplish in ten days, starting from Memphis on or before the 1st of February, moving by way of Pontotoc, Okalona, and Columbus, and reaching Meridian on the 10th. He was instructed to disregard all small detachments of the enemy, and to advance rapidly to his appointed destination. Simultaneously with these movements, the Eleventh Illinois and a colored regiment, with five tin-clad gun-boats, were sent up the Yazoo to create a diversion and to protect the plantations along the banks of that river; and another force, under Brigadier General Hawkins, was to patrol the country toward the Big Black, in the rear of Vicksburg, and to collect 50 skiffs, by means of which detachments of 200 or 300 men might be moved at pleasure through the labyrinth of bayous between the Yazoo and the Mississippi, for the purpose of suppressing the bands of guerrillas then infesting that region.

Sherman began his march on the 3d of February. Hurlbut moved across the Big Black by way of Messenger's Ferry, and McPherson by the railroad bridge six miles below. The two columns, with the cavalry, numbered about 25,000 men. On the 5th both columns met the enemy, Hurlbut's at Joe Davis's plantation, and McPherson's at Champion Hills, and there was skirmishing all day, with small loss on either side, but without materially impeding the progress of the troops, who the next day entered Jackson. This was the third time that Sherman's troops had entered and occupied the capital of Mississippi, and it is fair to presume that this third occupation pretty nearly completed the work of destruction so shamelessly indulged in on two previous occasions.¹

entirely upon what we may gather weekly. Starvation stares the army in the face—the handwriting is on the wall.' On the 26th of October he says, 'From the best information I have, the resources of food (meat) of both the Tennessee and Virginia armies are exhausted. The remark now applies with equal force to South Carolina and Georgia, and the army must henceforth depend upon the energy of the purchasing commissaries, through their daily or weekly collections. I have exhausted the beef cattle, and am now obliged to kill stock cattle.'

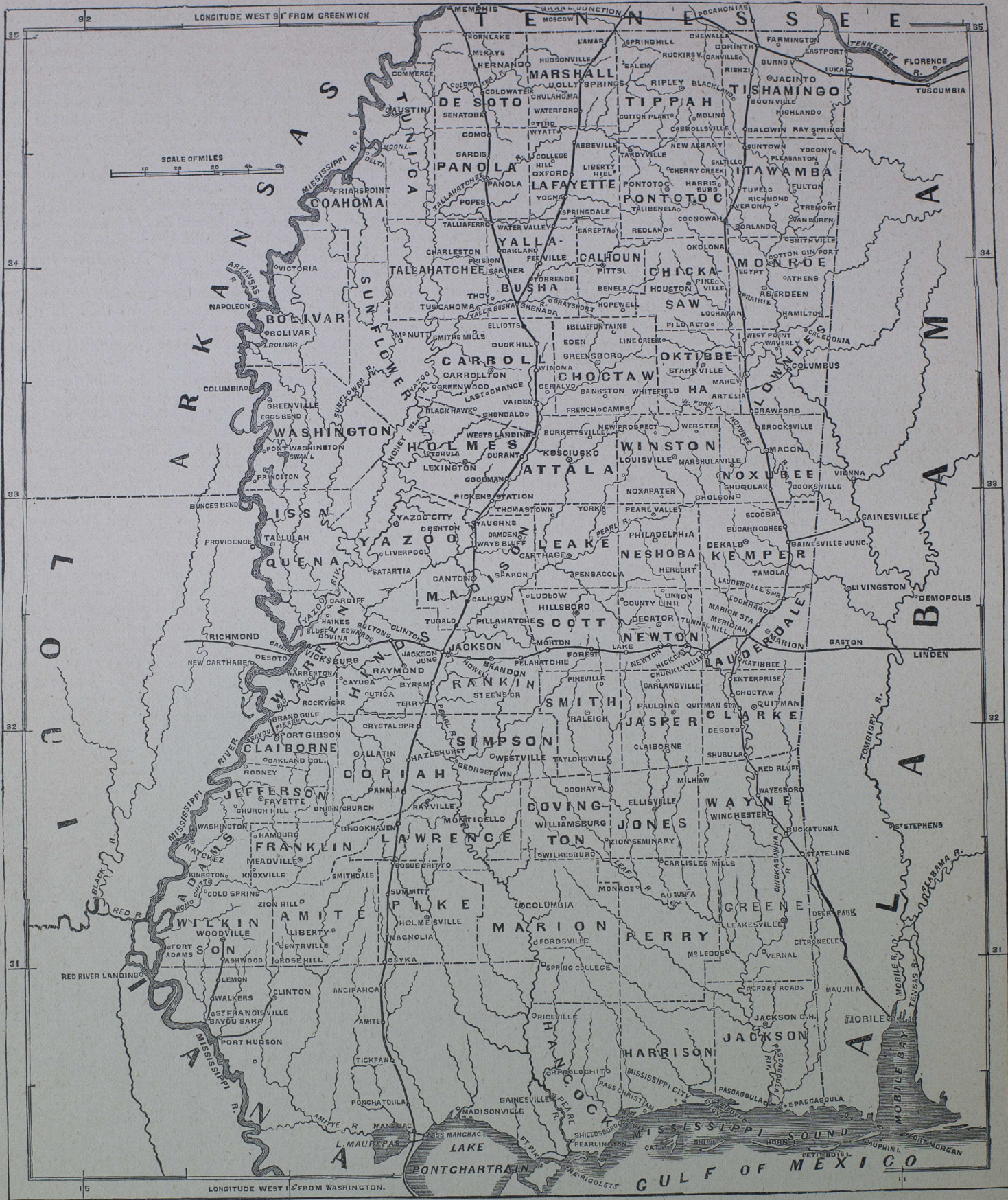
"From these you perceive that there is too much cause for the deep solicitude manifested by the writers. They should excite the fears and apprehensions of every lover of his country. Truly the responsibility upon us is great, when we are expected to feed these vast armies, whether the producers will sell to us or not. The slightest reflection would teach any one that it is impossible to provide for such armies by impressments alone. The people must cheerfully yield their supplies, or make up their minds to surrender their cause. It is their cause. It is not the cause of the government. The government is theirs. The army, the government, you and I, and every one, and every thing we have, are staked upon this contest. To fail is total and irremediable ruin, universal confiscation of every thing, and abject and ignominious submission and slavery to the most despicable and infamous race on earth. Whoever has any other thought but to fight on, at any cost of life and property, until we achieve our independence, or all perish in the struggle, deserves to be the slave of such an enemy. But, under the guidance of Providence, our cause is safe in the hands of our army, provided we do our duty at home. But Providence will not help a people who will not help themselves. Our enemies have no hope of conquering us by arms. Their only hope is that we will be untrue to ourselves, and in the blind pursuit of gain, lose sight of our country, and thus suffer our army, and with it our cause, to perish. How stands the case? You know the resources of Tennessee are lost to us; the hog cholera and other causes have cut short the prospect in Georgia and other states. It is ascertained that the last year's crop of bacon is about exhausted, and it is certain that the crop of this will be much shorter than that of last year. Now two large armies look almost solely to Florida to supply one entire article of subsistence. The entire surplus of this year's crop of bacon throughout the Confederacy, even when husbanded with the utmost economy, will be inadequate to the demands of the government. This makes it the duty of every man to economize as much as possible—to sell not a pound to any one else while there is any danger of our army suffering, and to pledge at schedule rates his entire surplus—bacon, beef, sugar, and sirup—to the government. I solemnly believe our cause is hopeless unless our people can be brought to this point.

"I have thought it my duty to address this confidential circular to the principal men in various sections of the state, and invoke their aid and co-operation with the purchasing commissaries and government agents in their districts, in inaugurating and putting into operation some system by which our armies can be more promptly supplied, and all of our resources which are necessary secured to the government. The appeals to me are more and more urgent every day; the pressure upon our state is very great. Should she now respond to the call made upon her resources as she has upon the bloodiest battle-field of the war, the measure of her glory will be full. But if we withhold our supplies, we cripple our army, and render it impossible for them to advance after achieving the most signal victories. The people at home must put themselves upon a war footing. This they have never yet done. They must sow, and plant, and gather for the government. Then, and not till then, will the bright rays of peace break through the clouds of war which overhang us.

P. W. WHITE, Major and Chief Commissary.

¹ The Northern accounts of Sherman's march indicate its character in this respect. The following extract is taken from "A National Account," published in volume viii. of the *Rebellion Records*:

"It was the expectation, when the expedition started out, that they would draw most of their supplies, and all their forage for horses and mules, from the country. There was very little difficulty in finding enough for our purpose, even in the most barren parts of the country we passed



Sherman's troops marched with little other baggage than their ammunition and twenty days' provisions, and the rapidity of his movements met with very few obstacles from the enemy, who was too weak to oppose to them any formidable resistance. The entire Confederate force in the Department of Mississippi (now under General Polk's command), amounted to less than 16,000 effective men. The most which General Polk could do was to transport the supplies accumulated at the several railway stations into Alabama, behind the Tombigbee River.

Thus unopposed by the enemy, Sherman's march to Meridian was simply a promenade. He crossed the Pearl River on the pontoons which the ene-

my had left behind in his hurried retreat from Jackson. On his route he

was joined by thousands of negroes—men, women, and children—who swelled the vast column of the march. The railroad was completely demolished along the route. On the 14th, having marched 150 miles in 11 days, Sherman entered Meridian.

But where was General Smith, due four days ago? While the enemy was giving Sherman "a wide berth," he had not been blind to the importance of cutting off the supporting column of cavalry on its way to Meridian from Memphis. In fact, it was only Smith's junction with Sherman that Polk really feared. That must be prevented at all hazards. The accession of this cavalry force to Sherman's army would be the preliminary to a successful advance to Selma and Montgomery, and where not? Polk, covering his infantry behind the Tombigbee, ordered his cavalry to join Forrest, to whom was assigned the difficult task of heading off Smith's column.

Associated with General Smith was General B. F. Grierson, who had become thoroughly acquainted with the country on his previous raid. The column had not left Memphis till the 11th, and thus the enemy had been given time to organize his forces for effective resistance. The Federal force numbered 7000 men, and to oppose this Forrest had at length collected to-

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W. S. SMITH.

gether about the same number at Okalona, nearly 100 miles north of Meridian. Up to this point Smith and Grierson continued their march without serious resistance. Thus far they were permitted by the enemy to revel in a carnival of devastation, destroying corn estimated by the millions of bushels (one account makes it 1,000,000 bushels, another 3,000,000), and two or three thousand bales of cotton. Either by lack of discipline, owing to the character of such a march, or on account of the sudden and formidable opposition encountered, the Federal command did not behave well when on the 22d it reached Okalona, as was its wont in the presence of the enemy. Almost the first onset of Forrest's cavalry was decisive. Six guns were lost by the Federals in the first attack. Probably even after the first reverse the Confederates would have been checked had it not been for the impediment to Smith's fighting force of the crowd of camp-followers, who gave way to panic, and fled to the rear, sweeping with them a portion of the troops coming into position. It was with great difficulty that Smith covered his retreat and saved his trains. The Fourth Missouri Cavalry, acting as rear-guard, stood well its ground, checking the enemy until night-fall. Under cover of night the Federals fell back to Okalona (the battle had been fought south of that place, on the border of the prairie country), where order was restored. Smith and Grierson, after losing over 300 men and a large number of horses, continued their retreat over the country which for ten days they had been laying waste.

This disaster, of course, forbid any farther advance on the part of Sherman, who had in the mean time been destroying the railroads centring in Meridian.¹ He then, with one of his columns, marched northward to Canton, continuing his work of destruction in that direction. Finding that the column from Memphis had been driven back, he returned to Vicksburg. His loss had been probably about 200 men. He brought away with him 1000 white and 5000 colored refugees. He had done the enemy very great injury, which, unfortunately, in a large measure, fell upon the population rather than the army; had, by the destruction of the railroads between Vicksburg and Meridian, secured the east bank of the Mississippi against any future attack on the part of the enemy—one of the chief objects of the raid—and had learned a lesson in regard to the facility of marching through the southern portion of the Confederacy, which was of the greatest value to him at a later period of the war.

It is possible that, but for the failure of Sherman's supporting cavalry column, an attempt would have been made in conjunction with Farragut's naval force against Mobile. Farragut did indeed make a strong demonstration against Mobile, assaulting Fort Powell, and losing a gun-boat in the operation. But this attack was only a feint, to divert attention from a pet project which the government was at this time nursing, and which regarded affairs on the other side of the Mississippi.

Forrest did not stop with his defeat of Smith and Grierson at Okalona. If he could meet all the cavalry of Grant's department in the open field, what was to hinder him—now that the garrisons of Tennessee were continually being weakened by the concentration of forces for the spring campaign—from moving into Western Tennessee and Kentucky? He passed

¹ "The depôts, store-houses, arsenals, offices, hospitals, hotels, and cantonments in the town were burned, and, during the next five days, with axes, sledges, crow-bars, clam-bars, and fire, Hurlbut's corps destroyed on the north and east 60 miles of ties and iron, one locomotive, and eight bridges; and McPherson's corps, on the south and west, 55 miles of railway, 53 bridges, 61,075 feet of trestle-work, 19 locomotives, 28 steam-cars, and 3 steam saw-mills. Thus was completed the destruction of railways for 100 miles from Jackson to Meridian, and for 20 miles around the latter place, in such a manner that they could not be used against us in the approaching campaigns."—Bowman's *Sherman and his Campaigns*, p. 163.

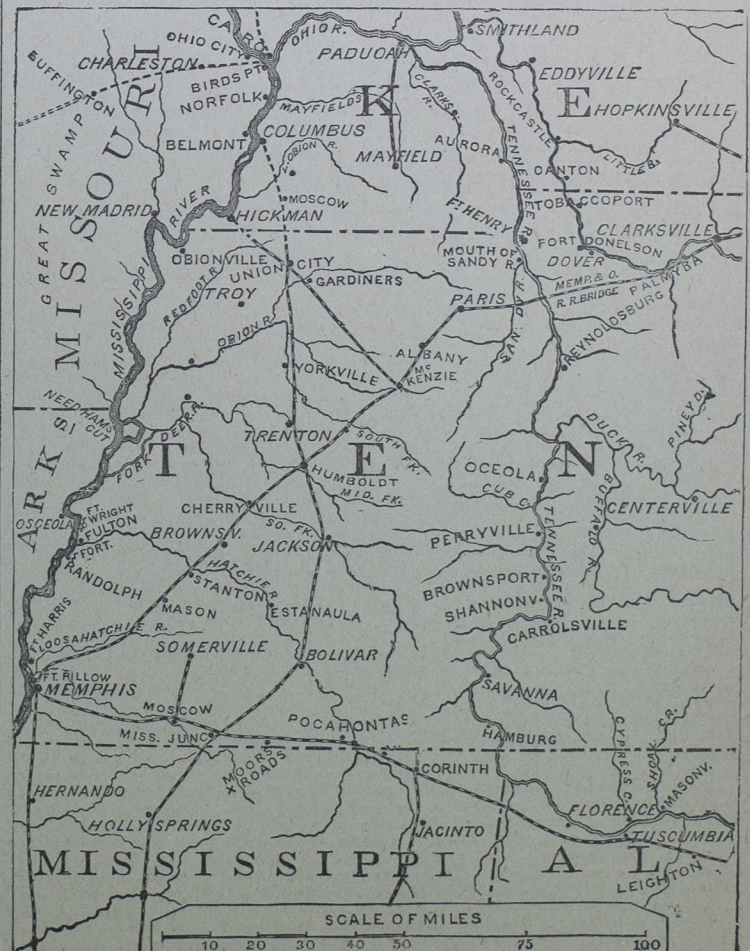
over the frontier of Tennessee late in March, and his expedition throughout was characterized by brutality and cowardice such as is not surpassed in the record of even savage warfare. It is possible that his command was infuriated by the devastation which had marked the progress of Sherman's Mississippi expedition. But this is no fair excuse for such conduct as that which it is now our duty to expose. Wherever Sherman's troops departed from the recognized customs of war, the reader will bear us witness that we have offered no excuse in their behalf. But if against them rebuke naturally rises to our lips, our cheeks burn with shame for the brutal capabilities of our human nature as we follow the career of General Forrest from his entrance into Tennessee to the massacre at Fort Pillow.

Forrest advanced from Okalona northward by the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. His command numbered between 5000 and 6000 men.¹ The force which stood in his way, even if he looked to Cairo as his destination, did not amount to more than half his own. Jackson, in Tennessee, was captured on the 23d of March. Forrest's line of march was west of the Tennessee River, toward the Mississippi. He captured Union City, near the northern border of Tennessee, on the 24th of March. This post had been occupied by Colonel Hawkins with about 500 men. Hawkins was attacked by over three times that number, but easily repulsed four several charges of the enemy. Then a flag of truce was sent demanding a surrender, and throwing upon Colonel Hawkins the consequence of a refusal. Against the wishes of the garrison the demand was complied with, although a relieving force of 2000 men was within six miles of him. His conduct was probably influenced by the fear that the enemy in his front would soon be strongly re-enforced.²

The Mississippi from Paducah to Island No. 10, about 160 miles, together with the adjacent portions of Tennessee and Kentucky, was under the command of Brigadier General Mason Brayman. His whole force—distributed at Paducah, Cairo, Columbus, Hickman, Island No. 10, and Union City—amounted to 2329 men, three fourths of whom were negroes. General Hurlbut, in command of the department, had, in compliance with orders from the War Department, sent all his veteran regiments home on furlough. All his cavalry was gone save about 2000. He did not dare to leave Memphis exposed, and was therefore able to afford very little assistance to the garrisons on the Mississippi River against which Forrest was moving. As soon as Forrest approached Jackson, Grierson, with his cavalry, was sent out to develop his force, and soon reported that the enemy "was a little too strong for him."

From Union City Forrest moved upon Hickman, about fourteen miles distant on the Mississippi. The garrison at this point was withdrawn. The enemy then advanced to Wayfield, Kentucky, which is about equally distant from Paducah, Cairo, and Columbus. He was at the centre of a circle, about the edge of which General Brayman's forces were situated. The lat-

¹ Hurlbut thinks it could not have been less than 8000.—*Report on the Conduct of the War*.
² General Hurlbut says, "Contrary to the entreaties, prayers, and advice of all his officers and all his men, he did surrender his post with a relieving force within six miles of him, and surrendered it, as I have no doubt, from pure cowardice."—*Report on the Conduct of the War*. It was a tame surrender, doubtless, but other testimony before the committee fully relieves Colonel Hawkins of the charge of cowardice.



MAP ILLUSTRATING FORREST'S TENNESSEE EXPEDITION.

ter could only await attack, and send re-enforcements to such weak points in turn as the emergency might demand. "One evening," he says, "I sent 400 men to Columbus, expecting trouble there, and the next morning had them at Paducah, seventy-five miles distant." No such thing as an offensive movement against Forrest could of course be contemplated, and the latter remained for three weeks subsisting upon captured stores in the very heart of a region which, almost from the beginning of the war, had been securely held by the national government. On the 25th of March an attack was made on Paducah, held by Colonel S. G. Hicks with a garrison of 650 men. The garrison retired into Fort Anderson, and there made a stand, assisted by two gun-boats, effectually repelling the enemy's assaults. Forrest then, failing to make an impression upon the defenders of the fort, demanded an unconditional surrender, closing his communication to Colonel Hicks in these words: "If you surrender you shall be treated as prisoners of war, but if I have to storm your works you may expect no quarter." Hicks refused, stating, like a faithful soldier, that he had been placed there by his government to defend that post, and he should do so. Three assaults from the enemy followed, each of which was repulsed with heavy loss to the assailants. In the last, one of the Confederate general officers, General Thompson, was killed.⁵ The next day Forrest retired, having suffered a loss of nearly 1500 men. The national loss was 14 killed and 46 wounded.² Columbus, on the Mississippi, stood out as defiantly as had Paducah, and the enemy retired without making an attack.

General Forrest appeared before Fort Pillow, 65 miles above Memphis, on the 12th of April. The garrison at this point consisted of 19 officers and 538 men, of whom 262 were negroes, commanded by Major L. F. Booth. The attack was sudden, no intimation of it being given before the pickets were driven in. Major Booth was killed early in the engagement, and Major W. F. Bradford succeeded to the command, and withdrew the forces from their outer intrenchments into the fort. The fort was situated on a high bluff, which descended precipitately to the river's edge. On either side was a ravine—the one below the fort containing several private stores and a few dwellings, constituting what is called the town. In front of the fort was an open space of level ground. The artillery defense consisted of 6 guns. The troops fought gallantly, aided by a gun-boat, and up to 2 P.M. the enemy had not gained any decisive advantage. A flag of truce was then sent in, conveying a demand for the unconditional surrender of the fort. Major Bradford asked an hour for consideration. Shortly a second flag appeared, and Bradford was allowed 20 minutes; if not out of the fort by that time an assault would be made. Bradford replied that he would not surrender. During all this time the enemy, regardless of his own flag of truce, was gaining an advantageous position for the assault. His forces were now within 100 yards of the fort, closely surrounding it. As soon as Major Bradford's reply was received, the bugle was sounded, and the Confederates, with a yell, rushed over the fortifications, raising the cry of "No quarter!" The troops composing the garrison, black and white, threw down their arms and sought to escape by running down the steep bluff on the river side, hiding behind trees, logs, bushes—any thing which could afford them cover against the maddest fiends which at that moment the sun shone upon. No wonder they fled, as it soon clearly appeared it was not a contest of men with men, but of men with brutal, fiendish murderers. The captured fort and its vicinity became at once a human shambles. Without discrimination of age or sex, and without mercy, men, women, and children were butchered until night put an end to the horrible tragedy, which was again renewed on the following morning. Not even sleep could quench the fiery hate of Forrest's men. Even the officers, with a few exceptions, assisted in the bloody carnival. It was exactly three years to a day since the attack on Fort Sumter had been made, and the same violence which had incited men to treason against their government was perhaps fitly displayed on this anniversary by the shameless massacre of United States soldiers at Fort Pillow.³

¹ Report on the Conduct of the War.

² General Sherman writes to Colonel Hicks from Nashville, April 5th, 1864:

"Your defense at Paducah was exactly right. Keep cool, and give the enemy a second edition if he comes again. I want Forrest to stay just where he is, and the longer the better. Don't credit any of the foolish and exaggerated rumors that are put afloat by design. I know what Forrest has, and will attend to him in time."

³ "The operations of the enemy at Paducah were characterized by the same bad faith and treachery that seemed to have become the settled policy of Forrest and his command. The flag of truce was taken advantage of there, as elsewhere, to secure desirable positions which the rebels were unable to obtain by fair and honorable means, and also to afford opportunities for plundering private stores as well as government property. At Paducah the rebels were guilty of acts more cowardly, if possible, than any they have practiced elsewhere. When the attack was made, the officers of the fort and of the gun-boats advised the women and children to go down to the river for the purpose of being taken across out of danger. As they were leaving the town for that purpose, the rebel sharpshooters mingled with them, and, shielded by their presence, advanced and fired upon the gun-boats, wounding some of our officers and men. Our forces could not return the fire without endangering the lives of the women and children. The rebels also placed women in front of their lines as they moved on the fort, or were proceeding to take positions while the flag of truce was at the fort, in order to compel our men to withhold their fire out of regard for the lives of the women who were made use of in this most cowardly manner."—Report on the Conduct of the War.

⁴ We have not described this disgraceful tragedy in its details. The following extract from the report of the Committee on the Conduct of the War will enable the reader to examine its features more minutely. All the statements made are supported by abundant and unimpeachable evidence:

"Then followed a scene of cruelty and murder without a parallel in civilized warfare, which needed but the tomahawk and scalping-knife to exceed the worst atrocities ever committed by savages. The rebels commenced an indiscriminate slaughter, sparing neither age nor sex, white nor black, soldier or civilian. The officers and men seemed to vie with each other in the devilish work; men, women, and even children, wherever found, were deliberately shot down, beaten, and hacked with sabres; some of the children, not more than ten years old, were forced to stand up and face their murderers while being shot; the sick and the wounded were butchered without mercy, the rebels even entering the hospital building and dragging them out to be shot, or killing them as they lay there unable to offer the least resistance. All over the hill-side the work of murder was going on; numbers of our men were collected together in lines or groups and deliberately shot; some were shot while in the river, while others on the bank were shot and their bodies kicked into the water, many of them still living, but unable to make any exertions to save themselves from drowning. Some of the rebels stood on the top of the hill, or a short distance down its side, and called to our soldiers to come up to them, and as they approached, shot them down in cold blood; if their guns or pistols missed fire, forcing them to stand there until they were again

Forrest, in the face of his own statement that, while only 20 killed and 60 wounded, he buried 228 Federals on the evening of the assault, coolly claims that all these were killed in fair fight! After this affair the enemy retreated into Mississippi. A fortnight later General S. D. Sturgis, with 12,000 men, was sent after Forrest, but the movements of the enemy were so rapid that he easily escaped this pursuing column. Early in June Sturgis was again sent against Forrest, with instructions to find and defeat his command, in order to prevent its junction with General Johnston, then resisting General Sherman's advance in Northern Georgia. The Federal column dispatched for this purpose consisted of 9000 infantry (including most of A. J. Smith's division), and 3000 cavalry under General Grierson. The campaign was terribly mismanaged by Sturgis. After advancing through West Tennessee and Northern Mississippi to Guntown on the Mobile Railroad, Grierson's cavalry encountered Forrest, pushing his cavalry back on his infantry, which was strongly posted on a semicircular ridge, protected by a creek in front. Sturgis, with the infantry, was five or six miles behind. Getting information of Grierson's position, he pushed his command forward at double-quick, and as it was a very hot day, the troops, upon confronting the enemy, were thoroughly exhausted. To make matters still worse, the train of over 200 wagons was allowed by Sturgis to rush forward with his men, filling the road and impeding their movements. No rest was given the troops, who were immediately sent to the support of the cavalry already engaged. No attempt was made to turn the enemy's strong position, and from the attack which was made no other consequence could be expected than that which followed. Both cavalry and infantry were soon routed, and driven in disorder back upon and over the abandoned train. The pursuit was momentarily checked at Ripley, but was continued with some vigor almost to Memphis. In this expedition Sturgis lost between 3000 and 4000 men, most of whom were captured.

A month later (July 7th) another command was sent against Forrest, consisting of the same number of men, but this time under command of A. J.

prepared to fire. All around were heard cries of 'No quarter!' 'No quarter!' 'Kill the damned niggers; shoot them down!' All who asked for mercy were answered by the most cruel taunts and sneers. Some were spared for a time, only to be murdered under circumstances of greater cruelty. No cruelty which the most fiendish malignity could devise was omitted by these murderers. One white soldier, who was wounded in one leg so as to be unable to walk, was made to stand up while his tormentors shot him; others who were wounded and unable to stand were held up and again shot. One negro, who had been ordered by a rebel officer to hold his horse, was killed by him when he remounted; another, a mere child, whom an officer had taken up behind him on his horse, was seen by Chalmers, who at once ordered the officer to put him down and shoot him, which was done. The huts and tents in which many of the wounded had sought shelter were set on fire, both that night and the next morning, while the wounded were still in them—those only escaping who were able to get themselves out, or who could prevail on others less injured than themselves to help them out; and even some of those thus seeking to escape the flames were met by those ruffians and brutally shot down, or had their brains beaten out. One man was deliberately fastened down to the floor of a tent, face upward, by means of nails driven through his clothing and into the boards under him, so that he could not possibly escape, and then the tent set on fire; another was nailed to the side of a building outside of the fort, and then the building set on fire and burned. The charred remains of five or six bodies were afterward found, all but one so much disfigured and consumed by the flames that they could not be identified, and the identification of that one is not absolutely certain, although there can hardly be a doubt that it was the body of Lieutenant Akerstrom, quartermaster of the Thirteenth Tennessee Cavalry, and a native Tennessean; several witnesses who saw the remains, and who were personally acquainted with him while living, have testified that it is their firm belief that it was his body that was thus treated.

"These deeds of murder and cruelty ceased when night came on, only to be renewed the next morning, when the demons carefully sought among the dead lying about in all directions for any of the wounded yet alive, and those they found were deliberately shot. Scores of the dead and wounded were found there the day after the massacre by the men from some of our gun-boats who were permitted to go on shore and collect the wounded and bury the dead. The rebels themselves had made a pretense of burying a great many of their victims, but they had merely thrown them, without the least regard to care or decency, into the trenches and ditches about the fort, or the little hollows and ravines on the hill-side, covering them but partially with earth. Portions of heads and faces, hands and feet, were found protruding through the earth in every direction. The testimony also establishes the fact that the rebels buried some of the living with the dead, a few of whom succeeded afterward in digging themselves out, or were dug out by others, one of whom your committee found in Mound City Hospital, and there examined. And even when your committee visited the spot, two weeks afterward, although parties of men had been sent on shore from time to time to bury the bodies unburied and rebury the others, and were even then engaged in the same work, we found the evidences of this murder and cruelty still most painfully apparent; we saw bodies still unburied (at some distance from the fort) of some sick men who had been met fleeing from the hospital, and beaten down and brutally murdered, and their bodies left where they had fallen. We could still see the faces, hands, and feet of men, white and black, protruding out of the ground, whose graves had not been reached by those engaged in reinterring the victims of the massacre; and although a great deal of rain had fallen within the preceding two weeks, the ground, more especially on the side and at the foot of the bluff, where the most of the murders had been committed, was still discolored by the blood of our brave but unfortunate men, and the logs and trees showed but too plainly the evidences of the atrocities perpetrated there.

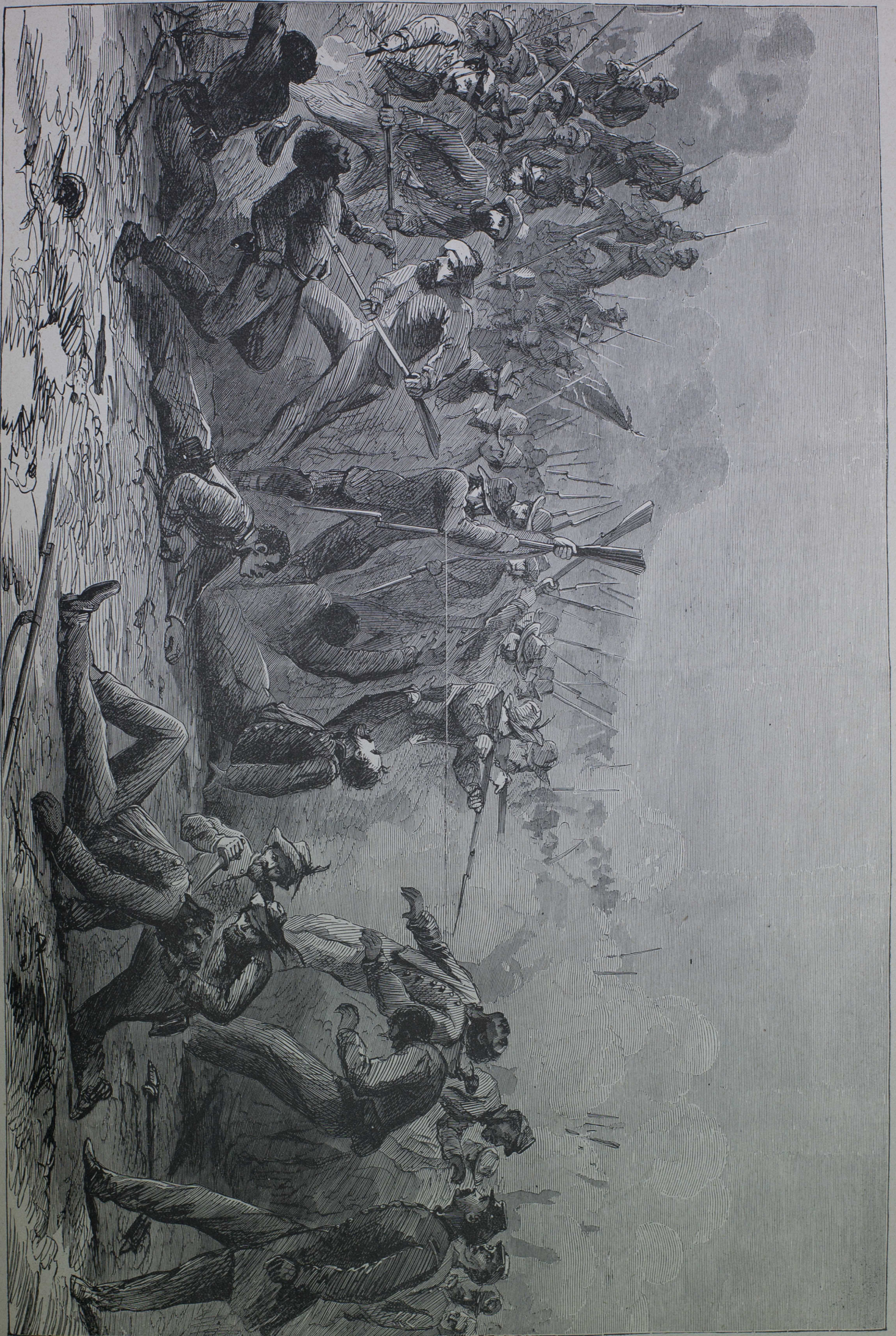
"Many other instances of equally atrocious cruelty might be enumerated, but your committee feel compelled to refrain from giving here more of the heart-sickening details, and refer to the statements contained in the voluminous testimony herewith submitted. Those statements were obtained by them from eyewitnesses and sufferers; many of them, as they were examined by your committee, were lying upon beds of pain and suffering, some so feeble that their lips could with difficulty frame the words by which they endeavored to convey some idea of the cruelties which had been inflicted on them, and which they had seen inflicted on others.

"How many of our troops thus fell victims to the malignity and barbarity of Forrest and his followers can not yet be definitely ascertained. Two officers belonging to the garrison were absent at the time of the capture and massacre. Of the remaining officers but two are known to be living, and they are wounded and now in the hospital at Mound City. One of them, Captain Potter, may even now be dead, as the surgeons, when your committee were there, expressed no hope of his recovery. Of the men, from three hundred to four hundred are known to have been killed at Fort Pillow, of whom at least three hundred were murdered in cold blood after the post was in possession of the rebels, and our men had thrown down their arms and ceased to offer resistance. Of the survivors, except the wounded in the hospital at Mound City, and the few who succeeded in making their escape unhurt, nothing definite is known; and it is to be feared that many have been murdered after being taken away from the fort.

"In reference to the fate of Major Bradford, who was in command of the fort when it was captured, and who had up to that time received no injury, there seems to be no doubt. The general understanding every where seemed to be that he had been brutally murdered the day after he was taken prisoner.

"There is some discrepancy in the testimony, but your committee do not see how the one who professed to have been an eyewitness of his death could have been mistaken. There may be some uncertainty in regard to his fate.

"When your committee arrived at Memphis, Tennessee, they found and examined a man (Mr. McLagan) who had been conscripted by some of Forrest's forces, but who, with other conscripts, had succeeded in making his escape. He testifies that while two companies of rebel troops, with Major Bradford and many other prisoners, were on their march from Brownsville to Jackson, Tennessee, Major Bradford was taken by five rebels—one an officer—led about fifty yards from the line of march, and deliberately murdered in view of all there assembled. He fell—killed instantly by three musket-balls, even while asking that his life might be spared, as he had fought them manfully, and was deserving of a better fate. The motive for the murder of Major Bradford seems to have been the simple fact that, although a native of the South, he remained loyal to his government."



THE FORT PILLOW MASSACRE.