



FORREST'S RAIDERS ATTACKING IRVING PRISON.

Smith, who advanced to Tupelo, where the enemy, about 14,000 strong, was then concentrated. A battle was here fought (July 14th), in which the enemy, thrice attacking the Federal lines, was each time repulsed. It was a drawn battle, and Smith, without advancing farther, retreated to Memphis, whence he again set out with 10,000 men on the 4th of August, moving by way of Holly Springs to the Tallahatchie River. But this time Forrest was not to be found, and Smith, after remaining in this vicinity for several days, again returned to Memphis, and was sent to the Department of the Missouri.

While General Smith was looking for Forrest in Mississippi, the latter had moved upon Memphis with 3000 men. He charged into the town on the morning of August 18th. He had heard that Generals Hurlbut, Washburne, and Buckland made their quarters at the Gayoso Hotel, but, paying them a visit at that place, he found them "not at home." He captured several staff and other officers, however, and about 300 soldiers. A number of Confederate prisoners were confined in Irving Prison. Failing in an attempt to gain possession of this prison, General Forrest left the town, and beat a hasty retreat back into Mississippi.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE FLORIDA EXPEDITION.

Gillmore lands 10,000 Men at Jacksonville.—Object of the Expedition in large measure Political.—Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation.—The President's Motives.—The Enemy surprised.—Number of Confederate Troops in Florida.—The Federal Troops occupy Baldwin.—Gillmore returns to Hilton Head.—His Instructions to General Seymour disregarded by the latter.—The Battle of Olustee.—Seymour's Blunder.—Disastrous Termination of the Expedition.

WHILE Sherman was advancing upon Meridian, a force of 10,000 men was landed at Jacksonville, on the eastern coast of Florida. These were a portion of the Tenth Army Corps, under General Q. A. Gillmore, who, on the 16th of July, 1863, had succeeded General Hunter in command of the troops operating in South Carolina. The object of this Florida expedition was in large measure a political one. President Lincoln had included in his first message to the Thirty-eighth Congress (December 7th, 1863) a proclamation of amnesty, offering a free pardon to all such rebels as would take an oath to support the Federal Constitution and Union, "and abide by and faithfully support all acts of Congress passed during the existing rebellion having reference to slaves, so long and so far as not repealed, modified, or held void by Congress, or by decision of the Supreme Court." Exceptions were made in the cases of those who were or had been officers or agents of the Confederate government; of those who had left judicial stations under the United States, or seats in Congress, or had resigned commissions in the Federal army or navy to take part in the rebellion; of Confederate military and naval officers above the rank of colonel in the army or lieutenant in the navy; and of all who had in any way treated white or black soldiers otherwise than as prisoners of war. It was also proclaimed that, as soon as in any of the Confederate States "a number of persons, not less than one tenth in number of the votes cast in such state at the presidential election of 1860, each having taken the oath aforesaid, and not having since violated it, and being a qualified voter by the election law of the state existing immediately before the so-called act of secession, and excluding all others, shall re-establish a state government which shall be republican, and in nowise contravening said oath, such shall be recognized as the true government of the state: and the state shall receive thereunder the benefits of the constitu-

tional provision which declares that 'the United States shall guarantee to every state in this Union a republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion, and, on application of the Legislature or the executive (when the Legislature can not be convened), against domestic violence.'" The President entertained somewhat extravagant expectations as to the results of this proclamation. It is not necessary to say that he had no partisan motive in issuing it; he only wished to begin the reorganization of governments in the Southern States. The movement was premature; perhaps it was ill considered. If successful, some foreign complications might be avoided; but, so far as any real reconstruction was concerned, that could only come as the consequence of final victory in the war. Unfortunately, the President's too sanguine hopes conducted to the embarrassment of military operations. Expeditions were undertaken which distracted forces from vital centres, and which, contemplating nothing beyond the possession of a small slice of territory in Florida and Texas, and being undertaken with numbers only adequate to such a result, had not the remotest connection with the progress of the war from a military stand-point. The disastrous results of these expeditions are not fairly attributable to the President's plan; but, apart from their unfortunate results, no such half-military and half-political projects were in place.

The objects sought to be attained by the Florida expedition are thus stated by General Gillmore:

1. To procure an outlet for cotton, lumber, timber, etc.
2. To cut off one of the enemy's sources of commissary supplies.



S. D. STURGIS.

3. To obtain recruits for any colored regiments.

4. To inaugurate measures for the speedy restoration of Florida to her allegiance, in accordance with instructions which I had received from the President by the hands of Major John Hay, Assistant Adjutant General.¹

The troops, consisting of twelve regiments—one half of them colored troops—under the immediate command of Brigadier General Truman Seymour, left Hilton Head on the 6th of February, and landed the next day at Jacksonville, at the mouth of St. John's River. The landing of this force was a complete surprise to the enemy. In the Confederate Departments of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, there were at this time about 33,000 effective troops. Of these there were about 5000 in Florida, under the command of General Finnegan. The progress of the Federal troops from Jacksonville to Baldwin, in the interior, met with no opposition. Finnegan made an attempt to stand at Camp Vinegar, seven miles west of Jacksonville, but on the approach of the Federal columns he abandoned his position, having sunk the steamer St. Mary's, and burned 270 bales of cotton. On the morning of the 9th General Gillmore reports: "We have taken, without the loss of a man, about 100 prisoners, eight pieces of artillery in serviceable order and one well supplied with ammunition, and other valuable property to a large amount." Baldwin, which the Federal troops now occupied, was eighteen miles west of Jacksonville, and was the point of junction of two railroads, one running from Fernandina, a short distance north of Jacksonville, southwestwardly to Cedar Keys, on the western coast: the other from Jacksonville, across the northern part of the state to Tallahassee, the state capital. A portion of Seymour's command, under Colonel Henry, pursued the enemy almost to Lake City.

General Gillmore had accompanied the expedition in person, and remained until the 15th, when he returned to Hilton Head. On the 11th he had instructed General Seymour not to risk a repulse by an advance on Lake City, but, if possible, to hold Sanderson (forty miles west of Jacksonville), and, at any rate, the south fork of the St. Mary's. The next day he ordered the entire force to concentrate at Baldwin. Before his departure for Hilton Head he made arrangements for the construction of fortifications at Jacksonville, Baldwin, and on the south fork of the St. Mary's. At that time it was understood that no advance should be made without farther instructions from Gillmore, nor until the defensive works were well advanced.²

General Gillmore was therefore astonished by receiving a communication from Seymour on the 18th (dated the 17th), stating that he intended to advance to the Suwanee River, 100 miles distant from Jacksonville, and that he was already moving his troops westward. Not being able to accumulate supplies sufficient to permit him to make the movement, Seymour declared his purpose to move without supplies, even if compelled to retrace his steps to procure them. He urged Gillmore to prevent any force re-enforcing the enemy from Georgia by a naval demonstration against Savannah. He asked, also, for a general to be sent him to command his advanced troops. General Gillmore, having no intention to occupy the western part of Florida, at once dispatched General Turner, his chief of staff, to Jacksonville to prevent the movement. Upon arriving in Florida with a letter to Seymour from Gillmore protesting against the advance of the former, Turner found that the troops were already at Olustee, and engaged with the enemy.³

¹ The following letter was addressed to General Gillmore by President Lincoln, January 13th, 1864:

"Major General GILLMORE:
"I understand an effort is being made by some worthy gentlemen to reconstruct a legal state government in Florida. Florida is in your department, and it is not unlikely that you may be there in person. I have given Mr. Hay a commission of major, and sent him to you with some blank books and other blanks, to aid in the reconstruction. He will explain as to the manner of using the blanks, and also my general views on the subject. It is desirable for all to co-operate, but if irreconcilable differences of opinion shall arise, you are master. I wish the thing done in the most speedy way possible, so that when done it may be within the range of the late proclamation on the subject. The detail labor will of course have to be done by others, but I shall be greatly obliged if you will give it such general supervision as you can find consistent with your more strictly military duties.
A. LINCOLN."

On the 31st of January General Gillmore issued the following order:

"Headquarters Department of the South, Hilton Head, South Carolina, January 31st, 1864.
"In accordance with the provisions of the presidential proclamation of pardon and amnesty, given at Washington on the 8th day of December, in the year of our Lord 1863, and in pursuance of instructions received from the President of the United States, Major John Hay, Assistant Adjutant General, will proceed to Fernandina, Florida, and other convenient points in that state, for the purpose of extending to the citizens of the State of Florida an opportunity to avail themselves of the benefit of that proclamation, by offering for their signature the oath of allegiance therein prescribed, and by issuing to all those subscribing to said oath certificates entitling them to the benefits of the proclamation. Fugitive citizens of the State of Florida within the limits of this department will have an opportunity to subscribe to the same oath, and secure certificates in the office of the post commander at Hilton Head, South Carolina.
"By command of Major General Q. A. GILLMORE.
"E. W. SMITH, Assistant Adjutant General."

² General Gillmore's Report.

³ The following are copies of the letters—General Seymour's announcing his movement, and General Gillmore's reply:

"Headquarters Department of the South, February 17th, 1864.
"GENERAL.—The excessive and unexpected delays experienced with regard to the locomotive, which will not be ready for two days yet, if at all, has compelled me to remain where my command could be fed. Not enough supplies could be accumulated to permit me to execute my intention of moving to the Suwanee River.
"But I now propose to go without supplies, even if compelled to retrace my steps to procure them, and with the object of so destroying the railroad near the Suwanee that there will be no danger of carrying away any portion of the track.
"All troops are therefore being moved up to Barber's, and probably by the time you receive this I shall be in motion in advance of that point.
"That a force may not be brought from Georgia (Savannah) to interfere with my movements, it is desirable that a display be made in the Savannah River; and I therefore urge that upon the reception of this, such naval force, transports, sailing vessels, etc., as can be so devoted, may rendezvous near Pulaski, and that the iron-clads in Warsaw push up with as much activity as they can exert.
"I look upon this as of great importance, and shall rely upon it as a demonstration in my favor.
"There is reason to believe that General Hardee is in Lake City, now possibly in command, and with some force at his disposal.
"But nothing is visible this side of Sanderson. Saddles, etc., for mounting the Seventh New Hampshire as rapidly as possible, are greatly needed, and I shall send a portion of that regiment to this point as soon as it can be spared subsequent to my advance.

General Seymour had begun his movement on the 18th, and expected no encounter with the enemy before reaching Lake City. On the night of the 19th he halted at Barber's, a small station on the railroad 30 miles west of Jacksonville. The Confederate General Finnegan had, in the mean time, been apprized of the hostile movement, and, instead of awaiting attack at Lake City, he preferred to choose his own battle-ground, and advanced to Olustee, about 15 miles eastward, where his army took a strong position on a swamp which runs southward some distance from Ocean Pond, a small lake north of the railroad. His centre was protected by the swamp; his right rested on an earthwork protected by rifle-pits, while his left was posted on a slight elevation, sheltered by pines, and still farther guarded by cavalry. It was a position absolutely impregnable against double the numbers which held it, and the force under General Seymour was only about equal to that of the enemy; his only advantage was in artillery, of which he had sixteen pieces to the enemy's four.⁴

Seymour, without knowing any thing of the enemy's position, advanced from Barber's on the 20th, and, after a wearisome march of 15 miles over the sandy road, came suddenly upon the enemy's pickets near Olustee. The road at this point crossed the railroad to the right, to avoid the swamp on the south side. There was also a swamp on the right of the road, and between these two swamps lay the sole approach to the enemy's position. The action commenced about 2 o'clock P.M. The Federal troops, tired by their long march, went into battle under a great disadvantage. The artillery was pushed up so far to the front that both the gunners and horses were shot down with such rapidity that some of the guns were abandoned and others rendered useless. The infantry, poorly armed, were put in regiment by regiment as it arrived on the ground. There was no tactics, and the situation gave no opportunity for any. The road was so narrow that many of the men had to wade knee-deep in mud and water in order to get into action. One regiment after another went in beyond the swamps, and each fired away its ammunition, and, exposed to a murderous fire from the enemy, retired, giving place to another. The Seventh Connecticut, under the brave Colonel J. R. Hawley (late governor of Connecticut), held the advance after the preliminary skirmish. The field soon becomes too hot for this regiment,

"I have sent for the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts entire to come to this point. The Tenth Connecticut (eight companies) is to remain at St. Augustine, two companies to go to Picolata.

"I shall not occupy Picolata or Magnolia at this moment; when I do, portions of the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts will be sent from Jacksonville. The Fifty-fifth Massachusetts will remain here for the present, or until the Twenty-fourth relieves it.

"The Second South Carolina and Third South Carolina are at Camp Shaw (late Finnegan), for instruction and organization.

"The First North Carolina will be left at Baldwin, detaching three companies to Barber's.

"Colonel Barton will have the Forty-seventh, Forty-eighth, and One Hundred and Fifteenth; Colonel Hanley will have the Seventh Connecticut, Seventh New Hampshire, and Eighth United States Colored; Colonel Montgomery the Third United States and Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Colored; Colonel Henry the cavalry and Elder's battery, and Captain Hamilton the artillery. As soon as possible, Metcalf's section will be sent back. At present I should like to use it.

"Colonel Goss is ordered to keep six companies in motion from Fernandina constantly, and at least five days out of seven (every seven) toward and beyond Camp Cooper.

"Nothing appears to have been done upon the locomotive while at Fernandina. So it is reported to me.

"The prompt use of a locomotive and a printing-press with this movement were of the most vital importance, and will continue so to be. I trust both will be economized.

"And I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
"T. SEYMOUR, Brigadier General Commanding.

"Brigadier General S. W. TURNER, Chief of Staff:
"Send me a general for the command of the advanced troops, or I shall be in a state of constant uncertainty.
T. S."

"Hilton Head, South Carolina, February 18th, 1864.

"Brigadier General T. SEYMOUR, Commanding District of Florida:
"I am just in receipt of your two letters of the sixteenth and one of the seventeenth, and am very much surprised at the tone of the latter, and the character of your plans as therein stated. You say that by the time your letter of the seventeenth should reach these headquarters, your forces would be in motion beyond Barber's, moving toward the Suwanee River, and that you shall rely upon my making a display in the Suwanee River 'with naval force, transports, and sailing vessels,' and with iron-clads up from Warsaw, etc., as a demonstration in your favor, which you look upon as of 'great importance.' All this is upon the presumption that the demonstration can and will be made, although contingent not only upon my power and disposition to do so, but upon the consent of Admiral Dahlgren, with whom I can not communicate in less than ten days. You must have forgotten my last instructions, which were for the present to hold Baldwin and the St. Mary's south prong as your outposts to the westward of Jacksonville, and to occupy Picolata and Magnolia on the St. John's.

"Your prospect distinctly and avowedly ignores these operations, and substitutes a plan which not only involves your command in a distant movement without provisions, far beyond a point from which you once withdrew on account of precisely the same necessity, but presupposes a simultaneous demonstration of 'great importance' to you elsewhere, over which you have no control, and which requires the co-operation of the navy. It is impossible for me to determine what your views are with respect to Florida matters, and this is the reason why I have endeavored to make mine known to you so fully. From your letter of the eleventh instant from Baldwin (a very singular letter, by the way, and which you did not modify or refer to at all when you afterward saw me), I extract as follows:

"I am convinced that a movement upon Lake City is not, in the present condition of transportation, advisable, and, indeed, that what has been said of the desire of Florida to come back now is a delusion. This movement is in opposition to sound strategy," etc.

"And again: 'The Union cause would have been far more benefited by Jeff Davis having removed this railroad to Virginia, than by any trivial or non-strategic success you may meet. By all means, therefore, fall back to Jacksonville.'

"So much from your letters of the eleventh; and yet, five days later, you propose to push forward without instructions and without provisions, with a view to destroying the railroad which you say it would have been better for Jeff Davis to have got; and furthermore, you say in your letter of the sixteenth: 'There is but little doubt in my mind (but) that the people of this state, kindly treated by us, will soon be ready to return to the Union. They are heartily tired of the war.'

"As may be supposed, I am very much confused by these conflicting views, and am thrown into doubt as to whether my intentions with regard to Florida are fully understood by you. I will, therefore, reannounce them briefly.

"1st. I desire to bring Florida into the Union under the President's proclamation of December 8th, 1863, as accessory to the above.

"2d. To revive the trade on the St. John's River.

"3d. To recruit my colored regiments, and organize a regiment of Florida white troops; and,

"4th. To cut off in part the enemy's supplies drawn from Florida.

"After you had withdrawn your advance, it was arranged between us, at a present interview, that the places to be permanently held for the present would be the south prong of the St. Mary's, Baldwin, Jacksonville, Magnolia, and Picolata, and that Henry's mounted forces should be kept moving as circumstances might justify or require. This is my plan of present operations. A raid to tear up the railroad west of Lake City will be of service, but I have no intention to occupy now that part of the state.

"Very respectfully, etc.,
Q. A. GILLMORE, Major General Commanding.

"ROBERT N. SCOTT, Captain of U. S. Infantry, A. D. C.

"Headquarters of the Army, Washington, March 16th, 1864."
⁴ Only about half of Seymour's force was engaged, the rest being left to hold the posts on the coast and St. John's River.