



MAP OF STONEMAN'S NORTH CAROLINA RAID.

CHAPTER LV.

WILSON'S AND STONEMAN'S RAIDS.

Situation in the West at the close of January, 1865.—Organization of two Co-operative Expeditions under Wilson and Stoneman.—The Object of these Movements.—Wilson's Raid.—Intercepted Confederate Dispatches.—Capture of Selma.—Surrender of Montgomery.—Capture of Fort Taylor at West Point.—Macon surrendered under Protest.—Croton joins Wilson at Macon.—Stoneman's Raid.—Change of Plan.—Stoneman enters Southwestern Virginia.—Capture of Towns, Destruction of Railroads, etc.—Stoneman returns to North Carolina.—Fight at Salisbury.—Gilem defeats the Confederate Detachment covering Asheville.—Is checked by the Sherman-Johnston Armistice.

At the close of January, 1865, General Thomas's army consisted of A. J. Smith's and Stanley's corps—the Sixteenth and Fourth—and of Wilson's cavalry command, then about 22,000 strong. The only organized Confederate forces in the West this side of the Mississippi amounted to about 21,000 men, of which 12,000 were in Mississippi and the remainder at Mobile. As we have seen, A. J. Smith's corps and 5000 of Wilson's cavalry were sent in February to re-enforce General Canby. Thus Thomas retained the Fourth Corps and 17,000 of Wilson's cavalry. General Stoneman's command was also subject to his control.

Dick Taylor's army at Meridian, Mississippi, consisted of one infantry corps and 7000 cavalry under Forrest. It was not sufficiently large for an offensive campaign, and not an element of enough importance in the operations now contemplated by Thomas to justify the latter in attempting its elimination. In accordance with instructions received from the lieutenant general, Thomas determined to use the Federal forces under his control in co-operative movements. Two expeditions were organized; one to consist of Stoneman's command supported by the Fourth Corps, and the other of 12,000 cavalry under General Wilson. The former was designed to penetrate North Carolina and South Carolina toward Columbia, to co-operate

with General Sherman, destroying the railroads and supplies on its march; the latter was to co-operate with Canby by an advance, conducted upon a similar plan, against Selma, Montgomery, and Macon.

Wilson's expedition, delayed by unfavorable weather and the exhausted condition of the horses, caused by the recent pursuit of Hood, did not leave Chickasaw, Alabama, until the 22d of March. It consisted of three cavalry divisions, commanded by Generals Upton,¹ Long, and McCook. The dismounted men of the three divisions, numbering 1500, acted as an escort to the supply train, which consisted of about 250 wagons. Wilson's instructions from the lieutenant general allowed him the largest discretion as an independent commander.² By divergent roads the command moved upon Russellville, and reached Elyton on the 30th of March, after an extremely difficult march over bad roads and swollen streams. At Jasper, on the 27th, Wilson had been informed that a part of Forrest's force, under Chalmers, was moving toward Tuscaloosa, and he knew that as soon as the direction of his movement was discovered the balance of the enemy's cavalry would move to the same point. The country so recently overrun by Hood's army was nearly destitute of supplies, and Wilson's train was consequently very large. Obviously Forrest would make every effort to destroy this train. Wilson therefore ordered his wagons to be left between the two branches of the Black Warrior, and his troops to fill their haversacks and load the pack animals with supplies, and advance as rapidly as possible to Montevallo. At Elyton, Croton's brigade, of McCook's division, was detached, and sent to Tuscaloosa, "to burn the public stores, military school, bridges, and founderies" at that place. In the neighborhood of Montevallo,

¹ Upton commanded the Fourth Division. Wilson says in his report: "Brigadier General B. H. Grierson had been originally assigned to the command of this division, but, failing to use diligence in assembling and preparing it for the field, he was replaced by Brevet Major General E. Upton, an officer of rare merit and experience."
² Wilson's Report.



JAMES H. WILSON.

on the 31st, a large number of iron works, rolling-mills, and collieries were destroyed.

From this point the advance was resumed toward Selma. Just south of Montevallo there was some skirmishing with Roddy's cavalry on the 31st, and fifty prisoners were captured. At Randolph a Confederate courier was captured with two dispatches, one from General Jackson, commanding one of Forrest's divisions, and the other from Major Anderson, Forrest's chief of staff. From the first Wilson learned that Forrest was in his front with a portion of his command; that Jackson, with his division, and all the wagons and artillery of the Confederate cavalry, was marching from Tuscaloosa to Centreville; that Croxton had struck Jackson's rear, and interposed between him and the Federal train, and that Jackson, knowing this, would attack Croxton on the following morning. The other dispatch indicated that Chalmers had reached Marion, and was about to cross the Cahawba for the purpose of joining Forrest in Wilson's front, or in the works at Selma; also that the bridge across the Cahawba at Centreville was held by the Confederates. Following fast upon this intercepted intelligence came a dispatch from Croxton, dated the previous night, stating that he had struck Jackson's rear, and, instead of pushing on direct for Tuscaloosa, would follow the enemy, and bring on an engagement, if possible, to prevent Jackson's junction with Forrest. Wilson immediately ordered McCook to advance to Centreville and secure the bridge there, and continue the march to Trion, where, after breaking up Jackson's command, he was to join Croxton and return with the entire division to the main army. Long and Upton were ordered to press Forrest back to Selma. Forrest's force, about 5000 strong, was encountered at Ebenezer Church on the 1st of April, and completely routed, losing two guns and 200 prisoners. By 4 P.M. on the 2d Wilson reached the immediate vicinity of Selma, having destroyed the trestle and bridges on the railroad as far as Burnsville.

Selma is situated on the north bank of the Alabama River. A line of bastioned fortifications extended three miles distant from the city, on the north side, from the river below to the river above, flanked on the west by Valley Creek, and on the east by an almost impracticable swamp. Including the citizen militia, the garrison numbered about 7000 men. On the approach of the Federal columns, Dick Taylor left the city under the command of General Forrest. The works were carried by assault on the 2d. The loss in Long's division, which was mainly engaged in the direct assault, was 40 killed and 260 wounded. Forrest, Armstrong, Roddy, and Adams escaped with the main portion of their commands under cover of the darkness. Thirty-two guns and 2700 prisoners—including 150 officers—and a large quantity of stores were captured. Selma was the principal Confederate dépôt in the southwest. In anticipation of its capture, 25,000 bales of cotton had been burned by the enemy.

On the 5th McCook came in with the train, not having attacked Jackson or effected a junction with Croxton. After having constructed a bridge 870 feet long across the Alabama, General Wilson crossed his troops on the 10th, leaving the arsenal, founderies, and stores of Selma a complete ruin. Montgomery was on the 12th surrendered by the city authorities, the Confederate General Adams having fallen back before Wilson, after the destruction of 90,000 bales of cotton. The Federal cavalry then entered Georgia, and on the 13th General Upton, with 400 dismounted men, captured Columbus, saving the bridges over the Chattahoochee, and taking 52 field-guns and 1200 prisoners. The Confederate ram Jackson, nearly ready for sea, and carrying an armament of six 7-inch guns, was destroyed, together with the navy yard, arsenal, armory, factories, 200 cars, and an immense amount of cotton. The same day La Grange's brigade, of McCook's division, captured Fort Taylor at West Point, above Columbus, taking three guns and 300 prisoners.

On the 20th Wilson arrived at Macon, which was surrendered under protest by the municipal authorities, who claimed that, under the provisions of armistice which had been agreed upon between Sherman and Johnston, and of which Wilson now heard for the first time, the capture was contrary to the usages of war. Notwithstanding this, Wilson held as prisoners of war Major Generals Howell Cobb and G. W. Smith, and three brigadier generals.

Croxton's brigade, in the mean time, had eluded Jackson, and captured Tuscaloosa on the 3d of April, and, advancing a few miles farther southwest, had then turned back to Jasper, and thence, *via* Talladega and Newman, joined Wilson at Macon, having marched 650 miles in 30 days.

Stoneman's expedition had started from Knoxville, Tennessee, two days before Wilson's departure from Chickasaw. Its original purpose was co-operation with General Sherman; but before it set out Sherman had already captured Columbia, South Carolina, and was moving into North Carolina. The plan of Stoneman's expedition was therefore modified. About this time it was feared that General Lee might evacuate Richmond and Petersburg, and force his way through East Tennessee, *via* Lynchburg and Knoxville. To prevent this, Stoneman was sent toward Lynchburg, with orders to completely annihilate the railroad west of that point. The Fourth Corps was also ordered to advance from Huntsville, Alabama, as far up into East Tennessee as it could supply itself, repairing the railroad as it advanced, and forming, in conjunction with Tillson's infantry division, a strong support for Stoneman's cavalry in the event of the latter being driven back.

Stoneman moved with three brigades—Brown's, Miller's, and Palmer's—commanded by General Gillem, through Bull's Gap, and thence eastward up the Watauga River, and across Iron Mountain to Boone, in North Carolina, where, on the 18th of April, he had a slight skirmish with some horse-guards. Continuing his advance to Wilkesborough, he then moved into southeastern Virginia. By the main column and detachments from it, Christiansburg, Wytheville, and Salem were captured, and the railroad was destroyed from near Lynchburg to Wytheville. Concentrating his command, Stoneman returned to North Carolina through Jacksonville and Taylorsville. From Germantown Palmer's brigade was sent to Salem (North Carolina), where 7000 bales of cotton were burned and the cotton factories destroyed; also the bridges on the railroad between Greensborough and Danville, and between Greensborough and the Yadkin River. In the accomplishment of these objects there was some fighting, and 400 prisoners were captured. From Germantown Stoneman moved on Salisbury, where he charged a Confederate force 3000 strong defending the place, capturing 14 guns and 1364 prisoners. The immense dépôts of supplies in Salisbury were destroyed, and the bridges on all the railroads leading out of the town were burned for several miles. Stoneman then returned to Greenville, East Tennessee, with his prisoners and captured artillery, leaving Gillem with the three brigades east of the mountains to intercept or disperse any Confederate troops moving south. On the 23d of April, Gillem, having defeated a detachment of the enemy defending Ashville, would have captured the town, but was met by a flag of truce announcing the armistice agreed upon between Sherman and Johnston. This armistice, and the circumstances which led to it, will be considered in a subsequent chapter.



ALVIN C. GILLEM.