

Hood's Advance on Florence—His Army Crossing the Tennessee River—No Fighting.

COLUMBIA, Tenn., Tuesday, Dec. 27, 1864. From escaped prisoners who have just arrived from Florence, I learn that the advance of Hood's army reached Florence on the evening of the 25th, and during the whole of next day his infantry was crossing the river. From Duck River, Hood retreated rapidly to the Tennessee, his main army not once making a stand. Our cavalry crossed Duck River in time to have an occasional brush with Forrest's force, who covered the enemy's retreat. No fighting of any consequence, however, has occurred since the affair at Spring Hill. It is safe to say the Tennessee is now free from Rebels.

Thomas's Campaign.

From Our Special Correspondent.

NASHVILLE, Dec. 24, 1864.

THE MILITARY SITUATION.

Before this reaches you, Hood's army, or what there is left of it, will have effected its escape to the south side of the Tennessee River, or, otherwise, be prisoners of war, moving north of the Ohio. From present indications the latter is decidedly the more probable route.

To furnish a correct idea of the present situation, and enable the reader to form an intelligent opinion as to the drift of future developments in this Department, I will indulge in a hasty and general resume of the more salient features of recent military operations.

When Sherman started on his grand raid through Georgia, and Hood, then at Tusculum, learned of the movement, a week or so afterward, it is to be supposed the Rebel chiefs were in a regular quandary which course to pursue: to follow the great flanker with a slight prospect of catching him; or, concentrate every available Rebel, move rapidly northward through Tennessee, annihilate or capture the remnant of Sherman's army left under Thomas, and wind up by taking possession of Nashville, with its immense stores—in short, accomplish something that would be fully an offset to Sherman's operations in Georgia. He decided on the latter course. About the 19th ult. he crossed the Tennessee, and with Forrest in the advance, moved rapidly forward toward Pulaski, where our little army of observation was stationed. Schofield, commanding in the field, finding himself in danger of being flanked by overwhelming numbers, retired to Columbia, bringing off all his supplies.

Hastily fortifying the place, our troops made a stand at Columbia for five days, as, in the absence then of a sufficient force to successfully resist the enemy's advance, the next best thing was to retard his progress as long as possible, so as to allow Thomas, then in Nashville, time to concentrate a force that would, at the proper moment, hurl back the invader. Finding his position at last untenable, Schofield retreated to Franklin again on the 26th, and again throwing up breastworks, took a breathing spell, intending to retire to Nashville during the night. Hood, however, knowing that this was our last resting place before reaching Nashville, and under the impression that our army was flying before him, a demoralized and dispirited mass, accelerated his pursuit, and coming up in the afternoon, made a tremendous onslaught on our lines, being fully confident he could break them and capture a great part of our army and immense wagon train. The result is already known.

In my experience with the army, since and before, I have seen nothing to equal the desperation of the fighting at Franklin, for the time being, and hardly anything more disastrous than the enemy's repulse. During the night Schofield fell back to Nashville, arriving here during the next day. Hood followed close in his rear, and then commenced the steps of Nashville. Thomas, in the meantime was receiving reinforcements, and marshaling his hosts to strike an effective blow, his only anxiety being lest Hood would fall back before receiving his deities. That sanguine General, however, had no notion of retreating, but coolly settled down outside the city, fully intent on capturing the place, if not by assault, then by starving it into surrender or evacuation. Indeed, citizens then living beyond our lines, and who gained the confidence of prominent Tennessee officers, among them Gen. Cheatham, now state that Hood and his leading Generals were quite confident that Thomas's army was nothing but a demoralized rabble of conscripts and raw recruits, who having retired before them from Pulaski, would hardly be able to make a successful stand at Nashville. The affair at Franklin should have taught them better, but there are none so foolish as those who will not learn.

THE TURNING POINT IN THE CAMPAIGN.

During the presence of the foe around Nashville, the blockade of the Cumberland below the city and the threatening attitude of Forrest toward our now only remaining line of communication with the rear, Thomas must have chafed at the apparent prestige of the enemy, and anxiously awaited the moment when he could most effectively accomplish his destruction. That moment at last arrived, and the brilliant achievements of last Thursday and Friday, already history, attest the admirable foresight and distinguished generalship of the Commander of the Department of the Cumberland. Apart from what is yet to follow, such a crushing defeat on the one side, and clean sweeping victory on the other, has not been realized since the inauguration of the Rebellion. I went over the battlefield after the smoke and din of battle had died away. I could not but wonder at the extraordinary strength and magnitude of the Rebel works. They had no less than five different lines of heavy intrenchments, with forts on every commanding eminence; and to be driven and harried pell-mell from such a position, certainly indicates a disaster of more than ordinary magnitude. Hood's invasion of Tennessee was undoubtedly made with reference to permanent occupation. The very fact that his army never disturbed a rail while they had complete control of the Tennessee and Alabama Railroad, is strikingly significant of something more than a grand raid, and looks decidedly like a movement to take and hold possession of the State.

MOVEMENTS AFTER THE TWO-DAYS' FIGHT.

The grand charge of our army in the second day's fight, which completely crushed the Rebel lines and hurled them back in confusion, commenced about 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Standing near Gen. Thomas's headquarters—a position commanding a view of nearly the whole field—I had a fine opportunity of witnessing the movement. The same was grand in the extreme, and when at last the shades of night closed in, with the jubilation shouts of our victorious soldiers, now receding away in the distance, still ringing in my ears, I could not but feel a pang of regret, that the sun was not yet above the horizon high in the heavens. Two or three hours more of daylight would have been worth an ordinary victory to our troops. As it was, the darkness was a regular god-send to the shattered and flying columns of the enemy, who now made the best possible use of their legs, while the night in part concealed their movements.

Daylight found the fugitives between Brentwood and Franklin, our infantry close on their heels, the cavalry everywhere pointing on their flanks, harrying their retreat, and capturing prisoners by the hundred. The chase was kept up to Spring Hill, distant from Nashville thirty-two miles, where the enemy made a temporary stand, so as to allow their wagon trains to get a safe distance ahead. The place is well adapted for defense, and was the scene of a spirited little fight, during our retrograde movement from Pulaski. About half-past six o'clock in the evening (Wednesday) our advance, supported by a cavalry division under Hatch, charged the enemy, driving them from their position, and sending them flying toward Columbia. Hatch performed wonders. His men gallantly rushed on a battery which was giving no considerable annoyance, capturing it, with about 350 prisoners. This has been the last fighting of any consequence up to the present, and the quiet will naturally suggest a glance at the

SITUATION TO-DAY.

Gen. Thomas's Headquarters were this morning at

New-York

NEW-YORK, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1864. PRICE FOUR CENTS.

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MONROE. Two hours [afterward we received the dispatch herewith printed.—Ed. Trib.]

WASHINGTON, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1864.

It would seem to be a mistake, as reported this morning, that the naval and military fleet has returned from North Carolina to Fortress Monroe. The Navy Department has no such intelligence, but that one vessel only yesterday returned to the latter place, bringing dispatches from Admiral Porter. The messenger has not yet reached Washington. It is ascertained from an authentic source, however, that the date of the return of the fleet to the latter place was exploded within 300 yards of Fort Fisher about 2 a. m. on the 24th.

Later in the day Admiral Porter attacked the fort and adjacent defenses and renewed the bombardment on Christmas Day. On each occasion we drove the Rebels from their guns to the shelter of the bomb-proof, so as to effectually silence their fire. In a very few minutes after the frigates and heavy ships got into position. A detachment of troops landed on Sunday afternoon. The skirmishers pushed up gallantly to the fort under cover of our fire. The bombardment of the fort continued on Monday. The Santiago de Cuba captured a company of North Carolina soldiers in the outworks and took them off.

Further Particulars of the Attack on Fort Fisher—The Bombardment Going On—Heavy Weather. BALTIMORE, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1864. The associated press correspondent telegraphs the following from Fort Monroe: FORT MONROE, Tuesday, Dec. 27, 1864. Via WASHINGTON, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1864. I have just arrived here on the Santiago de Cuba from Fort of Wilmington. The attack on Fort Fisher commenced at noon of Saturday, 26th, continued all day, was resumed on Sunday, and kept up with great vigor all day. The fort is much damaged. All the barracks and storerooms were burned, and the garrison driven to the bomb-proofs, scarcely venturing to reply. A small fraction of our troops landed on Sunday afternoon, skirmished with great gallantry, pushed up to the fort, and actually entered the work and killed a Rebel bearer of dispatches, who was entering.

Lieut. Wallen, of the 102d New York regiment, captured the Rebel flag from its outer bastion. Our troops also captured a whole battalion of the enemy, who were outside of their works, but our forces were withdrawn from the shore. When the Santiago de Cuba left, the bombardment was continuing. On Sunday, the sailors from the Santiago captured Fort Hill battery with sixty-five men, and brought the whole party off to the ships. The torpedo light was successfully exploded on Saturday morning at 2 o'clock, but with what result is not known.

The weather has been most severe at Newbern and Roanoke Island. The oldest inhabitants never experienced such severe winters.

FROM SOUTH-WESTERN VIRGINIA.

Rebel Admission of the Capture of Important Salt Works by Union Forces—No Fighting of Consequence.

WASHINGTON, Wednesday, Dec. 28, 1864.

To Maj.-Gen. DIX, New-York: From Richmond papers of the 26th date the following intelligence is forwarded. LEWIS M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

FROM SOUTH-WESTERN VIRGINIA.—The Lynchburg Virginian has the following additional information, to the capture of the salt works announced officially yesterday. We had been led to hope that these important works were safe, but the source from which the report of their capture comes, leaves us no room to doubt its correctness. They were occupied by the enemy on Tuesday, the 26th, and held by them, as is stated, until Thursday, when the Yankees retreated toward Bristol. We learn, that the place was held by about six reserves, under Col. Preston, the most of whom escaped capture.

The works are reported to be but little damaged, and we understand from persons who have visited them, since the occupation of the enemy, that they can be put in working order again by the first of February. A large quantity of salt already gotten out was destroyed, and all the buildings of the place were burned. Several pieces of artillery were also captured by them, but they got but little else of any kind. Gen. Brockbridge was at last accounts at Saltville, preparing to follow the enemy on his retreat.

A brigade continued advancing with their rear guard. No further fighting has taken place than that already reported. A gentleman who passed over the railroad from Bristol to Clark Springs, after the enemy advanced, says the bridges between these places are all burned, but the track is unimpaired.

NEWS FROM REBEL SOURCES.

What the Richmond Editors say of the Prospect.

From The Sentinel, Dec. 24.

"We cast anchor and wished for the day," said one aboard a ship that had been beaten by the tempest, and found itself overcast by darkness on an unknown sea. "We cast anchor and wished for the day." How often and with what results, we have heard of late years, has this prayer been uttered by the Rebels, as they have been driven back by our forces, and have seen the light of day no more than to oppose its course to the present, and anxiously to anticipate the return of darkness to cast anchor and wish for the day. And how often, however, the night and violent the tempest, they have never failed to own at last, and to give our allies with brightness and beauty, which has been the result of our operations. The thing which has been the cause of our success, is the fact that we have had a succession of unpleasant things. Revelations of our enemies have broken upon our ears like the report of exploding demmons, revealing in the prospect of turning down their prey. But, thank Heaven, our faith has not been a long season of trial, for God has not been down long in revenge. Already the Lord is streaked with the light of the dawn, and the day will soon show its full beams.

It shall be seen, however, the worst is now over. Gen. Sherman, we presume, has retreated to a favorable point, and has taken up a defensive position. We will have lost the men who have fallen or been captured; and besides that, we will have lost a large part of what we have secured a considerable number of recruits, and had, altogether, if not so well off as we might have been, we are better off than if we had attempted nothing.

In Georgia, we presume, we have evacuated Savannah, or will find it necessary to do so. Sherman is going from Atlanta to capture everything. He was out to seize Macon and Augusta; he was going to seize our prison-camp, and set about thousands of Federal captives at liberty. In truth, however, he has merely exchanged Atlanta, a city in the interior of our territory, for Savannah, a city on the edge. It is just such an exchange as a military man would dream of making, unless driven by necessity. Instead of conquest, it is evacuation.

It has been from the beginning the opinion of eminent military men that it would have been wise to abandon such coast towns as Savannah, and even Richmond, and retire to the interior. Sherman, who had got into changed Atlanta, a city in the interior of our territory, for Savannah, a city on the edge. It is just such an exchange as a military man would dream of making, unless driven by necessity. Instead of conquest, it is evacuation.

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General has applied the Presidential order with all commissary stores, and double the quantity the allowances of a General in command of an army, let us hope that any, to the contrary, Richmond, and to Fort Lee's army. It is true that even six horses are not equal for an afternoon ride without full allowance of oats; but six thousand will go all the better if a charge if they get a little hay and an ear of Indian corn.

Reference is often made to history for examples of constancy and fortitude under disaster, on the part of nations which, by the exercise of these qualities, have retrieved, apparently, the most desperate fortunes, and preserved their independence in spite of circumstances of seemingly hopeless adversity. There are many instances of this kind, and of which the most striking example is that of the Greeks, who, after the day when Leonidas fell at Thermopylae, to the day when Washington fought at Trenton. They have, in fact, been frequently quoted as the force of the illustration is lost in the familiarity of the example. The Greeks, however, and the Romans, who, with the Greeks, struggled against the preponderating power of Persia, the obstinacy with which the Dutch sustained their seventy years' contest against Spain, and the valor with which Froelich combated his hosts of European enemies, are not so ready to imitate these things, everybody who is not so ready to imitate what he is so very willing to admire. If, indeed, it were plain that the people of these Confederate States were animated by the spirit of the Greeks, the perseverance of the Romans, and the valor of the Dutch, and revolutionary ancestors, the result of the struggle in which they are now engaged would not be for moment doubtful.

That these qualities are at least latent in the Confederate people, there is no need to take for granted. It is true, however, that the existence of these qualities, as never to have commenced this war. There was always a possibility that the moment for the exercise of all these lofty attributes would finally come upon us; and should it find us unprepared, we should be a people of charlatans, and exhibit our attempted revolution as a sorry imitation of those noble episodes which have adorned the history of the human race. We have been in the habit of boasting ourselves that we have already developed a high degree of those qualities which excite the sympathy of the world in behalf of struggling nationalities; that we have already equaled the heroism of the Greeks, the obstinacy of the Dutch, and the fortitude of the Romans. No one, however, can truthfully deny the valor of our soldiers, or withhold a proper tribute of admiration and sympathy from those portions of our population which have so heroically braved the fury of the enemy and suffered so many privations for the sake of our cause. No one, either, can deny that we have not only met, but have even surpassed, that high standard which challenges alike our commendation and our emulation. We may be a very heroic people—we may endure suffering with fortitude, and struggle bravely for our independence, but we are not to be proud. The partial proofs we have already given do not by any means complete the weight of testimony which is required. If we were, for instance, to abandon the contest now, to acknowledge ourselves beaten and retiring, we should be a people of charlatans, and exhibit our attempted revolution as a sorry imitation of those noble episodes which have adorned the history of the human race. 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