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BY BENJAMIN F. DILL. MEMPHIS, TENN., WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1865. VOLUME XVI.–NUMBER 44.

MEMPHIS APPEAL.

PUBLISHED DAILY & WEEKLY

—BY—

BENJAMIN F. DILL.

To whom all Letters should be Addressed.

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WILSON'S RAID.

HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY CORPS,
MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI,
MACON, GA., June 20, 1865.

Brig.-Gen. William D. Whipple, Chief of Staff and Assistant Adjutant General, Headquarters Department of the Cumberland.

General: My last general report of operations, dated at Gravelly Springs, Ala., February eighth, eighteen hundred and sixty-five, completed the history of the Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi, from its organization to that date.

In pursuance of instructions from Gen. Thomas, I was authorized, after the escape of Hood to the south side of the Tennessee river, to assemble the available force of the corps in the vicinity of Eastport, at the head of steamboat navigation, on the Tennessee river, for the purpose of completing the organization and putting the troops into the best possible condition for early active operations.

By his direction, after transferring the Seventh Ohio and fifth Iowa, from the Sixth Division, it was ordered to Paducah with a view to its service in Kentucky or Tennessee for local operations. No reports have since been received of its services.

On the twenty-fourth of January, La-Grange's and Wallace's Brigade of the First Division, after a fatiguing march, arrived at Waterloo Landing, in the northwestern corner of Alabama. They had been detained in Kentucky, under Gen. McCook, for the purpose of ridding that State of a band of rebel cavalry under Lyon. In pursuance of previous orders the Third Brigade of the division was then distributed between the First and Second Brigades. Brevet Brig.-Gen. Watkins, at his own request, was ordered to Nashville to report to Brig.-Gen. R. W. Johnson, commanding the Sixth Division, and about the same time the Second Division, Brig.-Gen. Eli Long commanding, and newly mounted and equipped, arrived from Louisville, having marched from that place a distance of two hundred and eighty-five miles, in midwinter, over bad roads, with scanty supplies of forage, in twenty-eight days. Soon after this, Winslow's Brigade of the Fourth Division arrived by steam transports from the same place. The Second Brigade of this Division was then organized by joining the First Ohio (transferred to the Second Division) with the Fifth Ohio and Seventh Ohio (transferred from the Sixth Division). Brev.-Gen. A. J. Alexander, a young officer of courage and administrative ability, was assigned to the command. Brig.-Gen. B. N. Grierson had been originally assigned to the command of this Division, but failing to use due diligence in assembling and preparing it for the field, he was relieved by Brev.-Maj.-Gen. E. Upton, an officer of rare merit and experience.

The troops were all cantoned on the north bank of the Tennessee river, Long, Upton and Hatch's Divisions and Hammond's Brigade, of Knipe's Division at Gravelly Springs, and McCook's Division at Waterloo. The aggregate force was about twenty-two thousand men, thirteen thousand of whom were armed with Spencer carbines and rifles; sixteen thousand were well mounted on horses, simply requiring a few weeks rest, feed and attention to become fit for active service. The balance were poorly armed and dismounted.

On the third of February I received instructions to send a division of five thousand cavalry to Gen. Canby. After consultation with Gen. Thomas, it was decided to send Knipe's Division; but in order to furnish it with horses, it was found necessary to dismount a part of the command remaining behind. Gen. Hatch's Division, composed of most excellent troops, had, under its gallant commander, won great distinction during the recent campaign; but having the largest number of dismounted men, and having been constantly in service from the beginning of the war, I thought it best to take the horses from his command to mount the troops about to leave. I wished to give it an opportunity to rest, furnish it a remount of fresh horses, equipments and arms, and thereby to make it a model in drill, discipline and equipments, as it had already made itself in dash, constancy, and the cheerful performance of duty.

On the third of February the mounted portion of the Seventh Division embarked at Waterloo on transports for Vicksburg. The dismounted portion, with such horses as could be obtained, followed from Nashville under the direction of Brigadier-General Knipe, as soon as transportation could be furnished. Brevet Brig.-Gen. J. H. Hammond had been relieved by the direction of the Chief Surgeon from the command of a Brigade in this division, after having earned great credit with it in the battles about Nashville and the pursuit of Hood from Tennessee.

These changes left under my immediate command seventeen thousand men, requiring about five thousand horses to furnish a complete remount.

As the troops arrived at Gravelly Springs they were assigned to camps as close together as the circumstances of ground, water and contiguency to the landings would permit. The mild climate, rocky soil and rolling surface of the country rendered this altogether the best locality that could have been found for recuperating and preparing both men and horses for an early Spring campaign.

The camps were laid out with regularity. Comfortable quarters for the men and shelters for the horses were constructed without delay; roads were made to the landings, and supplies of forage, rations, clothing, equipments and ammunition were furnished in great abundance. A thorough system of instruction for men and officers was instituted, and every necessary effort was made to bring the corps to the highest possible state of efficiency. I transmit herewith a topographical sketch showing the situation of the camps and their arrangement. The plan of that constructed by Gen. Hammond, and afterward occupied by a part of Gen. Upton's Division, I regard the best arrangement of a cavalry cantonment yet devised.

The influence of the system adopted in the subsequent career of the corps cannot be over-estimated. The final victory over Forrest and the rebel cavalry was won by patient industry and instruction while in the cantonments of Gravelly Springs and Waterloo. The great fault in our cavalry system had previously been overworked in detachments, and the absence of instruction, organization, and uniformity of equipment.

On the twenty-third of February, Gen. Thomas arrived at Eastport with instructions directing me to fit out an expedition of five or six thousand cavalry for the purpose of making a demonstration upon Tuscaloosa and Selma in favor of Gen. Canby's operations against Mobile and Central Alabama. After consultation, in which I expressed a belief in the capacity of my corps to capture both those places, and conduct from the latter most important operations, Gen. Thomas gave me permission to move with my entire available mounted force, and authorized me to pursue such course as I might see proper, keeping in view the general object of the impending campaign. The instructions of Lieut.-Gen. Grant, transmitted to me by Gen. Thomas, after directing me to be ready to march as soon as Gen. Canby's movement had begun, allowed me the amplest discretion as an independent commander.

It was at first intended that the expedition should begin its movement by the fourth of March, but heavy rain storms setting in, the Tennessee river became very much swollen, and the roads impassable.

Lieut.-Gen. Grant having directed all the surplus horses possessed by the West to be sent to Gen. Canby, there were no means left in the hands of the Cavalry Bureau to mount Hatch's Division. I therefore directed him to turn over his dismounted men and his surplus horses to Brevet Brig.-Gen. J. H. Hammond, and to resume the instruction of his command at Eastport. It was expected that the supply departments would soon be able to furnish him horses for Spencer carbines, so as to enable him to take the field and join the Corps somewhere in Alabama or Georgia. By a voluntary arrangement between Brevet Brig.-Gen. D. E. Coon, commanding the First Brigade of Hatch's Division, and Brig.-Gen. Croxton, the former also turned over to the latter all his Spencer carbines then in his Brigade. By these means the troops of the First, Second and Fourth Divisions, with the exception of a few hundred, were armed with the Spencer carbine, and all had arms with metallic cases.

The heavy rains continued, in consequence of which the river overflowed its banks and destroyed a large quantity of grain accumulated for the horses at Chickasaw Landing. The steamboats could not reach the highlands except by working their way through the woods and fields until the river subsided to its natural banks. The crossing was therefore delayed until the eighteenth instant.

Division commanders were directed to see that every trooper was provided with five days' light rations in haversacks, twenty-four pounds of grain, one hundred rounds of ammunition, and one pair of extra horseshoes for his horse; that the pack animals were loaded with five days of hard bread, ten of sugar, coffee and salt, and the wagons with forty-five days coffee, twenty of sugar, fifteen of salt, and eighty rounds of ammunition. These calculations were made upon the basis of a sixty days campaign, and under the supposition that the command would be able to supply itself from the country with everything else in abundance. Only enough hard bread was taken to last during the march through the sterile region of North Alabama.

A light canvas pontoon train of thirty boats, with the fixtures complete, transported by fifty six-mule wagons, and in charge of a battalion of the twelfth Missouri cavalry, Maj. J. M. Hubbard commanding, was also got ready to accompany the expedition.

The entire train in charge of Capt. W. E. Brown, Acting Chief Quartermaster, numbered not far from two hundred and fifty wagons, escorted by fifteen hundred dismounted men of the three divisions. These men were organized into battalions and commanded by Major now Col. Archer.

At daylight on the twenty-second of March, all the preliminary arrangements having been perfected, and the order of march having been designated, the movement began.

The entire valley of the Tennessee, having been devastated by two years of warfare, was quite as destitute of army supplies as the hilly country south of it. In all directions for one hundred and twenty miles there was almost absolute destitution. It was, therefore, necessary to scatter the troops over a wide extent of country, and to march rapidly as circumstances would permit. This was rendered safe by the fact that Forrest's forces were at that time near West Point, Miss., one hundred and fifty miles southeast of Eastport, while Roddy's occupied Montevallo on the Alabama and Tennessee River Railroad, nearly the same distance to the southeast. By direction of the Major-General, we crossed Elk river at Pulaski, and in the vicinity of Lynnville, having marched from that place a distance of two hundred and eighty-five miles, in midwinter, over bad roads, with scanty supplies of forage, in twenty-eight days. Soon after this, Winslow's Brigade of the Fourth Division arrived by steam transports from the same place. The Second Brigade of this Division was then organized by joining the First Ohio (transferred to the Second Division) with the Fifth Ohio and Seventh Ohio (transferred from the Sixth Division). Brev.-Gen. A. J. Alexander, a young officer of courage and administrative ability, was assigned to the command. Brig.-Gen. B. N. Grierson had been originally assigned to the command of this Division, but failing to use due diligence in assembling and preparing it for the field, he was replaced by Brev.-Maj.-Gen. E. Upton, an officer of rare merit and experience.

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La Grange's entire Brigade, leaving all pack trains and wagons with the main column, so that he could march with the utmost possible celerity; and, after seizing the Centreville bridge and leaving it under protection of a sufficient guard, to cross the Cahawba and continue his march by the Scottsboro road toward Trion. His orders were to attack and break up Jackson's forces, form a junction with Croxton if practicable, and rejoin the Corps, with his entire Division, by the Centreville road to Selma. Although he did not leave Randolph till near eleven o'clock, A. M., and the distance to Scottsville was nearly forty miles, I hoped by this movement to do more than secure the Centreville bridge, and prevent Jackson from joining the force in front of the main column.

Having thus taken care of the right flank, and anticipated Forrest in his intention to play his old game of getting upon the rear of his opponent, I gave directions to Long and Upton to allow him no rest, but push him toward Selma with the utmost spirit and rapidity. These officers comprehended the situation, pressed forward with admirable zeal and activity upon the roads which have previously been indicated. The advance of both Divisions encountered small parties of the enemy, but drove them back to their main force at Ebenezer Church, six miles north of Plantersville. Forrest had chosen a position on the North bank of Bogler's creek, and disposed of his force for battle, his right resting on Mulberry creek and his left on a high wooded ridge, with four pieces of artillery to sweep the Randolph road, upon which Long's Division was advancing, and two on the Maplesville road. He had under his command in line Armstrong's Brigade, of Chalmer's Division, Roddy's Division, Crossland's Kentucky Brigade, and a battalion of three hundred infantry just arrived from Selma, in all about five thousand men. Part of his front was covered by a slashing of pine trees and rail barricades.

As soon as Gen. Long discovered the enemy in strength close upon the main body, he reinforced his advance guard (a battalion of the seventy-second Indiana Mounted Infantry) by the balance of the regiment, dismounted and formed it on the left of the road. Pushing it forward, the enemy was broken and driven back.

At this juncture he ordered forward four companies of the seventeenth Indiana Mounted Infantry, Lieut.-Col. Frank White commanding. With drawn sabers this gallant battalion drove the enemy in confusion into the main line, dashed against that, broke through it, rode over the rebel guns, crushing the wheels of one piece, and finally turned to the left, and cut its way out, leaving one officer and sixteen men in the enemy's hands, either killed or wounded. In this charge, Capt. Taylor, of the seventeenth Indiana, lost his life, after having led his men into the very midst of the enemy, and engaged in a running fight of two hundred yards with Forrest in person.

Gen. Alexander's Brigade had the advance of Upton's Division; and when within three miles of Ebenezer Church, heard the firing and cheers of Long's men on the right, pushed forward at a trot, and soon came upon the enemy. Gen. Alexander hastily deployed his brigade mostly on the right of the road, with the intention of connecting with Long's left, and, as soon as each twenty was in readiness, pushed forward his line dismounted. In less than an hour, although the resistance was determined, the position was carried by a gallant charge, and the enemy completely routed. Alexander's Brigade captured two guns and about two hundred prisoners, while one gun fell into the hands of Gen. Long's brigade.

Winslow's Brigade immediately passed to the front and took up the pursuit, but could not again bring the rebels to a stand.

The whole corps bivouacked at sundown about Plantersville, nineteen miles from Selma. With almost constant fighting, the enemy had been driven since morning twenty-four miles.

At daylight the second Long's Division took the advance, closely followed by Upton's. Having obtained a well drawn sketch and complete description of the defenses of Selma, I directed Gen. Long, marching by the flanks of brigades, to approach the city and cross to the Sumerville road, without exposing his men, and to develop his line as soon as he should arrive in front of the works. Gen. Upton was directed to move on the Range Line road, sending a squadron on the Burnsville road. Lieut. Rendelbrook, with a battalion of the Fourth U. S. Cavalry, was instructed to move down the railroad, burning stations, bridges and trestle works as far as Burnsville. By rapid marching, without opposition, the troops were all in sight of the town, and nearly in position by four P. M.

As I approached the city I perceived that my information was generally correct; I therefore made a reconnaissance of the works from left to right for the purpose of satisfying myself entirely as to the true point of attack and the probable chances of success. I directed Gen. Long to assault the enemy's works by moving diagonally across the road upon which his troops were posted, while Gen. Upton, at his own request, with a picked force of three hundred men, was directed to penetrate the swamps upon his left, break through the line covered by it, and turn the enemy's right, the balance of his division to conform to the movement. The signal for the advance was to be the discharge of a single gun from Hodney's Battery, to be given so soon as Upton's turning movement had developed itself.

Before this plan could be put into execution, and while waiting for the signal to advance, Gen. Long was informed that a strong force of Rebel cavalry had begun skirmishing with his rear, and threatened a general attack upon his pack train and lead horses. He had left a force of six companies well posted at the creek in anticipation of this movement afterward ascertained to have been made by Chalmers, in obedience to the instructions of Forrest. This force was at Marion the day before, and was expected on the road from that place. Fearing that this affair might compromise our assault on the main position, Gen. Long having already strengthened the rear by another regiment, with admirable judgment, determined to make the assault at once, and, without waiting for the signal, gave the order to advance. The troops dismounted, sprang forward with resistless alacrity, and in less than fifteen minutes, without ever stopping, wavering or faltering, had swept over the works and driven the rebels in confusion toward the city. I arrived on that part of the field just after the works were carried; at once notified Gen. Upton of the success, and ordered him to push on as rapidly as possible, directing Col. Minty (who in command of the Second Division) to gather his men for a new advance; ordered Col. Vail, commanding the seventeenth Indiana, to place his own regiment and the fourth United States cavalry, Lieut. O'Connel, and the Board of Trade Battery, Capt. Robinson commanding, and renewed the attack. The rebels had occupied a new line but partially finished, on the edge of the city. A most gallant charge by the Fourth United States Cavalry was repulsed, but rapidly returned on the left. It was now quite dark. Upton's Division advancing at the same time, a new charge was made by the fourth and seventeenth Indiana and fourth Cavalry dismounted. The troops, inspired by the wildest enthusiasm, swept everything before them, and penetrated the city in all directions. During the first part of the action the Chicago Board of Trade Battery had occupied a commanding position, and steadily replied to the enemy's guns.

I regard the capture of Selma the most remarkable achievement in the history of modern cavalry, and one admirably illustrative of its new powers and tendencies. That it may be fully understood, particular attention is invited to the following facts:

The fortifications assaulted and carried consist of a bastioned line, on a radius of nearly three miles, extending from the Alabama river below to the same above the city. The part west of the city is covered by a deep and almost impassable creek; that on the east side, by a swamp extending from the river almost to the Summerville road, and entirely impracticable for mounted men at all seasons. I plead with confidence, as a personal reconnoissance, that dismounted men might, with great difficulty, work through it on the left of the Range Line road. The profile of that part of the line assaulted is as follows: Height of parapet, six to eight feet; height of slope, five feet; depth of ditch, five feet; width from ten to fifteen feet; hight of stockade on the glacis, three feet; sunk into the earth, four feet. The ground over which the troops advanced is an open field, generally level, sloping slightly toward the works, but intersected by one ravine and marshy soil, which both the right and left of Long's line experienced some difficulty in crossing. The distance which the troops charged, exposed to the enemy's fire of artillery and musketry, was six hundred yards. Particular attention is invited to that part of Gen. Long's report which describes the assault. He states that the number engaged in the charge was one thousand five hundred and fifty officers and men. The portion of the line assaulted was manned by Armstrong's Brigade, regarded as the best in Forrest's Corps, and reported by him at more than one thousand and five hundred men. The loss in this assault was fifty killed, one hundred and two wounded, and seven missing. Gen. Long was wounded in the head, Cols. Miller and McCormick in the leg, and Col. Briggs in the breast.

I doubt if the history of this, or any other war, will show another instance in which a line of works, as strongly constructed and well defended as this, by mounted men and artillery, has been stormed and carried by a single line of men without support. Too much credit cannot be accorded to Gen. Long, Cols. Minty, Miller, and Vail, or to the gallant officers and men under their command. I submit herewith a map of Selma and its defenses, surveyed and drawn by Capt. H. E. Noyes, Second U. S. Cavalry, and A. D. C.

The immediate fruits of our victory were thirty-one field guns, and one thirty-pounder Parrott, which had been used against us, twenty-seven hundred prisoners, including one hundred and fifty officers, a number of colors, and immense quantities of stores of every kind. Gen's. Forrest, Armstrong, Roddy and Adams escaped with a number of men, under cover of darkness, either by the Burnsville and river road, or by swimming the Alabama river. A portion of Upton's Division pursued on the Burnsville road until long after midnight, capturing four guns and many prisoners. I estimate the entire garrison, including the militia of the city and surrounding country, at seven thousand men. The entire force under my command, engaged and in supporting distance, was nine thousand men and forty guns.

As soon as the troops could be assembled and got into camp I assigned Brevet Brig.-Gen. Winslow to the command of the city, with orders to destroy everything that could possibly benefit the Rebel cause. I directed Gen. Upton to march at daylight with his division, for the purpose of driving Chalmers to the west side of the Cahawba, to open communication with McCook, expected from Centreville, and, in conjunction with the latter, bring in the train.

The capture of Selma having put us in possession of the enemy's greatest depot in the Southwest, was a vital blow to their cause, and secured to us the certainty of going in whatever direction might be found most advantageous. I gave directions to Lieut. Col. Harwood, Fourth Michigan Cavalry, engineer officer on my staff, to employ all the resources of the shops in the city in the construction of pontoons, with the intention of laying a bridge, and crossing to the south side of the Alabama river, as soon as I could satisfy myself in regard to Gen. Canby's success in the operations against Mobile. On April fifth Upton and McCook arrived with the train, but nothing definite had been heard of Croxton. McCook had been entirely successful in his operations against Forrest, but on reaching Scottsboro he found Jackson well posted, with a force, he thought, too strong to attack. After a sharp skirmish he retired to Centreville, burned the Scottsboro Cotton Factory and all the wagons, returned toward Selma, satisfied that Croxton had taken care of himself and gone in a new direction.

On the sixth of April, having ordered McCook to construct a bridge over the Alabama, with the utmost dispatch, I went to Cahawba to see Gen. Forrest, who had agreed to meet me there, under a flag of truce, for the purpose of making an exchange of prisoners. I was not long in discovering that I need not expect liberality in this matter, and that Forrest hoped to recapture the men of his command now in our hands. I refused to discuss the question, and soon came upon the enemy. Gen. Alexander hastily deployed his brigade mostly on the right of the road, with the intention of connecting with Long's left, and, as soon as each twenty was in readiness, pushed forward his line dismounted. In less than an hour, although the resistance was determined, the position was carried by a gallant charge, and the enemy completely routed. Alexander's Brigade captured two guns and about two hundred prisoners, while one gun fell into the hands of Gen. Long's brigade.

Winslow's Brigade immediately passed to the front and took up the pursuit, but could not again bring the rebels to a stand.

The whole corps bivouacked at sundown about Plantersville, nineteen miles from Selma. With almost constant fighting, the enemy had been driven since morning twenty-four miles.

At daylight the second Long's Division took the advance, closely followed by Upton's. Having obtained a well drawn sketch and complete description of the defenses of Selma, I directed Gen. Long, marching by the flanks of brigades, to approach the city and cross to the Sumerville road, without exposing his men, and to develop his line as soon as he should arrive in front of the works. Gen. Upton was directed to move on the Range Line road, sending a squadron on the Burnsville road. Lieut. Rendelbrook, with a battalion of the Fourth U. S. Cavalry, was instructed to move down the railroad, burning stations, bridges and trestle works as far as Burnsville. By rapid marching, without opposition, the troops were all in sight of the town, and nearly in position by four P. M.

As I approached the city I perceived that my information was generally correct; I therefore made a reconnaissance of the works from left to right for the purpose of satisfying myself entirely as to the true point of attack and the probable chances of success. I directed Gen. Long to assault the enemy's works by moving diagonally across the road upon which his troops were posted, while Gen. Upton, at his own request, with a picked force of three hundred men, was directed to penetrate the swamps upon his left, break through the line covered by it, and turn the enemy's right, the balance of his division to conform to the movement. The signal for the advance was to be the discharge of a single gun from Hodney's Battery, to be given so soon as Upton's turning movement had developed itself.

Before this plan could be put into execution, and while waiting for the signal to advance, Gen. Long was informed that a strong force of Rebel cavalry had begun skirmishing with his rear, and threatened a general attack upon his pack train and lead horses. He had left a force of six companies well posted at the creek in anticipation of this movement afterward ascertained to have been made by Chalmers, in obedience to the instructions of Forrest. This force was at Marion the day before, and was expected on the road from that place. Fearing that this affair might compromise our assault on the main position, Gen. Long having already strengthened the rear by another regiment, with admirable judgment, determined to make the assault at once, and, without waiting for the signal, gave the order to advance. The troops dismounted, sprang forward with resistless alacrity, and in less than fifteen minutes, without ever stopping, wavering or faltering, had swept over the works and driven the rebels in confusion toward the city. I arrived on that part of the field just after the works were carried; at once notified Gen. Upton of the success, and ordered him to push on as rapidly as possible, directing Col. Minty (who in command of the Second Division) to gather his men for a new advance; ordered Col. Vail, commanding the seventeenth Indiana, to place his own regiment and the fourth United States cavalry, Lieut. O'Connel, and the Board of Trade Battery, Capt. Robinson commanding, and renewed the attack. The rebels had occupied a new line but partially finished, on the edge of the city. A most gallant charge by the Fourth United States Cavalry was repulsed, but rapidly returned on the left. It was now quite dark. Upton's Division advancing at the same time, a new charge was made by the fourth and seventeenth Indiana and fourth Cavalry dismounted. The troops, inspired by the wildest enthusiasm, swept everything before them, and penetrated the city in all directions. During the first part of the action the Chicago Board of Trade Battery had occupied a commanding position, and steadily replied to the enemy's guns.

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