

the Confederates had burned the bridges, which Sherman's men rapidly rebuilt, and on the 17th the National troops entered the city as Hampton's cavalry left it. Bales of cotton, piled up in the streets, were on fire, there was a high wind, and the flakes of cotton were flying through the air like a snow-storm. In spite of all efforts of the soldiers, the fire persistently spread at night, several buildings burst into a blaze, and before morning the heart of the city was a heap of ruins. There has been an acrimonious dispute as to the responsibility for this fire. It seems probable that Hampton's soldiers set fire to the cotton, perhaps without orders, and it seems improbable that any one would purposely set fire to the city. At all events, Sherman's men did their utmost to extinguish the flames, and that General gave the citizens 500 head of cattle, and did what he could to shelter them. He did destroy the arsenal purposely, and tons of powder, shot and shell were taken out of it, hauled to the river, and sunk in deep water. He also destroyed the foundries and the establishment in which the Confederacy's paper money was printed.

That same day, the 18th, Charleston was evacuated by the Confederate forces under General Hardee, and a brigade of National troops commanded by General Schimmelpennig promptly took possession of it.

On the 20th, leaving Columbia, Sherman's army bore away for Fayetteville. The most serious difficulty was met at Catawba River, where the bridges were destroyed, the floods interfered with the building of new ones, and there was a delay of nearly a week.

Fayetteville was reached on the 11th of March, and here communication was opened with General Alfred H. Terry, whose men had captured Fort Fisher, below Wilmington, after a gallant fight, in January, and later the city itself, thus closing that harbor to blockade-runners. In taking the fort, Terry's men had fought their way from traverse to traverse, and the stubborn garrison had only yielded when they literally reached the last ditch.

At Averysboro, 35 miles south of Raleigh, on the 16th of March, the left wing suddenly came upon Hardee's forces intrenched across its path. The left flank of the Confederates was soon turned,



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and they fell back to a stronger position. Here a direct attack was made, but without success, and Kilpatrick's cavalry was roughly handled by a division of Confederate infantry. General Slocum then began a movement to turn the flank again, and in the night Hardee retreated. Each side had lost 500 men.

Averysboro is about 40 miles west of Goldsboro. Midway between is Bentonville, where, on the 19th, the left wing again found the enemy intrenched across the way, this time in greater force and commanded by Johnston. Thickets of black-jack protected the flanks, and it was ugly ground for fighting over. Slocum's men attacked the position in force as soon as they came upon it. They quickly broke the Confederate right flank, drove it back, and planted batteries to command that part of the field. On the other flank the thickets interfered more with the organization of both sides, the National troops threw up intrenchments, both combatants attacked alternately, and the fighting was very bloody. After nightfall the Confederates withdrew toward Raleigh, and the road was then open for Sherman to march into Goldsboro. At Bentonville, the last battle fought by this army, the National loss

was 1604 men, the Confederate 2342. At Goldsboro Sherman was joined by Schofield's corps, which had been transferred thither from Thomas' army.

Several attempts to negotiate a peace were made during the winter of 1864-5, the most notable of which took place early in February, when Alexander H. Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederacy, accompanied by John A. Campbell and Robert M. T. Hunter, applied for permission to pass through Grant's lines for the purpose. They were conducted to Fort Monroe, met President Lincoln and Secretary Seward on a steamer in Hampton Roads, and had a long and free discussion. The Confederate commissioners proposed an armistice, with the hope that after a time, if trade and friendly relations were resumed, some sort of settlement or compromise could be reached without more fighting. But Mr. Lincoln would consent to no peace or armistice of any kind, except on condition of the immediate disbandment of the Confederate armies and government, the restoration of the Union, and the abolition of slavery. The Confederate commissioners were

not authorized to concede the restoration of the Union, and the conference had no practical result.

Late in February General Sheridan, at the head of 10,000 cavalry, moved far up the Shenandoah Valley, and at Waynesboro his Third Division, commanded by General Custer, met Early's force on the 2d of March. In the engagements that ensued, Early was completely defeated, and about 1500 of his men were captured, together with every gun he had, and all his trains. Sheridan then ruined the locks in the Jamer River Canal, destroyed portions of the railroads toward Lynchburg and Gordonsville, and rode down the peninsula to White House, crossed over to the James, and joined Grant, taking post on the left of the army, and occupying Dinwiddie Court House on the 29th.

Grant and Lee had both been waiting impatiently for the roads to dry, so that wagons and guns could be moved—Lee because he saw that Richmond could not be held any longer, and was anxious to get away; Grant because he was anxious to begin the final campaign and prevent Lee from getting away. The only chance for Lee to escape was by slipping past Grant's left, and either joining Johnston in North Carolina or



A DETACHMENT OF THE FIRST SOUTH CAROLINA (COLORED) FEDERAL VOLUNTEERS, COLONEL BEARD, REPELLING AN ATTACK OF THE CONFEDERATE TROOPS IN THE VICINITY OF DOBOY RIVER, GA.

FROM A SKETCH BY COLONEL BREWERTON.