



CONFEDERATE CAMP, CITY HALL SQUARE, ATLANTA. FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN WHEN THE CAMP WAS OCCUPIED BY THE 2D MASSACHUSETTS.

GENERAL SHERMAN AND THE "MARCH TO THE SEA."*

FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL, NEW YORK,
December 22d, 1886.

MY DEAR SIR:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your esteemed favor of the 20th instant, and trust you will pardon me if I adhere to my former conclusion not to attempt a magazine article on any war event. I do not profess the skill or patience of an historian, but only to be a witness before the great tribunal of the world, of scenes which I have witnessed or events in which I have shared. Of these I have testified fully in the two volumes of memoirs first published by the Appletons in 1875, and republished in 1885 in the form of a second edition, corrected and enlarged. In these volumes I believe I have recorded fully and truthfully all that seemed necessary, all at least that I purpose to do. Taking, for example, the "March to the Sea," to which you refer, I am sure I have given in the second volume every material fact of that feature of the civil war, which has to the public the charm of an epic because of its seeming novelty, its mysterious progress, and its glorious result — much of which was disputed at first, but is now more than confirmed by General Grant in his immortal "Personal Memoirs." Even my second edition was in the hands of the printers before I had seen General Grant's words in manuscript or print, so that our joint testimony must stand the test of time. True, many an orator in his safe office at the North had proclaimed his purpose to cleave his way to the sea. Every expedition which crossed the Ohio River in the early part of the war headed for the sea, but things were not ripe

till the Western army had fought, and toiled, and labored down to Atlanta. Not till then did a "March to the Sea" become practicable and possible of grand results. Alone I never measured it as now my eulogists do, but coupled with General Thomas's acts about Nashville, and those about Richmond directed in person by General Grant, the "March to the Sea" with its necessary corollary, the march northward to Raleigh, became vastly important, if not actually conclusive of the war. Mr. Lincoln was the wisest man of our day, and more truly and kindly gave voice to my secret thoughts and feeling when he wrote me at Savannah from Washington under date of December 26, 1864:

"When you were about leaving Atlanta for the Atlantic coast I was anxious, if not fearful; but feeling that you were the better judge, and remembering 'nothing risked, nothing gained,' I did not interfere. Now the undertaking being a success, the honor is all yours; for I believe none of us went further than to acquiesce; and taking the work of General Thomas into account, as it should be taken, it is indeed a great success. Not only does it afford the obvious and immediate military advantages, but in showing to the world that your army could be divided, putting the stronger part to an important new service, and yet leaving enough to vanquish the old opposing force of the whole, Hood's army, it brings those who sat in darkness to see a great light. But what next? I suppose it will be safer if I leave General Grant and yourself to decide."

So highly do I prize this testimonial that I preserve Mr. Lincoln's letter, every word in his own handwriting, unto this day; and if I know myself, I believe on receiving it I experienced more satisfaction in giving to his overburdened and weary soul one gleam of satisfaction and happiness, than of selfish

* Our readers will be interested in the above letter received by us from General Sherman in response to a request for an account of the Atlanta Campaign, and printed with his approval. They will also be glad to

know that we have since so far overcome General Sherman's reluctance as to induce him to prepare a paper on "The Grand Strategy of the War," which will appear in the magazine within a few months.—EDITOR.

pride in an achievement which has given me among men a larger measure of fame than any single act of my life. There is an old maxim of war, that a general should not divide his forces in the presence of an enterprising enemy, and I confess that I felt more anxious for General Thomas's success than my own, because had I left him with an insufficient force it would have been adjudged ungenerous and unmilitary in me; but the result, and Mr. Lincoln's judgment *after* the event, demonstrated that my division of force was liberal, leaving to Thomas "enough to vanquish the old opposing force of the whole, Hood's army," and retaining for myself enough to march to the sea, and thence north to Raleigh, in communication with the old Army of the Potomac which had so long and heroically fought for Richmond; every officer and soldier of which felt and saw the dawn of peace in the near approach of their comrades of the West who, having finished their task, had come so far to lend them a helping hand if needed. I honestly believe that the grand march of the Western army from Atlanta to Savannah, and from Savannah to Raleigh, was an important factor in the final result, the overwhelming victory at Appomattox, and the glorious triumph of the Union cause. All the leading facts have been published by General Grant, by myself, and by General J. D. Cox, and I prefer to leave others to fill out the episodes which give life and interest to the picture.

I certainly commend THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for its enterprise in collecting in a durable form many of these episodes, all varying more or less in describing the same event, or series of events, according to the tone and temper of the writer, the more valuable by reason of their variance, because every honest man sees things from a different standpoint, and can only write earnestly what he personally believes. The time is also opportune because the safety of the country cannot now be imperiled by jealousies and hatreds perfectly natural in the midst of horrid war; and therefore I again express my entire satisfaction with the course of your magazine in collecting from the witnesses while living their personal testimony,—every article of which I have read, in common with millions of our people. These will crystallize into history, the leading facts and results of which are already pretty well established, whilst the minor affairs will remain the subject of song and story to the survivors, who are fast giving place to new men, who, if wise, will profit by our mistakes and be thankful that we of 1861-5 caught the buffets of war, which otherwise would surely have fallen on them. The civil war is long since over, and though

bitter and terrible beyond the power of expression in words, its events seem to me as the memory of a dream; therefore, so far as I am concerned it must rest.

One single fact about the "March to the Sea" unknown to me was revealed by General Grant in his "Memoirs," Vol. II., page 376:

"I was in favor of Sherman's plan from the time it was first submitted to me. My chief of staff, however, was very bitterly opposed to it, and as I learned subsequently, finding that he could not move me, he appealed to the authorities at Washington to stop it."

I had been acquainted with General John A. Rawlins, General Grant's "chief of staff," from the beginning of the war. He was always most loyal and devoted to his chief, an enthusiastic patriot, and of real ability. He was a neighbor of General Grant in Galena at the breaking out of the war, a lawyer in good practice, an intense thinker, and a man of vehement expression; a soldier by force of circumstances rather than of education or practice, yet of infinite use to his chief throughout the war and up to the hour of his death as Secretary of War, in 1869. General Rawlins was enthusiastically devoted to his friends in the Western army, with which he had been associated from Cairo to Vicksburg and Chattanooga, and doubtless, like many others at the time,—October, 1864,—feared that I was about to lead his comrades in a "wild-goose chase," not fully comprehending the objects aimed at, or that I on the spot had better means of accurate knowledge than he in the distance. He did not possess the magnificent equipoise of General Grant, nor the confidence in my military sagacity which his chief did, and I am not at all surprised to learn that he went to Washington from City Point to obtain an order from the President or Secretary of War to compel me with an army of sixty-five thousand of the best soldiers which America had ever produced to remain idle when an opportunity was offered such as never occurs twice to any man on earth. General Rawlins was right according to the light he possessed, and I remember well my feeling of uneasiness that something of the kind *might* happen, and how free and glorious I felt when the magic telegraph was cut, which prevented the possibility of orders of any kind from the rear coming to delay or hinder us from fulfilling what I knew was comparatively easy of execution and was sure to be a long stride toward the goal we were all aiming at—victory and peace from Virginia to Texas. He was one of the many referred to by Mr. Lincoln who sat in darkness, but after the events saw a great light. He never revealed to me the doubts he had had.

With best wishes for your continued prosperity and success, I am, sincerely your friend,

W. T. Sherman.