

The Twelfth Corps

In transmitting this order to Slocum, General Butterfield, Hooker's chief of staff, added: "The general desires the division that can be quickest at Bridgeport be placed there." The condition stipulated in this request seems to have determined the selection of Geary's Division for the important and glorious movement then pending, and enabled the White Stars to win further laurels at Wauhatchie and Lookout Mountain.

The reason why General Slocum was left behind is clear in view of his claim that "when he came here it was under promise that he should not have to serve under Hooker."* Some such arrangement became necessary, for Hooker naturally entertained resentful feelings against Slocum when the outspoken opinions of the latter came to his ears. On October twelfth he wrote to President Lincoln, from Stevenson, Alabama, suggesting that Slocum should be tendered a command in Missouri or elsewhere, and in which he says:

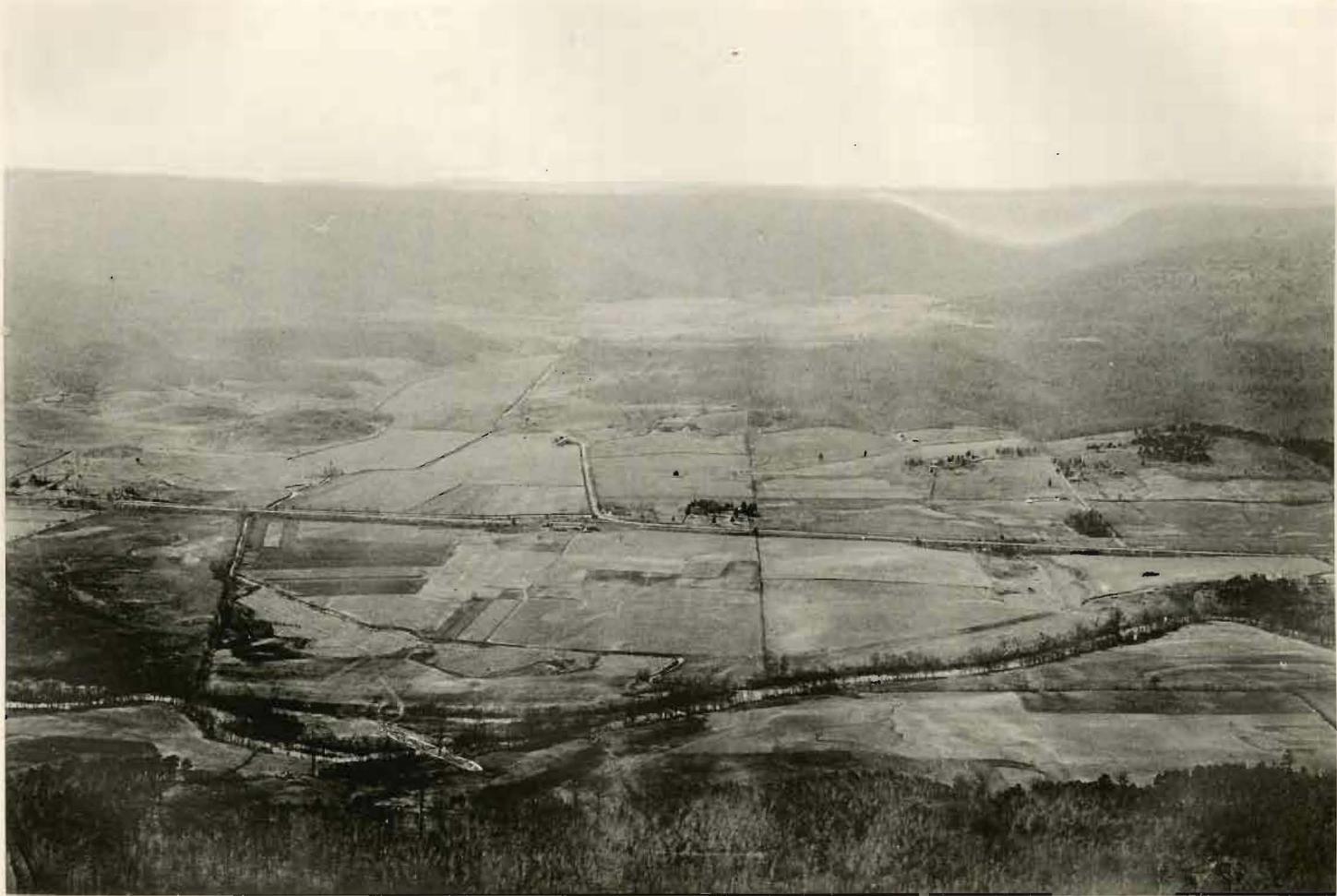
Unless he gives more satisfaction in the discharge of his duties he will soon find himself in deeper water than he has been wading in. I shall act very deliberately with him. I will incur reproach if I allow the public interest to suffer by his contumacy. He now appears to be swayed entirely by passion in the exercise of his office.

Slocum continued in his headquarters at Tullahoma, Tennessee, where he had been most of the time since the arrival of his corps in the West. Geary's Division, which had been stationed at different points along the railroad between Murfreesborough and Tullahoma, was placed on railroad trains and moved to Bridgeport, his advance reaching there on the twenty-fifth.

The Midnight Battle of Wauhatchie.

Bridgeport, on the Tennessee River, was practically the terminus at this time of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. The trains could not run any farther, because the line between this point and Chattanooga was in the possession of the enemy. The river was not available as a route for supplies, for the northern slope of Lookout Mountain, then held by a portion of Longstreet's Corps, descended

* See letter of C. A. Dana to Secretary of War, dated Chattanooga, October 29, 1863. Official Records, Vol. XXXI, Part I, p. 73.



WAUHATCHIE VALLEY AND BATTLEFIELD.

View from Sunset Rock on Lookout Mountain where Generals Bragg and Longstreet stood when they watched the troops of Geary's Division, Twelfth Corps, in their advance to Wauhatchie. The railroad and highway run from right to left, through the center of the picture. The fighting occurred near the point where the fence line intersects the highway.

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steeply to the shore, enabling the Confederate forces at that point to command the channel.

Chattanooga was so closely besieged on its southern front and on its flanks by Bragg's army that the Union forces there were obliged to obtain their subsistence and other supplies from Bridgeport. The latter place was only twenty-six miles distant, but owing to the obstructed communication all rations and forage had to be hauled on wagon trains by a circuitous mountainous country over roads that were well nigh impassable. The wagon trains were inadequate to the duty, and the road was lined with the bodies of horses and mules that had died of exhaustion and hunger on the route. The Union troops at Chattanooga were already on short rations, and the artillery teams were destitute of forage. Unless communication could be opened with Bridgeport by driving the enemy out of Lookout Valley, Chattanooga must be evacuated, and all the advantages of Rosecrans's campaign lost.

The Nashville Railroad was now safely held by Williams's Division, leaving Hooker free to undertake the movement intrusted to him for restoring direct connection with Bridgeport. To assist him in this undertaking, a force of 1,500 men from the Army of the Cumberland came down the river in pontoon boats on the night of October twenty-seventh, and under cover of the darkness effected a landing at Brown's Ferry, near the lower end of Lookout Valley. A bridge was laid immediately, over which the remainder of the two brigades to which these men belonged crossed and took up an intrenched position.

On the morning of October twenty-seventh Geary's Division, preceded by the Eleventh Corps, left Bridgeport, and crossing the Tennessee River on pontoons commenced the movement to Chattanooga. Geary was unable to concentrate his entire command at Bridgeport in time for this advance, and so marched away without Candy's Brigade and the One Hundred and Second New York of Greene's Brigade. The division moved this day as far as Shellmound, where it arrived at two p. m. Heavy fatigue details were made here to assist in the construction of a pontoon bridge at this place, the men being kept on this work until after midnight. Resuming the march at daylight the column moved by way of Running Water and Whitesides to Wauhatchie, six miles from Chattanooga, encamping here at five p. m. On passing Whitesides the

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Sixtieth New York was detached, with orders to hold the pass leading from that place to Trenton.

When General Hooker halted Geary's command at Wauhatchie he ordered the Eleventh Corps on to Brown's Ferry, three miles farther, leaving Geary in the valley, where his unsupported and isolated position naturally invited attack. General Hazen, commanding one of the brigades from Chattanooga, "went to General Hooker and endeavored to get him to take up a compact line across the valley, and to bring all his forces together. But being confident the enemy would not disturb him, Hooker refused to change his dispositions." * General Hooker in his report of the battle of Wauhatchie says that, "The commands were too small to keep up a substantial communication that distance," and that he "deemed it more prudent to hold the men well in hand than to have a feeble one;" also, that in his judgment, it was essential to retain possession of both approaches to Kelly's Ferry.

On October twenty-eighth, the day of Geary's arrival at Wauhatchie, Generals Bragg and Longstreet were on Lookout Mountain, from where they saw the Eleventh Corps march down Lookout Valley and unite with the force at Brown's Ferry. Longstreet says in his report, "The rear guard of this command † (about 1,500, with a battery of artillery) came up in about an hour and halted three miles from the main force. The road between the two commands ran along the western base of a series of heights and parallel to them." He says further: "As soon as the rear guard halted I sent orders to General Jenkins ‡ to concentrate at the base of the mountain his three brigades. . . . I also ordered General Law to advance his brigade as soon as it was dark, and occupy the height in his immediate front which commanded the road between the enemy's forces. General Jenkins reported in time to see the positions occupied by the enemy. He was ordered to hold the point designated for General Law with a sufficient force, while a portion of his command moved up the road and captured or dispersed the rear guard. . . . This was the force which I hoped to be able to cut off, surprise and capture."

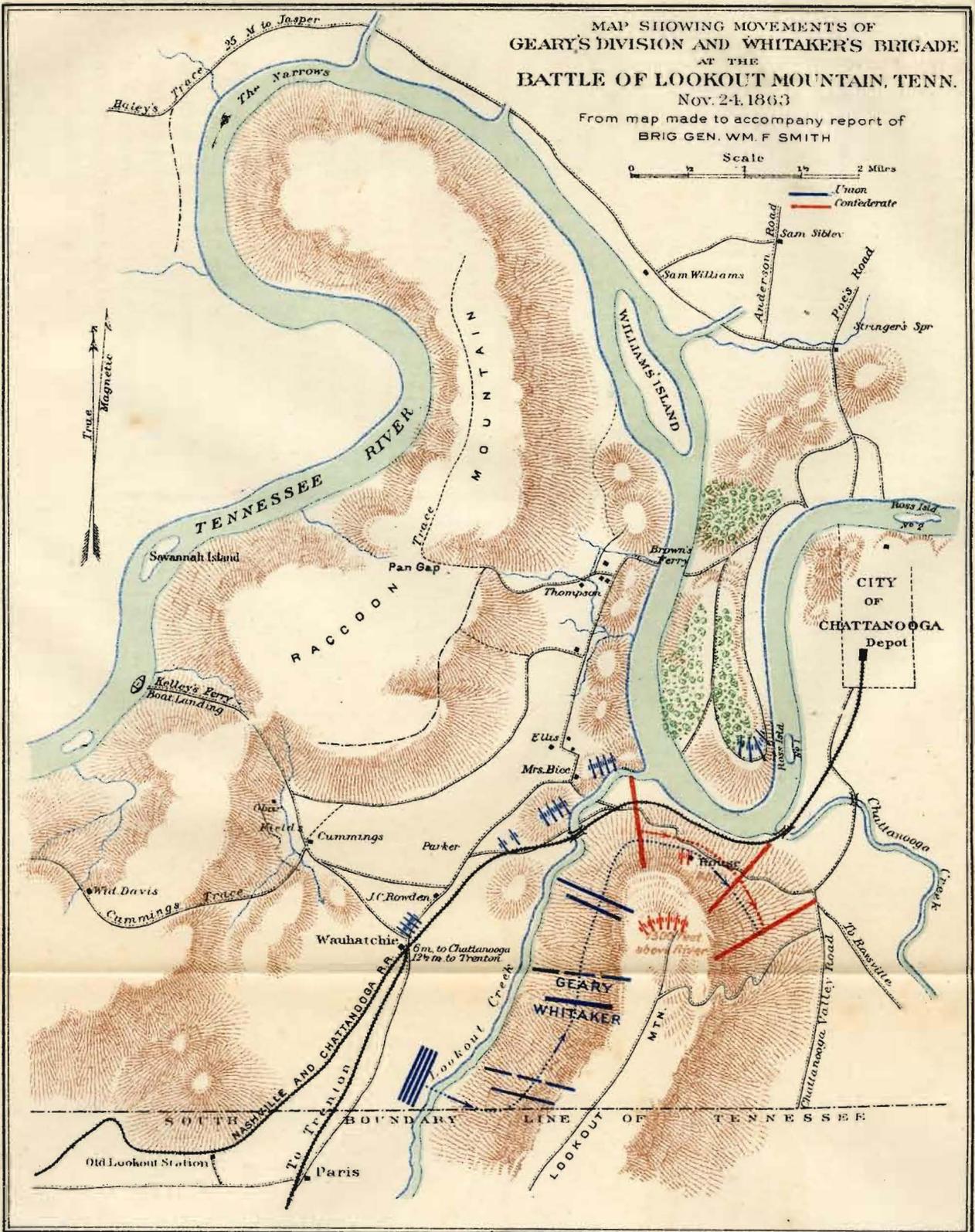
* See letter of C. A. Dana to Secretary Stanton, sent from Chattanooga, October 29, 1863. Official Records, Vol. XXXI, Part I, p. 72.

† Geary's Division.

‡ General Jenkins was then in command of Hood's Division.

MAP SHOWING MOVEMENTS OF
 GEARY'S DIVISION AND WHITAKER'S BRIGADE
 AT THE
 BATTLE OF LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, TENN.
 Nov. 24, 1863

From map made to accompany report of
 BRIG GEN. WM. F. SMITH



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A well-laid plan, indeed! But the White Star Division was composed of troops that never allowed themselves to be surprised; nor could they be captured by any such force as Longstreet, in this case, deemed sufficient for that purpose.

As soon as the night was far enough advanced to conceal the movement the Confederate leader placed Law's and Robertson's brigades on the hill commanding the road, with the intention of intercepting any reinforcements from Brown's Ferry, and then sent Bratton's South Carolina brigade on its mission to "cut off, surprise and capture" Geary's command. Benning's Brigade was placed on Law's left, where it was in position to reinforce Bratton. These four brigades, constituting Hood's Division, "should have mustered" 5,000 men, according to Longstreet's statement.

Geary had with him at this time two brigades—Greene's and Cobham's—of which there were six regiments present altogether, with one battery (Knap's) of four guns. The regiments were small. One of them, the One Hundred and Ninth Pennsylvania, reported only 110 men, all told, as present in the engagement. Geary says that his infantry carried 93 officers and 1,499 enlisted men into action at Wauhatchie. Longstreet made a very close estimate as to the strength of that rear guard. The force sent to surprise Geary was Kershaw's Brigade of Gettysburg fame, containing six regiments, under command of Col. John Bratton.

As night came on, Geary, realizing the dangerous situation which he occupied, ordered his men to "bivouac upon their arms, with cartridge boxes on," and placed his four pieces of artillery in position on a knoll near the Rowden house. The Twenty-ninth Pennsylvania, Colonel Rickards, was sent out on picket.

Shortly after midnight Bratton's advance encountered the pickets of the Twenty-ninth, whose vigilance and steady resistance gave Geary ample notice of the impending attack and time to get his troops in line. In the engagement which followed, the fighting was desperate and prolonged. The South Carolinians attacked in front and flank, but the White Stars changed front to rear, or refused their right and left regiments whenever it became necessary in conforming to the movements of the enemy.

There was a moon that night, but it was overclouded much of the time, and in the darkness the soldiers could aim only at the flashes of the rifles or in the direction indicated by the cries and

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cheers of their opponents. The Confederates directed an effective fire against the battery, the flame from the cannon affording a tempting mark. So many of the gunners were disabled that two of the pieces were silenced, and an infantry detail became necessary in working the other guns. The shouts of the Confederates to pick off the artillerists could be plainly heard. Lieutenant Geary of the battery, a son of the general, was killed. He had sighted a gun, and as he gave the command to fire he fell dead with a bullet through his forehead. Captain Atwell fell mortally wounded soon after; but the heroic gunners stuck to their work.

The fiercest attack was made against the One Hundred and Thirty-seventh New York and One Hundred and Eleventh Pennsylvania, and the steadiness of these veteran regiments contributed materially to the defeat of the enemy. Toward the close of the action there was a scarcity of ammunition in these regiments, and many of the soldiers were obliged to get cartridges from the boxes of their fallen comrades. The four guns of the battery fired in all 224 rounds. At three a. m., after two hours or more of continuous fighting, the Confederates abandoned the attack and disappeared in the darkness, leaving many of their dead and wounded on the field.

The Union losses were:

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Aggregate.
Staff, - - - - -	-	4	-	4
78th New York, - - - - -	-	2	-	2
137th New York, - - - - -	15	75	-	90
149th New York, - - - - -	1	11	-	12
29th Pennsylvania, - - - - -	1	6	2	9
109th Pennsylvania, - - - - -	5	23	4	32
111th Pennsylvania, - - - - -	9	34	2	45
Knap's (Pennsylvania) Battery, -	3	19	-	22
Total, - - - - -	34	174	8	216

Major Boyle, of the One Hundred and Eleventh Pennsylvania, was killed, and General Greene was seriously wounded by a bullet that passed through his upper jaw, disabling him completely.

The casualties in the Confederate troops, as officially reported by regiments, amounted to 31 killed, 286 wounded, and 39 captured

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or missing; total, 356. Colonel Kilpatrick, of the First South Carolina, was killed, "shot through the heart early in the engagement."

The battle over, the soldiers busied themselves until morning searching in the darkness for their wounded comrades, and in fortifying their position against further attack. Captain Collins, in his history of the One Hundred and Forty-ninth New York, says: "When the rays of the rising sun came over Lookout Mountain they fell with a mellow light upon the tall and portly form of General Geary, standing with bowed head on the summit of the knoll, while before him lay the lifeless form of a lieutenant of artillery. Scattered about were cannon, battered and bullet-marked caissons and limbers, and many teams of horses dead in harness. There were many other dead, but none attracted his attention save this one, for he was his son. The men, respecting his sorrow, stood at a distance in silence, while he communed with his grief."*

When General Hooker heard the firing at Wauhatchie he ordered the Eleventh Corps under arms, and directed a portion of it to march to Geary's relief. Two brigades moved up the valley road to Wauhatchie, but they did not arrive there until five-thirty a. m., two hours after the fight had ended. In the meantime Col. Orland Smith's Brigade of the Eleventh Corps attacked the hill near the Ellis house, which was held by Law and Robertson, and drove the Confederates from this position.

The casualties in the fighting on the night of October twenty-eighth were:

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Aggregate.
Eleventh Corps, - - - - -	45	150	9	204
Twelfth Corps, - - - - -	33	177	6	216
Total, - - - - -	78	327	15	420

In addition, the Western troops in their operations at Brown's Ferry, October twenty-seventh, lost four killed and seventeen wounded.

* Gen. John White Geary was born in Westmoreland Co., Pa., Dec. 30, 1819. Served in Mexican war as colonel, 2d Pa. Vols. Wounded at Chapultepec. First mayor of San Francisco (1850), and territorial governor of Kansas in 1856. At the outbreak of the Civil War he raised the 28th Pa. Vols. and went to the front as its colonel. Commissioned brig. gen. April 25, 1862; brevetted maj. gen. in 1865. Elected governor of Pa. in 1866. Died at Harrisburg, Pa., Feb. 8, 1873.

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The failure of General Bragg to drive Hooker out of Lookout Valley enabled Thomas to maintain communication with Bridgeport, and relieve his starving army. The "cracker line," as his soldiers called it, was open again. The Confederates still held Lookout Mountain in force, and hence the railroad and highway at its northern point remained in the enemy's hands. But, owing to the loop in the river, Brown's Ferry was only four miles from Chattanooga, and steamboats could ascend the stream to this point unmolested, while the wagon road by way of this ferry was now free all the way to Bridgeport.

The battle of Wauhatchie was a brilliant affair, to say nothing of the important results gained by it. General Thomas was a man of few words, not given to flattery, or the bestowal of unmerited praise. Hence, it is well to note the strong words in his General Order, No. 265, wherein he describes the fighting done by the commands of Geary and Smith, and adds that it "will rank among the most distinguished feats of arms of this war."

Lookout Mountain.

In October, 1863, the War Department issued an order creating the Military Division of the Mississippi, composed of the Department of the Ohio, the Cumberland and the Tennessee, the command of which was given to General Grant. On receiving notice of this appointment he proceeded immediately to Chattanooga to acquaint himself with the condition of affairs in that Department, and after a few days he established his headquarters there. The battle of Wauhatchie having solved the question of supplies he decided on an offensive movement, planning a battle that would either destroy Bragg's army or drive it southward into Georgia, and, at the same time, relieve Burnside, who was besieged at Knoxville. To this end he ordered the Army of the Tennessee, under General Sherman, to move from Memphis to Chattanooga to reinforce the Army of the Cumberland. Sherman, with three divisions of the Fifteenth Corps and one of the Seventeenth, arrived at Lookout Valley on November twenty-second, where the Confederates, from their eyrie on Point Lookout, could watch the long columns and wagon trains as they moved on toward Chattanooga.

The Fourth and Fourteenth corps, of the Army of the Cumber-