

## **Grant and Sherman Continue Their Advance**

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The bloody fighting in Virginia and Georgia continued, as the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia confronted each other in the third week of the Overland Campaign, while William Sherman and Joseph Johnston's armies maneuvered through the mountains of north Georgia. Following the ferocious fighting around the Mule Shoe salient during the previous week, the opposing forces warily faced each other near Spotsylvania during several days in which no significant combat took place. That changed on May 18, when General Grant ordered another major assault against the entrenchments of Robert E. Lee's battered force. Federal corps under Winfield Hancock and Horatio Wright struck the Confederate left, while Ambrose Burnside's Ninth Corps, not part of the Army of the Potomac but operating alongside it in an awkward command structure, attacked the rebel right. Lee's new line of earthworks held and the Federals were repulsed. Grant ordered his forces to extend further to their left, in an effort to turn Lee's right flank. The following day, Lee sent out a portion of Richard Ewell's Corps in an effort to ascertain Union intentions, but by the end of the day after some heavy fighting the rebels returned to their positions.

Grant had in fact determined to move his force on a broad sweep around the Confederate right. This enabled the Federals to maintain their supply and communication lines along the various rivers of eastern Virginia. Swinging first eastward and then to the south, Grant's next objective was Hanover Junction, just south of the North Anna River and where the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac and the Virginia Central Railroads intersected. Having the advantages of interior lines, Lee's army reached Hanover Junction on May 22 ahead of the Federals. Upon his arrival, Grant established a position along the north bank of the North Anna,

before sending part of the Fifth Corps across the river, where they were attacked by elements of A.P. Hill's Confederates at Jericho Mills. On May 24 Grant moved additional portions of his force across the North Anna. They found that Lee had established extremely strong defensive positions, with the center resting on the river and the left and right flanks swinging back in the shape of an inverted "U." Grant's army was in a dangerous position, with elements isolated on either side of Lee's force. Lee had the opportunity to strike a devastating blow against his enemy, but he fell ill and was unable to organize an assault. Consequently a major battle did not occur at North Anna, and Grant soon decided once again to swing to his left in an effort to move closer to Richmond.

In north Georgia, William Sherman moved his three armies farther southward after forcing Joseph Johnston's Army of Tennessee out of Resaca. On May 18, elements of Sherman's command skirmished with the retreating Confederates at Adairsville. The Union commander ordered his forces to then advance towards Cassville and Kingston, while one of his divisions veered to the west and captured the town of Rome after some fighting. Sherman believed that most of the Confederates had withdrawn towards Kingston, but in fact Johnston had laid a trap with a portion of his army at Cassville. Unfortunately for the rebels, a small force of Union cavalry discovered the southern position, causing General John Bell Hood, with the element of surprise lost, to withdraw. After some fighting near Kingston, Johnston ordered his army to retreat yet again, this time to a defensive position at Allatoona Pass. Rather than attack in such mountainous terrain, Sherman moved his three armies on a swing to the west towards the town of Dallas, abandoning his previous line of march along the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Johnston initially kept part of the Army of Tennessee at Allatoona Pass to guard the railroad,

while moving the remainder to the west to an area south of Dallas near New Hope. There the Confederates established defensive positions and waited for the next battle in this long campaign.