

## **The Grip of Federal Armies Tightens**

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The first day of this week, August 31<sup>st</sup>, found George B. McClellan nominated as the candidate for President of the United States. His Vice Presidential candidate was George H. Pendleton. In the Western Theater two corps of Hood's Confederate army attacked the fortified positions near Jonesborough, located south of Atlanta. The Confederate casualties outnumbered Federalist 10:1 after the attack was repelled. General Sherman successfully cut off Hood's army, by dismantling the Jonesborough railway and subsequently ordered Slocum to enter Atlanta at nightfall. The most important objective appeared to be Atlanta, however any chaos that could be caused by Sherman's armies was always welcome. On Thursday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, the citizens of Atlanta were ordered to evacuate. Fearing encirclement, Hood ordered his troops to evacuate the city as Sherman's grip tightened around this important southern citadel. Fighting broke out near the burning city, and again in Jonesborough, with the Confederates taking major casualties.

By Friday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, news had reached Washington of Sherman's capture of the city. Some minor fighting broke out near Lovejoy's Station south of the city. A brief break from combat allowed the Confederates to regroup and strategize, but without the manpower to mount a profitable offensive, the situation boiled down to an inevitable defeat for the crippled Confederates. On the same day, a major development took place in the Shenandoah Valley. General Sheridan, the strong Federal Cavalry Commander, was organizing his army with the objective of sweeping through the region and devastated the countryside.

The next day Sheridan had mobilized his forces and set out towards Berryville to confront Confederate General Early's deflated army. Simultaneously, R.H. Anderson's corps

left the Confederate capital of Richmond to assist General Early. During Anderson's march, a completely unexpected confrontation occurred and fighting broke out. This was the moment when both Federalists and Confederates realized that further military action in the region was imminent and would be continual. General Lee, still defending Petersburg, looked at this Union campaign very closely and was afraid that, should the Federalists not be stopped, the capital, Richmond, could be taken.

September 4<sup>th</sup>, Sunday, saw the death of John Hunt Morgan. Morgan was one of the most famous cavalry "officers" of the Confederacy. His raids had become infamous among Union forces, most notably "Morgan's Raid", which involved a group of cavalry travelling over 1,000 miles, resulting in the capture and parole of hundreds of Union soldiers. Ironically, the death of General Morgan was a surprise attack by Union forces. He was shot in the back while trying to escape from the attackers. The death of John Hunt Morgan was a major blow to Confederate morale. More developments in the Shenandoah included a full retreat by Early's army after a series of battles. Early became overwhelmed by Sheridan's advance and elected to retreat, regroup and strategize. This blunder was an embarrassment for the Confederates, who desperately needed to define this area. The overwhelming numbers of Union soldiers proved to be a troublesome obstacle to utilizing the supplies of this confederate region.

Monday and Tuesday, September 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, was quiet in each theater. At this time, action in Charleston, Atlanta, northern Virginia and the deep south was minor. The Shenandoah region was developing into a game of cat and mouse, with Gen. Early and Sheridan attempting to outmaneuver the other. The outcome of the war could depend on the results.