

Ed Vernon Memoir

Atlanta & March to the Sea
By Sergeant Edward Spencer Vernon
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After the city fell into our hands it was made a military depot, all the inhabitants were ordered either north or south, about an equal number going each way. Nothing but the tramp of the soldiers was heard by night or day, in the shattered, bullet-riddled and desolate city.

The rebel Genl. Hood feeling sore over the loss of Atlanta, determined upon a bold move that would again give him possession of the city. He therefore decided to march his whole army into Tennessee, cutting Sherman's communications on his way, destroying all his depot of supplies, and thus compelling Sherman to leave Atlanta and follow him into Tennessee. This was just what Sherman desired and he moved after him with the 4, 14, 15 & 17 corps and drove him as far north as suited his purposes in making the grand raid through Georgia.

When he had driven Hood beyond harms way, he returned to Atlanta and made all haste to put his army in readiness for the march to the sea. On the morning of the 15th of Nov. the army marched and all the business part of the city was destroyed being set on fire, it was left to the mercy of the flames. No one was left to oppose them or check the wide spreading ruin. There has been nothing like it in the history of the world. A city deserted by every inhabitant, the angry flames leaping heavenward and from building to building, rejoicing in their mad reign. Where man and happiness on dwelt in fond embrace.

Considered as a spectacle, the march of Genl Sherman's army surpassed in some respects all marches in history. The flames of a city lighted its beginning, desolation, which in one sense is sublime, marked its progress to the sea. Its end was beautiful possession, a city spared from doom, underneath smiling skies cooled by air balmy as the breath of a northern summer. The Army of the West slowly transforming itself into an Army of the East, moved from sunset to sunrise, through a territory rich in all things, though claimed to be so poor that the enemy could not feed the poor starving prisoners at Andersonville, but the Yanks found food in the garden, food in cellars, stock in fields, stock in barns, poultry everywhere, appeared in the distance disappeared in the presence and was borne away upon the knapsack and bayonets of thousands of soldiers.

A new Eldorado too was this heart of the South. Money, bright gold, shining silver, plucked from clothes and burial places by the road side enriched the invaders.

Jokes, laughter, and songs, and the tasting of the sweet of honey and [unreadable] the weary tramp, tramp over fields, roads, and bridges.

This brief memoir was written by ES Vernon sometime after the Civil War, probably around 1914. It was transcribed from a photocopy of the original handwritten letter by Paul Vernon, Edward's g2grandson.