

## CHAPTER IV

### CHICKASAW BAYOU

**F**OR ages and ages, water, ceaselessly streaming, ceaselessly seeping, through and over the calcareous silt, had furrowed the region until now there was a medley and labyrinth of narrow ravines and knife-blade ridges. Where the low grounds opened out it was apparently only that they might accommodate bayous, or some extension of a bayou, called by courtesy a lake. Along these the cane was thick, and backward from the cane rose trees and trees and trees, all draped with Spanish moss. It had been a rainy winter, a winter of broken banks and slow, flooding waters. Sloughs strayed through the forest; there was black mire around cypress and magnolia and oak. The growth in the ravines was dense, that upon the ridges only less so. From Vicksburg, northward for several miles, great clearings had recently been made. Here, from the Upper Batteries above the town to Haynes Bluff on the Yazoo, stretched grey field-works, connected by rifle-pits.

Chickasaw Bayou, sullen and swollen, curved away from the scarped hills and the strip of forest. On the other side of Chickasaw, and of that width of it known as McNutt's Lake, there was shaking ground — level enough, but sodden, duskily overgrown, and difficult. This stretched to the Yazoo.

Down the Mississippi from Memphis came Sherman with thirty thousand blue infantry. They came in transports, in four flotillas, and in front went Porter's Gunboat Squadron. Grant had planned the campaign. With the forces which had been occupying southwestern Tennessee, he himself was at Oxford. He would operate by land, overwhelming or holding in check Pemberton's eighteen thousand at Grenada. In the mean time Sherman, descending the Mississippi to the mouth of the Yazoo, some miles above Vicksburg and its river batteries, should ascend that stream, flowing as it did not far to the northward of the doomed town; — ascend the Yazoo, disembark the thirty thousand, and with a sudden push take Vicks-