February 8th, on the march westward to Baldwin and Lake City. This movement culminated on February 20th, in the famous battle of Olustee, or Ocean Pond, where General Seymour was defeated by the Confederates under Generals Colquitt and Finegan. Thus it seems that two clauses of General Gillmore's plans, namely 2d and 4th, were practically annulled in the very beginning, General Seymour having reported a day or so before that "I am convinced that what has been said of the desire of Florida to come back now is a delusion."

After its defeat at Olustee, the Federal army returned to Jacksonville. The churches and some of the largest houses were used as temporary hospitals. The floors were strewn with hay and on this the wounded soldiers were placed in rows, white and black side by side, as they were brought in from the front.

Fortifications were erected to strengthen the town against attack, and soon the arrival of reinforcements brought General Seymour's army up to 12,000 men, splendidly equipped in every department. Among these troops were six negro regiments.

The Confederate forces on February 26th occupied a position on McGirts Creek at a point where the wagon road and the railroad crossed the creek, ten or twelve miles west of Jacksonville. They were now under the command of General W. M. Gardner, who, outranking General Finegan, took command after the battle of Olustee. Breastworks and stockades were erected at McGirts Creek, the post being named Camp Milton. Afterward, when the Confederates abandoned these works, the Federal officers spoke of them as magnificently constructed fortifications, beautiful in detail. March 6th, General J. Patton Anderson assumed command of the Confederate army near Jacksonville. At that time it numbered about 8,000 men, some of them poorly equipped.

On March 1, 1864, General Henry (U. S. A.), with 500 cavalry and 2 pieces of artillery, left Jacksonville for the purpose of making a reconnaissance in the direction of Camp Milton. The movement developed into quite a skirmish at Cedar Creek, six miles west of Jacksonville, lasting from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. The Federal loss was one killed, four