













Great Commanders

*EDITED BY JAMES GRANT WILSON*

GENERAL HANCOCK

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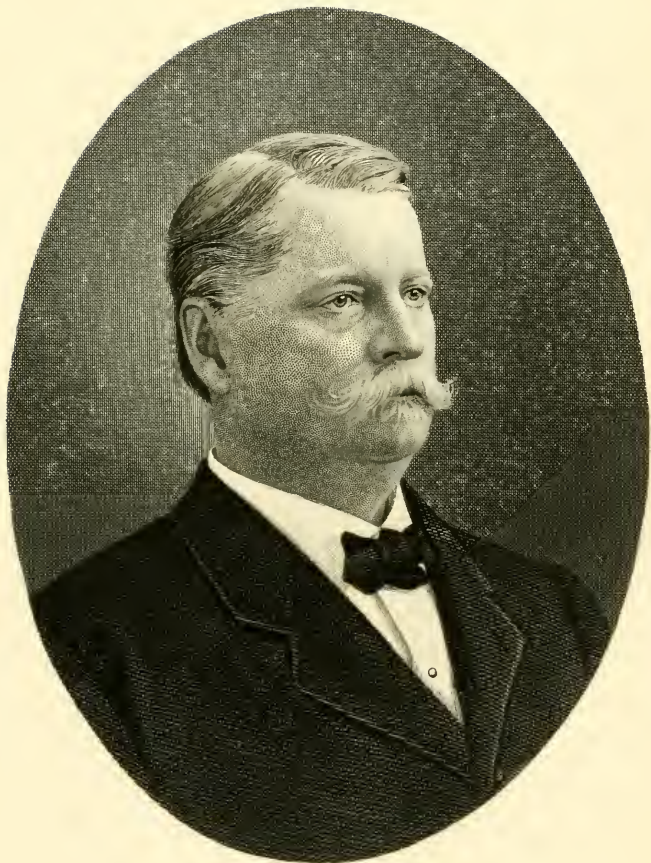
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Mr. A. Hancock

GREAT COMMANDERS ✓ 116

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# GENERAL HANCOCK

BY ✓

GENERAL FRANCIS A. WALKER

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1894

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## PREFACE.

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IN writing this life of General Hancock I have, with the kind permission of the Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons, drawn freely, as occasion required, from my History of the Second Army Corps, published by that house in 1887. In the same spirit, I have introduced some paragraphs taken from my paper on General Hancock, read before the New York Commandery of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion in February, 1891, and from my address on General Sheridan, delivered before the City Government of Boston in December, 1888. I have also made use here, as in the History of the Second Corps, of the manuscript narrative of General Charles H. Morgan, long inspector general and chief of the corps staff.

I most painfully regret the indifference, if not aversion which for years after the war I felt toward all that related to the incidents of the great struggle. As in the case of most soldiers, I suppose, everything that brought back those days and nights of suffering and anxiety was unwelcome, and material which would now be of priceless value was

neglected and scattered. When, in 1882, I took seriously up the task of writing the History of the Second Army Corps, many whose personal recollections would have enabled me not merely to speak with confidence of occurrences, dates, and order of events, but to give life and motion to the story, had died from the effects of hardships, privations, and wounds. Even during the four years devoted to that work scores of the most valued officers concerned with those great achievements, including three of the commanders of the corps, passed away, carrying with them knowledge never to be regained. And now, as I undertake to write this life of Hancock I have daily to grieve that it is beyond my power to ask this question and that question of Hancock himself, of Morgan, of Mitchell, of Wilson, of Parker, the briefest answer to which might serve to solve a difficulty or to cast a flood of light over what seems dark and inexplicable. It was probably in the nature of the case; but, oh, the pity! that the first years of peace were not taken to put down the personal experiences of hundreds of commanding and staff officers; to collate and compare the recollections of thousands of participants in the mighty struggle; and thus to give to those who shall come after us abundant material for a true and vivid history of the Civil War.

F. A. W.

*September, 1894.*

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## GENERAL HANCOCK.

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### INTRODUCTION.

It has often been remarked that, as a war recedes further and further into distance, the popular mind more and more comes to attribute to one commanding character the whole glory of the achievements of the victorious army. Little by little the lesser figures fade out of the picture, until, to the common sight, the army becomes only the extension of one man, whose intellect and will did not merely control, but create, the forces which he moved with such effect. In this there is much of justice, for in many wars the successful leader, whom fame thus selects for immortality, actually did, by his genius, bring into existence all that was above the commonplace—was, in effect, his whole army, in all that compelled victory. He had, indeed, capable and efficient lieutenants to execute his plans and to lead the wings of his battle line ; regiments, brigades, and divisions were officered by men who in many actions received deserved praise ; while the rank and file were in their place brave, loyal, and enduring. Yet it still remains

true that the general was the army, and the whole of it, in this sense : first, that had the army, good as it was, been given into the hands of a soldier less masterful, it would, in the situation existing, have been beaten ; secondly, that had the commander been given an army far less fortunately composed and officered, he would, before the end, have shaped and tempered it until it was fit for victory.

But it is not alone in respect to wars where, in this high sense, the leader was his own army, and by himself achieved the triumph, that the popular mind passes through the change we have indicated, gradually losing sight of the subordinate characters of the contest, and finally attributing all merit to one man. The same result is often seen where its justice can fairly be impeached by the student of military history, and where it contradicts the best contemporary opinion of the army and the people concerned. Hardly more rapid is the transference of the virtues of the soldiery and the subordinate commanders to him who finally won the victory, in cases where sound criticism confirms the justice of the act, than in cases where it is known to the historical scholar, where it was well known to the people of the time, that great substantive portions of the work were performed by soldiers of original and independent genius, perhaps by men who long disputed the first rank. Nay, that result is scarcely less likely to be reached, even in instances where it

was but an open secret to the army and the men of the time, that the successful leader owed all to some devoted staff officer or officers, some exceptionally gifted yet unambitious lieutenant or lieutenants who braced him around, supplied his deficiencies of thought or temper, inspired him with fresh determination when he faltered, suggested the one possible path out of seeming destruction, or pointed to the cardinal manœuvre of the impending conflict which should turn the scale of battle. In a word, whether for justice or for injustice, the popular mind is almost certain, as a war recedes into distance, to pass through the change indicated.

But while the tendency exists and operates continuously to bestow upon the one successful leader of a great war the entire praise for all that was done by his soldiery and his subordinate commanders, there is, in a single respect, a tendency which works in the opposite direction. One would not wish to say that even this exception always supplies a correction of the verdict of posterity where that verdict is most erroneous, for it must be confessed that the exception itself may be lightly made—is, in fact, often the result of mere popular favor, or is due to adventitious circumstances, sometimes to considerations little worthy of respect.

The exception to which I refer is that by which, in regard to most wars which attract considerable attention, some one general of division or com-

mander of an army corps is selected for a popular hero, largely by virtue of peculiarly taking qualities, of conspicuous dash and martial spirit, of a figure romantic or heroic in a degree which captivates the public fancy. Thus, while the world attributes more and more to Napoleon the credit of all that was done in those great wars against half Europe, and the stars of Moreau and Kleber, Massena and Lannes, sink ever nearer and nearer the horizon, the fame of Michel Ney receives only added luster with time. Thus, while many an American to-day fails to recognize the name of Nathanael Greene, the picturesque figures of Israel Putnam and Anthony Wayne are scarcely less conspicuous than they were in the first years after the Revolution. The highly and severely intellectual character of the great commander's office rather repels than attracts the admiration of many minds. The truly popular hero should be one somewhat below the highest, to whom men can draw closer than they can to the chief, who through the long vigils of the night plans in his tent the action of the coming day, revolving all the chances of an adverse fortune, receiving by booted and spurred messengers the last word from the skirmish line, and issuing orders with the punctilio of a secretary of state. Men love, rather, to think of the daring leader of corps or division who, in executing those orders, forms in the darkness the dense column of assault, or dashes

along the very front of raging battle, the inspiration of every soldier, the incarnate genius of war.

These remarks are appropriate to the place of the subject of this memoir among the illustrious soldiers who have been taken for the purposes of the present series. Of them all, Hancock was the only one who never had a separate command. All the others, perhaps through most of the campaigns to which they owe their fame, exercised the full authority, bore the whole responsibility, of men intrusted with the destiny of armies. It was, therefore, to the justness of their military conceptions, and to the skill and care and pains with which their plans were worked out, that their reputation was mainly due, though something must be allowed for personal bearing and influence, something also for fortune. Hancock, on the other hand, though he often conducted expeditions of a corps or of two corps, out from one or the other flank of the Potomac army, always did his work in execution of orders as precise as the situation allowed, never far beyond the reach of messengers from general headquarters, often under the very eye of the commander in chief. In the actions which contributed most largely to his fame he commanded a corps, or a wing of a line of battle, under the immediate authority and direction of a superior officer. It is, therefore, to the love soldiers bear toward a daring and brilliant subordinate, and to the delight the

popular mind feels in contemplating the heroic and romantic qualities in war, that Hancock owes the fame which has given him a place in the present series. That—if any one not the commander of a separate army is to be taken for such a purpose—Hancock is entitled to the honor, few will deny. His rightful pre-eminence among all the corps commanders of the Union army in the great war of secession can not be better stated than in the words of General Grant :

“ Hancock stands the most conspicuous figure of all the general officers who did not exercise a separate command. He commanded a corps longer than any other one, and his name was never mentioned as having committed in battle a blunder for which he was responsible. He was a man of very conspicuous personal appearance. Tall, well formed, and, at the time of which I now write, young and fresh-looking, he presented an appearance which would have attracted the attention of an army as he passed. His genial disposition made him friends, and his personal courage and his presence with his command in the thickest of the fight won for him the confidence of troops serving under him.” — *Grant's Personal Memoirs, vol. ii, page 539.*



## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND EDUCATION.

WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK was one of twin brothers, born February 14, 1824, to Benjamin Franklin and Elizabeth Hancock, then resident in the village known as Montgomery Square, in Montgomery County, Pa. The name of the county is popularly reputed to have been given in honor of the patriot general who fell in the assault on Quebec in 1775. In some notes now lying under my hand, however, General Hancock suggests that the name may have been derived from Montgomeryshire in Wales, many of the early settlers of the Pennsylvania shire having been of Welsh origin, as other well-known names besides that of Merion testify.

Benjamin Franklin Hancock had been born in Philadelphia in 1800; his father, Richard, an Englishman; his mother, Ann Maria Nash, a Scotch woman. His wife, Elizabeth Hoxworth, a native of Montgomery County, was of English and Welsh ancestry. The name was originally Hawkesworth. Members of that family had served in the French and Indian wars, in the Revolutionary army, and in

the War of 1812. After his marriage, Benjamin Hancock supported himself by public teaching, until he was admitted to the bar in 1828, upon which he removed with his wife and his twin sons to Norristown, in the same county. Here another son was born to him, and here the family continued to reside until it was dissolved by death, Mr. Hancock passing away in 1867, Mrs. Hancock in 1879. Benjamin Hancock was a man of a noble presence, fair, tall, and strong, like his illustrious son; dignified and courteous in bearing, honorable and faithful alike in private and in professional relations. He took an active part in the affairs of the community, and throughout his life commanded the affection and the respect of his fellow-citizens.

It hardly needs to be said of such a man as Winfield Scott Hancock became, that in boyhood he was spirited, energetic, honorable, and a leader among his playmates and schoolmates. The reader will doubtless be thankful for being spared the incidents which are sure to be related of any one risen to high distinction. With intelligent and cultivated parents, one of whom had for years been engaged in teaching, and with excellent schools at hand in the thriving borough which held the family home, a lad of young Hancock's intellectual activity and ambition could not fail to secure a sound and thorough elementary training. The region in which he was brought up was one of the loveliest of Pennsylvania. All influ-

ences, alike those of the family, of the community, and of the school, concurred in giving a full and harmonious development to his excellent natural powers of body and of mind.

I have spoken of Hancock's intellectual activity and ambition. I would not be understood as attributing to him a lofty intellectuality such as might, in a different career, have made him a leader of thought or speculation. He was, in the main bent of his nature, meant for action and for command. But all that we hear of his childhood and his youth shows that he had a strong and constant desire to distinguish himself. He took a prominent part in the debates of his school and of a small literary and philosophical club composed of the boys of the village. He was fond of the society of his elders, and listened eagerly to the discussion of political issues. At the age of fifteen he was selected to read the Declaration of Independence to his fellow-townsmen on the 4th of July. It is related that, even four years earlier, he had taken a great interest in politics, and on the setting up of a new Democratic newspaper in Norristown, in which his father had some share, entered the office as a volunteer compositor. It is clear that, had he not become a soldier, he would have been a keen politician, one who would have had to be reckoned with in the affairs of his State and perhaps of the nation. Indeed, though Hancock was one of the most soldierly men that

ever lived, he was always something of a politician, in the sense that authority was exercised by him with tact and with a great deal of diplomacy. No man ever cultivated his personal and professional relations more carefully, or had a livelier sense of the virtue of courtesy, conciliation, and considerateness in the use of power.

While still in school, at home, some native stirrings of martial spirit, quickened doubtless by the fact that he had been christened with the name of America's greatest living soldier, led him to organize a military company among his playmates, of which he became captain and at the head of which he paraded on the recurring festival of the nation. Many a boy has done as much who in after life was well contented with the avocations of peace; but those who have seen Hancock commanding an army corps with such delight in the exercise of authority, such a keen zest in military manœuvres, may be excused for thinking that this boyish soldiering here meant something more than usual.

At the age of sixteen the personal kindness of the member of Congress from the Montgomery district made the choice between politician and soldier; and in 1840 Hancock entered West Point as a cadet. He was afterward accustomed to express himself as feeling that this early entrance upon severe professional training was unfortunate. Many a lad is mature enough at sixteen to take up such studies and

exercises as those which characterize our noble Military Academy ; but Hancock at this age was but half grown. His large frame and powerful physique, his unfailing flow of animal spirits, and his impulsive disposition required a longer period of development in the preparatory stage. The severity of the requirements at West Point at this time may be judged from the fact that, although his class numbered nearly one hundred at the start, it was reduced at the end of the first year to fifty-four, of whom only twenty-five finally graduated.

Among Hancock's contemporaries at West Point were many afterward highly distinguished in the war. In the class directly above his own—that of 1843—were Grant, Franklin, J. J. Reynolds, Augur, Ingalls, Hamilton, J. J. Peck, and Fred Steele. In the class next below his own—that of 1845—were Fitz John Porter, Hatch, Davidson, Sackett, Gordon Granger, Clitz, David A. Russell, Thomas J. Wood, William F. Smith, Charles P. Stone ; and of those who joined the Confederacy, W. H. C. Whiting. In the class of 1846 were McClellan, J. G. Foster, Reno, Couch, Sturgis, Seymour, Stoneman, James B. Fry, Gibbs, G. H. Gordon, Innis H. Palmer ; and of Confederates, Maxey, Wilcox, Pickett, and D. H. Maury. His own class—that of 1844—contained few men destined to become of note. The class was very small, graduating, as stated, only twenty-five ; and these were subjected to an extraordinary number of

fatalities. Five of the twenty-five—a truly remarkable proportion—were killed in the war with Mexico within four years of their graduation. Five more died before the rebellion broke out. Six resigned before the war, and remained thereafter in civil life, of whom but one became distinguished. This was W. G. Peck, who recently died while professor of mathematics at Columbia College. Three resigned before the war, but entered the Confederate service, of whom but one—General and Governor Buckner, of Kentucky—attained high rank. One had been dismissed from the service before the rebellion. This left but five in the army in 1861. Of these, one was discharged on account of disability in 1863; another, the gallant General Alexander Hays, was killed in the Wilderness, May 5, 1864; the remaining three served through the war, Hancock and Pleasonton alone attaining conspicuous positions. Of all the members of the class of 1844 but three are living as I write—Buckner, Frost, and Pleasonton. With many of his classmates and contemporaries Hancock formed a close intimacy, being himself cordial, frank, and companionable. In scholarly rank he had not much to boast of, graduating number eighteen in a class of twenty-five. Hancock's record, as furnished me by Colonel John M. Wilson, Corps of Engineers, recently commanding the Military Academy, may be of interest :

## WINFIELD SCOTT HANCOCK, OF PENNSYLVANIA.

*Entered July 1, 1840, aged sixteen years, four months ; graduated  
June, 1844.*

FOURTH CLASS, JUNE, 1841 (54 members).	SECOND CLASS, JUNE, 1843 (34 members).
General standing..... 32	General standing..... 18
Mathematics..... 34	Philosophy..... 23
French..... 34	Chemistry..... 18
Number of demerits..... 85	Drawing..... 5
	Number of demerits..... 36
THIRD CLASS, JUNE, 1842 (44 members).	FIRST CLASS, JUNE, 1844 (25 members).
General standing..... 35	General standing..... 18
Mathematics..... 36	Engineering..... 20
French..... 33	Ethics..... 11
Drawing..... 7	Infantry tactics..... 6
Rhetoric, grammar, and geography..... 38	Artillery tactics..... 11
Number of demerits..... 140	Mineralogy and geology.... 9
	Number of demerits..... 46

In all military exercises Hancock excelled, and he showed marked aptitude for the routine of cadet life, qualified by a certain liking in the earlier years of the course for boyish escapades. The records of the Academy do not show that, while a cadet, he ever held the appointment of corporal or sergeant, but do show that he was appointed on the 23d of June, 1843, a cadet lieutenant, tenth in order of rank. The foregoing table shows that while his general average was far from high, he did well in drawing, in tactics, in natural history, and in ethics. The number of demerits, which appears somewhat

formidable for the first half of his course, falls off markedly during the last half.

Kent's Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States at this time formed a part of the course at West Point. To these, at his father's request, he added the reading, six times through, of Chitty's Blackstone, with the study of a law glossary. In a note under my hand General Hancock explains his father's wish by the remark, "In fact, he intended me finally to become a lawyer." Resignations from the army soon after graduation from the Military Academy were in this period very common. I have already stated that nine of Hancock's small class did so resign, while to any one at all familiar with the history of the war the names of Grant, Sherman, McClellan, Hooker, Burnside, "Stonewall" Jackson, and many others, will readily occur as among those who in other classes left the service for civil careers which were interrupted by the outbreak of the rebellion.

Doubtless it was to the course of extra reading referred to, combined with the strong political bias acquired in his childhood, that Hancock owed that interest in matters of government and law which led him to take up so actively the question of the rights of citizens in the seceding States during his administration of the military district comprising Louisiana and Texas, in 1867-'68. Those who held strongly by the reconstruction acts, and hence disapproved



General Hancock's course at this time, were much disposed to look upon his measures and reports merely as a political "card," played by an ambitious officer; but those who had known him long were well aware that he was always fond of discussions regarding the powers of the General Government, and maintained opinions on the subject of a highly conservative character.

## CHAPTER II.

### DOWN TO THE GREAT REBELLION.

IT has been shown that Hancock's career at West Point was in no sense distinguished. He was as far as possible from being one of those prodigies who, appearing every now and then in college or academy, command, often in an absurd degree, the admiration of their fellows, and arouse expectations of a general conflagration when once they shall get into the world. Nor was this failure of Hancock to attract special attention during his undergraduate life due to diffidence or modesty or early disadvantages on his part, or to adverse conditions in the Academy, or to envy or jealousy on the part of his comrades. The fact is, there was no reason at all why Hancock should make a mark at West Point. The qualities which, in their degrees and proportions, made him eminently powerful and successful as a corps or wing commander were not those which would give academic distinction; while the bigness of the plan on which he was cut out, though not as yet made up, and his youth and comparative immaturity upon entrance, caused his career to be, on the whole,

rather less than more conspicuous than might have been conjectured from his subsequent achievements.

And again, although the young soldier was soon to be brought into the midst of stirring events, and was to be given an opportunity to show his mettle, under the eyes of great captains, in great and memorable actions, he was not destined to win early renown. We shall not truly appreciate Hancock if we fail to see that he was not of that kind. His ultimate success was to be pre-eminently through character, which in a subaltern affords small ground for distinction, and through training, which requires years of experience in petty duties and small commands.

Graduating from the Academy on June 30th, Hancock was, on the 1st of July, 1844, brevetted second lieutenant in the Sixth Infantry. The company to which he was assigned was then stationed at Fort Towson, in the Indian country, near the Red River and the Texan border. The region abounded in the noblest of game, and the officers of the army posts were quite as much occupied in the pursuit of it as in regimental work. Hancock was a keen sportsman, and the exhilarating life of the two years spent here were admirably suited to bring out the spirit of the man and fill up his frame. On the 18th of June, 1846, he received his commission as second lieutenant, and was assigned to a company of the Sixth, then stationed on the borders of Mexico, where war was impending. But

his progress to the front was destined to be long delayed. First the commanding officer at Fort Washita, deeming his services necessary at his post, refused to allow him to join his company. Then he was sent to Fort Scott, on the Missouri frontier, and afterward to Cincinnati, to assist in mustering in volunteers. It was not until Taylor's army had overrun northern Mexico, fighting the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey, and Buena Vista, and Scott with his column had captured Vera Cruz and had fought the battle of Cerro Gordo on his victorious march up the valley of Mexico, that the young lieutenant was, in consequence of his urgent petition, permitted to go into the field. Landing at Vera Cruz, he was assigned to duty with a command composed of fourteen companies of infantry, from various regiments, under Colonel Milledge L. Bonham, forming a part of the command of General (afterward President) Pierce, which was to be thrown forward to re-enforce Scott. The march of this column was accomplished without formidable resistance, though not without much annoyance from parties of guerrillas, which beset the road and seized every opportunity to harass the troops and cut off stragglers, couriers, and convoys. Hancock came frequently under fire; and at the National Bridge, August 12th, he commanded a company which took part in dislodging a considerable body of the enemy who had fortified the heights and in-

flicted no small loss upon our troops. On arriving at Puebla, Hancock joined his own regiment. The army of invasion, thus re-enforced, resumed its forward movement, nearly eleven thousand strong. The enterprise, fortitude, and composure with which that perilous march to the Mexican capital was conducted by the lionlike chieftain against vast odds can never be too highly applauded; but this narrative does not call for any account of the strategy of the campaign, or any description of Scott's splendid victories.

Regarding the young officer, youngest of the lieutenants of his regiment, whose presence furnishes the only reason for here referring at all to these operations, it is enough to say that he bore himself with promptitude, energy, and courage. The captain of his company having been wounded at Churubusco, Hancock was left in command. In the column of assault at Molino del Rey, on the 8th of September, he found himself by the side of Longstreet, Pickett, Armistead, and Edward Johnson, all of whom he was to meet as enemies on other fields. It was Edward Johnson whom, with his division, he captured in the Salient, at Spottsylvania, on the 12th of May, 1864. Armistead fell within Hancock's line on the 3d of July at Gettysburg. Pickett will ever be famous as the leader of the division which was directed upon "The Clump of Trees;" while that occasion was neither

the first nor the last in which Longstreet and Hancock encountered each other as commanders of opposing forces. The adjutant of the regiment having been killed at Molino del Rey, Hancock was appointed to his place, from which he shortly afterward retired to take command of a company. He was brevetted first lieutenant for "gallant and meritorious conduct at Contreras and Churubusco," to date from August 20, 1847. In the severe battle of the 13th of September, which resulted in the occupation of the City of Mexico by our troops, Hancock was again engaged with credit. He remained in Mexico until the last division of our victorious army was withdrawn upon the conclusion of the treaty of peace. During the march to the coast he acted as regimental quartermaster and commissary. On his return to the United States he was assigned to duty as quartermaster at Fort Crawford, Prairie du Chien, Iowa, and here he remained until the spring of 1849, when he was ordered to Fort Snelling, Minn. After reaching his new post he was granted five months' leave, to enable him to visit his home in Pennsylvania, from which he had been five years absent.

It has been said that when Hancock went to the Military Academy it was his father's plan that he should, sooner or later, retire from the army, as was the fashion in those days, and take up the profession of the law. But after the stirring scenes in which the young man had been engaged during 1847-'48,

such a lame and impotent conclusion was in no man's thoughts. The real bent of his character, the most congenial employment of his powers, had become manifest beyond the possibility of mistake. By nature Hancock was a soldier, every inch of him, and he now felt it in every fiber of his being. He delighted in the exercise of authority. He enjoyed the active business of camp and the march, while, by what might almost seem a contradiction, he loved "papers," rejoicing in forms and regulations and requisitions. He had had a taste of the sterner parts of war, and he liked them. The smoke of battle had been in his nostrils, and he found it fragrant. The stir, the clash, the collision, the fierce encounter, the intense excitement of battle, the danger and the terror, suited his ardent, aggressive, martial temperament. And then he was profoundly ambitious of distinction, waking slowly to that honorable passion, but at last thoroughly possessed by it, and determined to win his way and make a name for himself in his chosen profession.

In the autumn of 1849 Hancock rejoined his regiment, of which he had been made adjutant, at St. Louis, and was soon appointed to act as aid on the staff of Brigadier-General N. S. Clark, commanding the military department which extended from the Indian country to the British possessions on the north. On the 24th of January, 1850, he was married to Miss Almira Russell, daughter of a St. Louis

merchant. The union was a happy one at the time, and remained a happy one until it was broken by death. A son, Russell Hancock, was born early in their married life. The only other child, a daughter, Ada Hancock, was born several years later, in Florida. In Missouri, either at St. Louis or at Jefferson Barracks, Hancock remained until 1855, reaching his first lieutenantcy in the Sixth Infantry, January 27, 1853. He became assistant adjutant general of the Department of the West, with headquarters at St. Louis, January 19, 1855, having by this time acquired a wide reputation for his mastery of army business and his knowledge of the regulations. He was appointed assistant quartermaster in the army, with the rank of captain, November 7, 1855, and was assigned to duty in Florida. The occasion was one which allowed the exhibition of the highest abilities in the equipment of expeditions and the supply of troops. The Seminole War had broken out in a country most difficult of access to regular troops and affording opportunity for all the artifices of savage warfare. Captain Hancock was stationed at Fort Myers, on the Caloosahatchee River, and here he displayed so much energy, foresight, care, and industry, that, when General Harney was ordered from Florida to Kansas, in consequence of the border troubles which had broken out, he applied for and obtained Hancock's transfer to the same field. In Kansas, Hancock remained on duty with the



troops in the field or at the depot until about the middle of 1858, when he set out under orders to join his regiment at the headquarters of the Department of Utah. With several officers, a train, and a small infantry escort he proceeded to Fort Bridger, accomplishing a march of more than seven hundred miles in twenty-six days. At Fort Bridger all the companies of the Sixth Infantry were united for the first time in sixteen years. Here Hancock resumed the duties of regimental quartermaster. The original destination of the regiment had been Oregon, where it was to reinforce Colonel Edward J. Steptoe's command, then engaged with the Indians; but it was now ordered to proceed to California. The difficulties of equipping the troops from such a starting point for their long and possibly perilous march of eleven hundred miles were enough to task even Hancock's abilities as quartermaster. He had to deal with half-starved animals, broken-down wagons, and limited supplies; but by the 21st of August the column was in motion, with its train of one hundred and twenty-eight wagons, directed upon the formidable and then little-known Sierras. Fortunately, no unusual snowstorms impeded the movement; and the troops and trains were finally brought into Benicia in even better condition than when they started. This result was considered at headquarters as reflecting the highest honor upon Captain Hancock. In conducting such a march Hancock was no mere wagon master, who

thinks it enough if he finally, somehow, gets his train into camp. His views of duty were always lofty; and his report to the quartermaster general, on the close of this expedition, contains a large amount of carefully selected and well-ordered information regarding the nature of the country traversed, the practicable routes of travel, the supply of water and of grass, with maps and tables of distances, which would have done credit to an engineer officer, and which bore testimony to the high conception of military service which actuated Hancock in the daily performance of duty.

After his arrival at Benicia, Hancock took a leave of absence to enable him to go East and bring back his family. Proceeding by way of Tehuantepec, he rejoined Mrs. Hancock, passing several weeks in Washington, and then set out again by the Isthmus of Panama for his post in California. Shortly after his arrival he was appointed chief quartermaster on the Pacific coast, with headquarters at Los Angeles, where he remained from May, 1859, until August, 1861. Here he was when the slow dispatches from the East brought the terrible tidings of attempted secession and flagrant rebellion. In blood and fire a new era had dawned upon the bewildered, awestruck, breathless nation. The people of eleven States had renounced their allegiance; the forces of the Union had been beaten and scattered in battle; the capital itself was threatened. The

armies that menaced it were commanded by men who had been trained in the country's service, many of them Hancock's fellow-students in the Academy, or his comrades in Mexico, Florida, and Kansas. What would come of it? What could come of it but destruction to the republic?

Whatever should come of it, there was no question in Hancock's mind as to what his part and his place would be. For him there was not a moment of hesitation or indifference as to the coming struggle. To the very center of his being he was loyal to the Constitution and the laws; and he never valued his commission in the army so highly as when it gave him a right to be in the front rank of their defenders. He knew too many who, like his friend Armistead, had reluctantly and painfully broken the main ties of their lives in taking the other side, to indulge in puerile talk about "traitors and sour apple trees." He knew too much of the Southern temper to make light of the task before the nation, or to predict a holiday parade for the Union armies; but with all his soul he stood by the Government, and never did his faith in the ultimate triumph of that cause waver, even amid disappointment, defeat, disaster, and disgrace. Indeed, I am disposed to think that in few things does popular opinion regarding the war commit a greater injustice than in disparaging the devotion of the officers of the regular army and in attributing a superior

patriotism to the volunteer. The reasons for such a notion are not far to seek. The public mind was rightfully impressed by the splendid gallantry with which the generous youth of 1861, through their own free act and choice, cut themselves off from home and friends and rallied around the flag of the Union. On the other hand, the officers of the regular army were not less naturally looked upon as accepting their posts of danger almost as a matter of business, the course of their education and their professional interests practically leaving them no choice but to fight on the one side or the other.

I believe, however, that public spirit was exceptionally strong among the officers of the regular army. They alone, of all the citizens of the United States, had been educated and bred under circumstances which made their country a constant object of regard, and which magnified and exalted every consideration relating to its honor and dignity. Those of us who remember the days before the war recall how common was the complaint that patriotism was dead; that the long reign of peace had fostered, at the best, civic virtues only; and that professional ambition and the greed of gain had dwarfed nobler and less selfish sentiments. There was in those days no instruction given regarding public affairs in the common schools, and even in most of our colleges there was no teaching of American history. The ordinary citizen of Mas-

sachusetts, of Pennsylvania, of Michigan, encountered the Government of the United States literally at the door of the post office only. Even the Fourth of July had degenerated into a mere barbaric festival of noise and boyish folly.

But the young cadet at West Point was instructed in his duties to his native land. Every morning he saw the flag of the United States run up the staff amid the discharge of artillery, and at nightfall he heard it saluted as it fell. Under that flag he performed his mimic evolutions day by day, and all his life was lived in the name of his country. His instructors were officers of the United States, many of them men who had shed their blood in the cause. How idle, then, to assume that the graduate of West Point was less imbued and instinct with patriotic sentiment than the graduate of Harvard or of Yale! And when the boy put on the dress of manhood it was the uniform of his country which he assumed. He was all his life an officer of the United States. Duty to the country became the very subject-matter of his professional career, the source, at once, and the aim, the beginning and the end, of his official life. Still, every morning the flag was saluted as it rose. Scarcely during the day did he pass out of the sight of that gay and glorious emblem of the nation's unity.

## CHAPTER III.

### WILLIAMSBURG TO ANTIETAM.

THE nation's necessity was, though in no mean sense, Hancock's opportunity. He was now to show what he went to West Point for; why he called himself a soldier; what his long years of service had qualified him to do for his country in the supreme crisis of its existence. Looking back upon the period which had elapsed since the close of the war with Mexico, any one who knew Hancock personally, and who is familiar with his career during the rebellion, must think that the service in which he had been engaged was precisely that best suited to develop the man to his highest capabilities of usefulness in the struggle which was before the nation. Absolutely destitute of asceticism, full of hearty fellowship, fond of ease and given to good cheer, his stirring ambition, his intense interest in his profession and his high standard of duty rendered those fourteen years one long term of military education. I doubt if there was an officer in the United States army who during that period—while political, social, and industrial forces were preparing the war

of secession—learned so much that was to become of use when that great occasion came. Hancock was not a man of lofty intellectuality. He had courage—fiery, enthusiastic courage; positive, active, unfaltering loyalty to country and comrade; he had industry beyond measure; the ambition that stirs to do great deeds, and be worthy of high promotion; above all, an unrest while anything remained to be done; a dissatisfaction with what was incomplete; a repugnance at all that was slovenly, clumsy, coarse, or half made up. I am disposed to believe that this period of Hancock's life was passed to even better advantage than if it had comprised active operations on the large scale against a powerful enemy. The time was to come—all too soon—when lives were to be thrown away by thousands and money by millions; when orders of infinite consequence were to be given as the result of one glance over a field as restless as the ocean after a storm; when the conjectures of an officer on the picket line were to determine the movements of twenty thousand men on the morrow. Meanwhile the future commander of the Second Army Corps, of the left wing at Gettysburg and in the Wilderness, was being trained for his high duties by conducting the orders and correspondence of a military department, fitting out expeditions of a company or a squadron, supplying outlying posts, or conducting the business of a quartermaster's depot on the plains or on the Pacific coast. To a man who

is willing to do things just so well that they will pass without censure from his superiors, caring himself only for pay-day and poker, such a scale of operations is cramping and dwarfing. To a man who is trying to do everything in the best possible way, who is studying his profession and accumulating experience against the day of larger things, nothing is more instructive, enlarging, and strengthening, if not pursued too long.

It followed that the outbreak of the war found Hancock singularly well equipped for the responsibilities and duties that were to devolve upon him. What he knew of infantry and could do with infantry let Williamsburg and Fredericksburg and Gettysburg and the Salient at Spottsylvania testify. While he was not a master of the science of logistics, like Meade and Humphreys, he could conduct a long march over bad roads, with artillery and trains, better, in my humble judgment, than any other officer of the war, Federal or Confederate. In the supply of troops, Hancock, as the result of thorough training and downright hard work, achieved almost the highest possible success. Of the uses of cavalry and artillery he knew enough—first, not to think that he knew everything, or to lead him to interfere in the conduct of those charged with these highly specialized services; and, secondly, to recognize good work whenever and by whomsoever done. General David M. Gregg, the capable commander



of the Second Cavalry Division, on one occasion remarked to me that there was no other officer of high rank in the Army of the Potomac under whom it was so agreeable to serve as under General Hancock.

Finally, Hancock's experience before the war had made him a perfect master of the Regulations, of the procedure proper to every department of the army and to every occasion of the service, and of the forms of military correspondence and record. A master, I say, not a slave; for, while no man understood better the beneficial uses of red tape, no one knew better how to cut red tape when the occasion required. An essayist—Lord Macaulay, I think—in satirizing the employment in the English language of certain Latin terms, asks us to imagine a Roman Consul seated in a back office in Bordeaux, a goose-quill over his ear, making out invoices for the skippers of merchant vessels. But the union of martial and civic functions need not be ludicrous. It would be hard to believe that Scipio at Zama looked one inch more the commander than Hancock at Fredericksburg or Gettysburg, or bore himself more knightly and heroically in danger and hardship, in weariness and wounds; yet Hancock was perhaps the greatest hand at "papers" the army ever knew. It is usual to make flings at this sort of thing, and to express contempt for regulations and red tape. But it is more likely that a mill or factory or railroad will be well managed whose ac-

counts and correspondence are always in arrears, in confusion, in error, than that a brigade or division or corps will be well administered under the same conditions. The need of order and system is even greater in the latter case. This Hancock perfectly understood. He deemed it no less important a part of his duty to study the state of his command through the morning reports and the monthly returns than on parade or review; and he knew that he could administer a tonic to a sickly regiment through the order-book and the letter-book not less effectually than at Sunday morning inspection.

In addition to all his other qualifications for command, Hancock enjoyed the advantages of a person at once singularly agreeable and singularly imposing. Now at the prime of life, in his thirty-eighth year, a perfect blond, standing six feet high, powerfully formed yet easy and graceful in his movements, with handsome features, strong yet without a trace of ferocity or even of habitual severity, authority was stamped upon him as upon few of the sons of men. He had, too, the consciousness of a fine presence, never sinking into dandyism but keeping him always up to the mark in dress and bearing. It was impossible for him to degenerate into slouchiness or slovenliness under the most trying conditions. Just as a dash of puppyism is an excellent quality in a junior officer, so a shade of physical self-consciousness in an officer of

high rank is certain to give a tone, not only to his own carriage and demeanor, but to the troops he may command, which the history of war shows to be a valuable corrective to certain tendencies toward deterioration from long-continued service in the field. Always stately and majestic yet never forbidding, except in some tremendous explosion of wrath; well dressed, well mounted; a soldier better deserving the appellation "The Superb" never led the march or rode along the line of battle.

Only one habit marred Hancock's otherwise invariable dignity and impressiveness under all circumstances—in his tent, among the camps, on review; on the march, whether in advance or retreat; in battle, whether in attack or defense. This was an extravagant indulgence, at times, in harsh and profane speech. A soldier is not likely to be altogether out of sympathy with the witty justice who defined swearing as "the unnecessary use of profane language." Whatever may be the occasions of civil life, no one who knows much of the tremendous exigencies of campaign and battle will judge very harshly of some extra vehemence of language on the part of a commander who feels that the lives of his men, and perhaps the destinies of his country, hang upon movements which he sees in danger of being defeated by the stupidity, the heedlessness, or the indolence of subordinates. Nor will the men of the late war, however scrupulous themselves in

speech, assert that they held in higher respect any officer who never made use of profane language than they did many who sometimes indulged in it. Yet the traditions of the regular army of the United States upon this subject were distinctly bad. The camp-fire and mess-room tales regarding the extravagant profanity of a few generals had set a fashion among the officers coming into prominence at the outbreak of the Rebellion which caused a great amount, not merely of very unnecessary, but of very silly and weak swearing. With many it amounted to an affectation, and that among some of the most meritorious, honorable, and generally courteous commanders in the service. However this might make the unthinking laugh and spice the stories of the camp, it made the judicious grieve, for it unquestionably was carried so far at times as to impair the proper authority and influence of some excellent officers. I do not mean to intimate that Hancock was "a sinner above all the rest." But he was not free from the habit of the army in this respect, and indulged in much use of language that was less impressive than a grave rebuke would have been.

It remains to speak of but one more trait of Hancock's character before we proceed to tell of his actual entrance upon the War of the Rebellion. I refer to his abounding, unfailing hospitality. In her affectionate Reminiscences of General Hancock, his wife relates that while they were living at Fort

Myers, though their family was small, their table was always stretched to its full capacity; and that the officers stationed at or visiting the post were accustomed to draw lots for the chairs which were placed for as many as could be seated. This story truly expresses the custom of Hancock's headquarters, whether in camp or in the field. The fare might be but bacon and hardtack; but, such as it was, every one was welcome to a share. Many hundreds of surviving officers of the war will remember the frank and genial invitation to a friendly glass with which an interview in his tent, perhaps not wholly pleasant in itself, almost invariably ended. Entertainment, indeed, was an instinct with him. I well remember his calling a young Confederate officer out of a small body of prisoners passing his tent, and saying to him with a courtesy that was inexpressibly winning, "Lieutenant, I am sorry to see you in trouble, pray take a glass of whisky and water with me." When, in August, 1864, I was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, Lieutenant-General Hill sent a staff officer to say that he had given orders to have me treated with all possible consideration, because Hancock had always been so kind to his (Hill's) soldiers, when prisoners.

A civilian might regard such a matter as of little importance from a military point of view, but every soldier will know better. It has been said that half the victories of diplomacy are won at the dinner-

table; and likewise, while a first-rate soldier may be a curmudgeon, and while a commander may choose to rule entirely by mere force, that man who knows how to mingle diplomacy with authority, to smooth the asperities of service, and to conciliate universal regard, has a wholly additional source of power in handling large masses of men. Soldiers are punctilious, sensitive, and quick to take offense. Next to absolute justice, nothing goes further to anticipate and avoid causes of dispute and to keep troops united, harmonious, and enthusiastic, than courtesy, suavity, and hospitality at headquarters.

Such, in his character, bearing, and qualifications for service, was Hancock, when, at his own request, he was ordered East in the summer of 1861, that he might take an active part in the war which had broken out amid direful portents on the Atlantic slope. Upon his arrival in Washington, it was first intended that he should be assigned to duty as chief quartermaster on the staff of General Robert Anderson, of Fort Sumter fame, who had been appointed to the command of the Union troops in Kentucky. When one remembers that Philip Sheridan was sent away from the field to buy horses for the army on the eve of the battle of Shiloh, he can believe that almost anything was possible to the men who were then selecting chiefs for the Union forces and assigning the officers of the regular army to their several stations. Fortunately such a blunder

was not committed in Hancock's case. His day for quartermaster service, valuable as that training had been to him, was past. So manifestly was he a commander in every lineament, in every motion, that it was seen to be absurd to keep such a soldier upon staff duty when an army of hundreds of thousands was to be officered; and, on the 23d of September, he was made a Brigadier-General of Volunteers, and assigned to the Army of the Potomac. In the organization of divisions, which took place during the winter, Hancock, to his great gratification, found himself commanding a brigade in the division of William F. Smith, universally known as Baldy Smith, who had been a student with him at the Academy, and with whom his relations had always been most intimate and cordial. General Smith, an officer of engineers, enjoyed a high reputation for intellectual ability, and not less for good fellowship and geniality. With such an agreeable association on the one side, and, on the other, with the difficult task before him of shaping and tempering four raw regiments\* into a perfect instrument of war, which should not fail under the severest strain of military duty or break in the fiercest

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\* Fifth Wisconsin, Forty-ninth Pennsylvania, Forty-third New York, Sixth Maine. General Hancock's staff consisted at this time of his brother, Captain John Hancock, Assistant Adjutant-General, and Lieutenants W. G. Mitchell, Isaac B. Parker, and Charles S. McEntee, aids.

shock of battle, the first winter of the great rebellion passed rapidly away.

No commander ever more carefully prepared in camp for success in the field than did Hancock, here and through all his subsequent career. Most, perhaps, think of him as a kind of meteor on the battlefield, an object of admiration or of terror, flashing hither and thither, achieving his triumphs by sheer brilliancy of bearing, force of intuition, and mysterious power over men. In fact, it was with infinite labor that he forged the weapon his hand was to wield with such effect. He knew that the greater the force exerted the more likely was the sword to break under the blow, unless it were perfectly wrought; and it was with care and pains inexpressible that he shaped and tempered it for the conflict. If at Williamsburg, in his first encounter with the enemy, he met and easily vanquished the Confederate force sent against him, led on one wing by D. H. Hill, and on the other by Jubal Early, it was not more by reason of the great tactical skill, calm courage, and majestic bearing which stamped upon him McClellan's epithet, "Superb," than of the training to which his troops had been subjected. Of Hancock in the winter camps of 1861, two things especially require to be said:

First, while he was a strict disciplinarian, he was incapable of any of those silly brutalities which a few officers of the regular army who were set over



volunteer regiments, and many volunteer officers who thought they were imitating regular-army methods, practiced during the first year of the war.

Second, although a "regular" in every fiber of his being, Hancock was altogether destitute of that snobbishness regarding volunteers which was exhibited by so many small minds, in so many great places, during the first year of the rebellion. He recognized the fact that the war was to be waged by volunteers; and that, however much the regular army had to give to the vast masses of earnest soldiers swarming in from East and from West to the defense of the Union, it was, after all, these men who were to bear the heat and burden of the great conflict. He saw that it was of supreme importance to promote the self-respect and self-confidence of volunteer regiments; to lead them to think that they could do anything, and were the equals of anybody; and that to be everlastingly talking about the regular army, bewailing the lack of its methods and forms, instituting odious comparisons, and sneering at the deficiencies of the new troops, was a very poor way of accomplishing that object.

Hancock not only never sneered at volunteers—he did not, incredible as it may seem, even patronize them. He made them feel—by his evident respect, his hearty greeting, his warm approval of everything they did well—that he regarded them as being just as fully, just as truly, just as honorably,

soldiers of the United States Army as if they had belonged to the old Sixth Infantry. Such was the spirit in which Hancock met his new command. We know with what assiduity, patience, and good feeling, what almost pathetic eagerness to learn and imitate, the volunteers of 1861 sought to fit themselves for their part in the great struggle. Hancock's thorough and cordial acceptance of volunteers was seen, again, in his choice of staff officers throughout the war. Even after he had become a corps commander, when any captain in the service would have been proud to come at his call, he showed no disposition to prefer an officer of the regular army as such. Except Morgan, whom he inherited from Sumner and Couch, no officer of the regular army ever held an important position on his staff. Mitchell and Bingham, Batchelder and Wilson, Brownson and Livermore, Miller and Parker were good enough for him.

The work which Hancock had done during the winter of 1861-'62, in preparing his enthusiastic volunteers for active service, was soon to be put to the test. Smith's division formed a part of the Fourth Corps, which General Keyes took to the Peninsula of Virginia in the spring of 1862. During the long and discouraging halt before Yorktown Hancock's troops were not engaged; but at Williamsburg, where on the 5th of May our troops overtook the retreating enemy, Hancock was given

his first opportunity, which he improved in such a manner as at once to make his name famous throughout the land. After several hours had been wasted in objectless and useless fighting in front of Fort Magruder, Hancock was dispatched with five regiments—three of his own, and two of Davidson's brigade—to cross Cub Dam Creek, on our extreme right, and, if possible, gain the enemy's rear. The movement was executed cautiously but promptly; and at noon Hancock occupied the redoubt upon the Confederate side which commanded the narrow mill-bridge across the creek, and sent word to headquarters of his success, nothing doubting that he would speedily be re-enforced to a degree which would make it practicable to advance into the enemy's rear, which had by inadvertence been left completely open, and thus cut off Longstreet's division. But divided counsels were the order of this day. Keyes, Sumner, and Heintzelman had all the morning been jarring with each other at the Whitaker House; McClellan was back at Yorktown; and for hours no re-enforcements were sent. At last the enemy, discerning Hancock's threatening attitude, directed against him a column under Generals Jubal Early and D. H. Hill, both afterward famous in the war. Hancock—to secure his own position, as well as to make ready for a prompt advance when he should be re-enforced—had occupied a second redoubt twelve hundred yards nearer Wil-

liamsburg, and still more directly threatening the enemy's rear. From this point he was already demonstrating against two other redoubts, when he perceived he was to be attacked by Early and Hill. Falling back in perfect order from his most advanced position, upon finding his right flank threatened, he halted his command, which, though for the first time in action, conducted itself with the greatest steadiness, and, when the enemy were within close range, received them with two clean volleys of musketry, followed up by a charge along the line. Hill was wounded, and his troops driven back in disorder. Early sought to retrieve the fortunes of the day, but was swept off the field by the steady advance of Hancock. In twenty-three minutes the affair was over. The action had been short, sharp, and decisive. The Confederates left in Hancock's hands a battle-flag and one hundred and sixty prisoners. So complete had been their discomfiture, that they made no further attempt to molest Hancock in his position. After the action was at an end re-enforcements arrived, and General Smith himself came upon the ground; but it was already late, and no attempt was made to pursue the advantage gained. When night fell, Longstreet withdrew from his untenable position, and continued his interrupted retreat up the Peninsula toward Richmond.

The action at Williamsburg made Hancock's reputation. He had shown enterprise, audacity,

and prudence in a critical movement, with a body of troops altogether insufficient to the purpose for which it had been dispatched. In the action which resulted, he had displayed perfect command over his men, high tactical skill, and decisive energy—energy, that is, applied in exactly the right way and at exactly the right moment. He had defeated and routed a superior force of the enemy, led by two of their ablest captains. It was no fault of his that the absence of the commander in chief and the divided counsels at the Whittaker House prevented the destruction of the enemy. No wonder that McClellan telegraphed that night, "Hancock was superb." In his report on the operations of the day, General Smith wrote: "The brilliancy of the plan of battle, the coolness of its execution, the seizing of the proper instant for changing from the defensive to the offensive, the steadiness of the troops engaged, and the completeness of the victory, are subjects to which I earnestly call the attention of the commander in chief for his just praise."

With such a striking opening of his career upon the Peninsula, it might well have been expected that, in the succession of terrific battles which took place before McClellan was finally driven away to the James River, Hancock's brigade would have found many opportunities to distinguish itself, and to exalt the fame of its commander. But, by one of those curious fortunes which mark the course of war, it

came about that this excellent body of troops passed through the entire campaign without once again becoming severely engaged with the enemy. It lay under arms within sound of the terrific conflict which raged for hours on the afternoon of the 31st of May and on the morning of the 1st of June, when the corps of Keyes, Heintzelman, and later of Sumner, were wrestling with nearly the whole force of Johnston's army. During the Seven Days' Battles—while other divisions and brigades were frightfully cut up in one action, only to be engaged the next day, and the next—Hancock's command was but once called to meet the enemy, and then in a minor affair. This was on the fatal 27th of June, when Porter's corps, re-enforced by Slocum's division, was bearing the brunt of the tremendous attack of Stonewall Jackson's divisions, then just arrived from the Valley. At a critical moment the enemy made an attempt to break through Hancock's advanced position at Garnett's Farm, close down by the Chickahominy, hoping thus to cut the communications between Porter and the remaining corps of McClellan, already under orders to retreat to the James. The attacking force was commanded by General Robert Toombs. Hancock's dispositions for defense—both with his infantry, re-enforced by two regiments from the Vermont brigade, and with artillery which had been sent to him for the purpose—were of the same masterly character as at

Williamsburg; and, after a short contest, the enemy was driven from the field. During the night Porter's beaten divisions crossed the Chickahominy and took up the route for the James. Hancock was withdrawn to his former position at Golding's, intrusted with the duty of covering the retreat. Late in the day, as he was retiring under orders, another, but comparatively slight, attack was made by the adventurous enemy, which was easily thrown off, only one of Hancock's regiments being engaged.\* On the 29th, Hancock's troops were in support of Sumner, at Savage Station, and on the 30th took their share of the tremendous shelling which was inflicted upon Smith's division at White Oak Swamp. Immediately after this they were sent forward to the James River, and were thus out of reach at the great battle of Malvern Hills, on the 1st of July.

But while, as related, Hancock's brigade had borne far less than its proportional share of the fighting on the Peninsula, the reputation of its commander had steadily advanced, as the result of his prompt execution of orders, the discipline his troops had exhibited in camp and upon the march, and his own fine bearing and intelligent action during the successive exigencies of the campaign. Franklin's corps was one of the last to arrive at Centreville for

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\* In this attack Colonel L. Q. C. Lamar, afterward Secretary of the Interior and a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, fell a prisoner into Hancock's hands.

the re-enforcement of Pope's army, in August; so that again Hancock's command failed to be engaged with the enemy in actions which are now of the highest historical interest. Still again, in the Antietam campaign, Hancock's brigade was destined to be kept out of the fight in a truly remarkable degree. At Crampton's Pass, on the 14th of September, it only exchanged artillery fire with the enemy, and at Antietam, on the 17th, it supported a powerful battery of many guns on the right of the Union line, without entering further into the action. Franklin had, indeed, on coming up about noon, been desirous of throwing in his powerful corps at the Dunker Church, to retrieve the fortunes of the day; but Sumner, who had been profoundly shocked by the losses of his own divisions, especially Sedgwick's, forbade the movement.

It has been said that Hancock's brigade was engaged at Antietam only in support of artillery. After Sumner's refusal to allow Franklin to deliver an attack at the Dunker Church—the scene of Sedgwick's terrible repulse—the Sixth Corps remained inactive during the afternoon of the 17th of September. For Hancock personally, however, much was yet in store. At noon of that momentous day—the bloodiest single day in the annals of the great war—tidings were brought to headquarters that the gallant Richardson, commanding the First Division of Sumner's Second Corps, had fallen in the battle



around Piper's House. At once Hancock was sent for in haste, and from McClellan's own lips received the order to proceed with all dispatch to Richardson's line, and assume command of that division. Though scarcely another brigade commander had been so little engaged in action since the army took the field in April, there had not been a moment's hesitation in selecting the officer who should succeed to the vacant division when the news arrived of Richardson's mortal wound; nor on Hancock's part was there the slightest doubt or fear upon receiving that sudden and unexpected promotion on the field of battle. It is generally more or less of an experiment to advance even a capable and efficient brigadier to the charge of a division. The natural range of his powers may be found to have been exceeded. Even should he in time grow up to the position, it is most likely that the new command will be exercised at first with too much either of timidity or of rashness, with somewhat less than a full grasp of the situation, with comparative feebleness of authority and influence over the unfamiliar body. No such painful interval of self-distrust, or of real inadequacy to new and larger responsibilities, marked Hancock's successive promotions. The very day he was advanced from captain and quartermaster to brigadier-general, he was, in every sense, a general officer, confident of his powers, rejoicing in the exercise of his functions, and thoroughly master of

himself, his place, his staff, and his troops. An hour after he rode down the line, at Antietam, to take up the sword that had fallen from Richardson's dying hand, no one could have told—he himself hardly knew—that he had not commanded a division for years. So thoroughly had he prepared himself for promotion during his service with his brigade, so sure was he of his powers, that he stepped forward to the higher command upon the field of battle, amid its wreck and disaster, without a moment of hesitation or of doubt, and at once became the leader of the division, as fully and perfectly as Sumner in his time had been, as Richardson but just now had been. The staff knew it; the troops felt it. Every officer in his place, and every man in the ranks was aware, before the sun went down, that he belonged to Hancock's Division.

The body of troops to which Hancock had been sent was one worthy of any commander. It was the division which Sumner had organized and drilled during the winter of 1861-'62, and which still showed in its every part the impress of the powerful hand which had first shaped and molded it. When Sumner was appointed to the Second Corps, Richardson took his division and led it with great credit during the campaign on the Peninsula. It passed through its baptism of fire at Fair Oaks on Sunday morning, where it lost eight hundred and thirty-eight men in a close, fierce, but victorious contest. Two of its

brigades—French's and Meagher's—crossed the Chickahominy to the support of Porter late in the afternoon of the 27th of June; and it was behind their undaunted line that Porter's badly shattered troops were re-formed. The division had been engaged at Allen's Farm on the morning of the 29th, and later in the day had taken an important part in the brief but sharp action at Savage Station. It had helped to hold the bridge with Franklin at White Oak Swamp on the 30th; and on the 1st of July, two of its brigades—Caldwell's and Meagher's—had gone to the support of Porter and Couch on the Heights of Malvern, and had contributed largely to the final repulse of the enemy on that ever-memorable day. At Antietam, it had been brought by Sumner across the creek, on the morning of which we write, and had been directed straight on Piper's house, where it became engaged in a sanguinary contest which resulted in driving the enemy out of the famous Sunken Road. It had lost eleven hundred and sixty-five men, of whom—although the fighting had been close, and charges and counter-charges had been made—only sixteen were among the "missing." It had lost, besides its gallant commander, many valuable officers, the casualties of the Irish Brigade of Meagher being especially heavy. The division had in this action captured four hundred prisoners and nine Confederate flags.

Such had been the experience of the body of

troops to the command of which Hancock was now assigned. That experience had been singularly fortunate if considered with reference to future efficiency. Partly by the chance of war, partly as the result of the courage and discipline of the troops and the exceptional capacity of the regimental commanders—notably Colonels Barlow, Brooke, McKeen, Nugent, Cross, and Zook—the division had never been borne backward in battle. It had never once had its line broken. It had been uniformly victorious; and, while it had sustained severe losses, it had never, except only in the case of the Irish Brigade at Antietam, lost blood to fainting, or sustained any of those shattering blows which take the life out of even the best troops. An equally fortunate initiation into the dreadful experiences of war had befallen few divisions. Nor was its future service, from Antietam forward, destined to be any less honorable, although its day of uniform good fortune was over and past. It was, indeed, to experience the very extremity of loss and disaster; and was to close its career, in 1865, with the proud, though melancholy, record of two thousand two hundred and thirty-seven men killed and eleven thousand seven hundred and twenty-four men wounded in battle; and was to go into history as the division of Sunday morning at Fair Oaks, of the Sunken Road at Antietam, of the Stone Wall at Fredericksburg, of the Wheat Field at Gettysburg, of the

Salient at Spottsylvania, of the closing fight at Farmville; as the division which had been commanded by five such soldiers as Edwin V. Sumner, Israel B. Richardson, Winfield S. Hancock, Francis C. Barlow, and Nelson A. Miles.

When Hancock rode over the field in the early afternoon of the 17th of September, to take command of his new division, the battle on the right was over, although none outside general headquarters suspected it. The troops lay in momentary expectation of renewing the attack in which already ten thousand men had fallen. Every now and then the bustle of the staff presaged new combinations, or the movement of troops to fill gaps in the line of battle was taken to mean that hot work was at once to begin. At intervals the artillery broke out in furious cannonading all along the line, or here and there two ambitious battery commanders tested the range of their guns and the skill of their cannoniers in a duel across the crouching lines of infantry. It was not amid the pomp of the review, with bands playing and officers saluting, but on the trampled battlefield strewn with bloody stretchers and wreck of caissons and ambulances, the dead and dying thick around, the wounded still limping and crawling to the rear, with shells shrieking through the air, that Hancock first met and greeted the good regiments he was to lead in a score of battles. The lines were ragged from shot and shell; the uniforms

were rent and soiled from hedge and ditch; the bands were engaged in carrying off the wounded or assisting the surgeons at their improvised hospitals.

The remainder of the day passed uncertainly, uneasily. The crash and clamor of Burnside's long-delayed fight, away down on the left, aroused expectation to its height; but this again died down as the Ninth Corps fell back before the Confederate troops arriving from Harper's Ferry. Pleasanton's batteries pressing forward in the center, supported by a few battalions of regulars, seemed like a renewal of the combat, while a gallant dash of the Seventh Maine, made from the front of Slocum's division, startled both the Union and the Confederate lines. But the day wore slowly away without any order for the renewal of the battle on the right, and when darkness came on Antietam passed into history. All the next day the two armies lay confronting each other without a collision; and during the following night Lee, his army and his trains intact, recrossed the Potomac into Virginia.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FREDERICKSBURG.

ON the 19th of September, two days after the doubtful battle of Antietam, the Second Corps moved to Harper's Ferry and took up a strong position on Bolivar Heights. Here the corps was destined to remain for a considerable period, while the country chafed at the inaction of the army which had been trumpeted as winning a great and glorious victory. Early in October General Sumner was relieved in the command of the corps by General Darius N. Couch who had won much distinction on the Peninsula at the head of a division of the Fourth Corps. The only exciting incident which attended the long rest on Bolivar Heights was a reconnoissance conducted by Hancock with his division, upon the 16th of October, adown the valley to Charlestown, with a view to discovering whether the enemy was there in force. The reconnoissance developing nothing but cavalry and artillery, Hancock withdrew his troops to camp the same night. On the 30th of October, McClellan, urgently pressed by the popular impatience at his

long delay, began his next and his last forward movement with the Army of the Potomac. The Second Corps, in the lead, crossed the Shenandoah, and, passing round the base of Loudon Heights into the valley, moved along the Blue Ridge, occupying successively the several passes over the mountains westward of the line of march, reaching the little village at the foot of Snicker's Gap on the evening of the 3d, and, on the 4th, after an artillery duel with Stuart, occupied Upperville.

During the movement along the Blue Ridge, and in the few days which followed, a curious psychological phenomenon appeared. Although this was one of the best-disciplined commands of the army, with a high repute for good order, a mania seized the troops for killing sheep. On the Peninsula there had been no sheep to kill; and, while on the march to Antietam, our men had scrupulously respected the loyalty of Western Maryland. But when the fat and fleecy flocks of the country through which we were now called to pass came in sight, discipline for the moment gave way, at least *quoad* mutton. At first the night was taken for forays; but soon the passion rose to absolute fury. In vain did officers storm and swear; in vain was the saber used freely over the heads of the offenders who were caught; in vain, even, did the provost guard of one division turn about and fire ball-cartridges, from the road, at fellows who deliberately



left the ranks to go across the fields. General Couch was outraged; he instructed each division commander to assemble a court martial for the trial of these offenders; and soon, every evening after coming into camp, three courts were in session in the Second Corps, with sheep-stealers before them, and sharp and summary were the punishments inflicted; but it was all to no purpose—the killing went on as bad as ever.

Of the three division commanders, Hancock was peculiarly sensitive to the slightest imputation of indiscipline. Of all three it was he who issued the sternest orders and swore the loudest oaths. One day, having observed some soldiers of the Irish Brigade, after falling out of ranks, steal around a bit of wood, manifestly bent on plunder, he determined to make an example. Accordingly, he left the column with his staff, and, galloping around the wood from the opposite side, came upon the group gathered about an unfortunate victim upon which one of the number was proceeding to make anatomical observations. The less guilty members of the party caught a glimpse of the coming doom in time to climb over a high stone fence and escape; but upon the principal offender, taken *in flagrante delictu*, Hancock pounced with drawn sword and eyes flashing fire. Down on his knees went the wretch, scared by the general's aspect. "Arrah, dear general, don't be the death of me;

I didn't do it, indade I didn't." "You infernal liar," shouted the general, "what do you mean by telling me that? I saw you, you scoundrel! I'll teach you to disobey orders; I'll teach you to kill sheep!" And with this, crushing out the last hope of poor Paddy, he flourished his sword as if about to begin execution, when, in the most opportune moment, up jumped the innocent subject of the controversy, and, giving vent to its feelings in a quavering ba-a! ran off, while, amid the shouts of the staff, the general put up his saber and rode away.

Of all the offenders in this respect, the Irish Brigade received the most blame; but there is some reason to accept the indignant disclaimer of their commander, who declared that a large number of the sheepskins found in his camps had really been placed there by the men of the Fifth New Hampshire, after they had eaten the carcasses. Strangely enough, this passion for killing sheep disappeared as quickly as it had appeared; and never afterward, so far as the writer knows, did anything of the sort occur to tarnish the good name of the Second Corps. It was an epidemic, coming and going inexplicably, in flat contradiction to the general character of the troops, and, while it lasted, affecting only sheep, of all the animal creation.

On the 6th of November the Second Corps reached Rectortown. It was while the troops were in this camp that, on the night of the 7th of No-

vember, the order arrived from Washington which relieved General McClellan finally from the command of the Army of the Potomac, which was given to General Burnside. In the grief and indignation with which, on their arrival at Warrenton, the soldiers received the news that the commander in whom they delighted was again taken away from them, the Second Corps shared fully; but that grief and indignation never for a moment affected the loyalty of the corps or impaired its discipline. The corps and division commanders were not the sort of men to permit this. To Hancock, in especial, the removal of McClellan was a blow keenly felt, for he was deeply attached to his chief, with whom he had been a great favorite ever since Williamsburg; but to all open complaints or mutinous remarks, then too common and unfortunately encouraged by some high officers, he had but a single reply, "We are serving our country, and not any man."

The change of command not unnaturally resulted in a brief delay at Warrenton. Burnside had before him two courses. The one was to move directly forward, crossing the Rappahannock, as Meade was to do a year later after Gettysburg, to fight Lee at Brandy Station or Culpeper, should he be found there in force, or, failing that, to cross, in turn, the Rapidan, and take the direct route to Richmond through the Wilderness and Spottsylvania. The other course was to move to the left

and seize Fredericksburg, on the right bank of the lower Rappahannock, before Lee should apprehend his design. It was the latter course which Burnside decided to take. Its success required three good, stiff, though not excessive, days' marches, on the part of at least the leading corps, with prompt co-operation from Washington in the way of providing rations, beef cattle, and, above all, pontoons, at Acquia Creek. Of these latter needs, General Halleck, at Washington, was duly notified.

The Second Corps, still in advance, left Warrenton on the 15th, and, marching steadily, though with all-night rests, reached Falmouth, on the left bank of the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg, in the early afternoon of the 17th. The little city of Fredericksburg was at this moment occupied only by a regiment of cavalry, four companies of infantry, and a light battery. But, by another of those miserable blunders which mar the whole history of the war, each one of them costing its hundreds or thousands of lives, the pontoons were not on hand when the column arrived, nor, indeed, until the 25th of the month. During all this time, the troops of the enemy were coming up to the right bank of the river, in plain view, and fortifying at their leisure positions which were a month later to be fruitlessly assaulted with terrific loss. Meanwhile the entire Army of the Potomac had come up and been extended along the Rappahannock. Han-

cock's division was stationed behind Falmouth with headquarters at the Washington House.\*

Hancock's division on the eve of Fredericksburg was constituted as follows: First Brigade, Brigadier-General John C. Caldwell: Fifth New Hampshire; Seventh, Sixty-first, and Sixty-fourth New York; Eighty-first and One Hundred and Forty-fifth Pennsylvania. Second Brigade, Brigadier-General Thomas Francis Meagher: Sixty-third, Sixty-ninth, and Eighty-eighth New York; Twenty-eighth Massachusetts; One Hundred and Sixteenth Pennsylvania. Third Brigade, Colonel Samuel K. Zook: Second Delaware; Fifty-second, Fifty-seventh, and Sixty-sixth New York; Fifty-third Pennsylvania; Twenty-seventh Connecticut. The Division staff consisted of John Hancock, Assistant Adjutant General; Hoyt, Assistant Quartermaster; Balloch, Commissary of Subsistence; and Mitchell, Parker, and Miller, Aids; Rorty and Ritzius, Acting Aids.

The town of Fredericksburg, as was evident to all who looked across the river, could not be seriously held by the enemy, for it lay on the lower of the two banks of the Rappahannock, commanded by the artillery with which the Falmouth or Stafford side was soon lined. But there was small utility in carrying the town while the enemy held the hills in

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\* Here it was that Hancock received his promotion in the regular army from captain to major and assistant quartermaster, November 30, 1863.

the rear. The Confederate troops had no use for the town, except to prevent a surprise upon the hills; the Union troops had no use for it whatever except as they might occupy it for a momentary cover, while forming their columns for an assault upon the hills. But a direct attack upon the enemy through Fredericksburg was full of difficulties. Between the town and the hills ran a deep ditch, or canal, which had been used to carry water from the river above to certain mills upon its course and then emptied into the river below the town. The hills themselves, which curved around Fredericksburg approaching the Rappahannock at either end, were admirably adapted for defense, and had been strongly fortified since the arrival of the Union troops upon the Stafford side. The plain, which our army emerging from the town must cross, was wide enough and clear enough to allow the utmost effects of artillery and infantry fire from the hills and from a sunken road and a stone wall which ran along their base at the only practicable point for assault. Such was the prospect which greeted the eyes of General Burnside and his troops every clear day from about the middle of November till the 10th of December, 1862. Nevertheless, Burnside decided to cross into the city and carry the hills by a resolute attack should the enemy make a stand there. At least that was the plan which he afterward claimed to have followed. So vacillating, however, were his

moods, so contradictory the orders given, that it must always remain doubtful how much of this was an afterthought, of the truth of which he had persuaded himself. Whatever his real intentions were, if, indeed, he had any definite purpose, he, on the day last named, directed General Sumner, commanding the Right Grand Division, consisting of the Second and Ninth Corps, to prepare to cross the river and occupy Fredericksburg. Coincidentally with his crossing, Franklin was to cross with the Left Grand Division, three miles below the town, and threaten Lee's communications with Richmond.

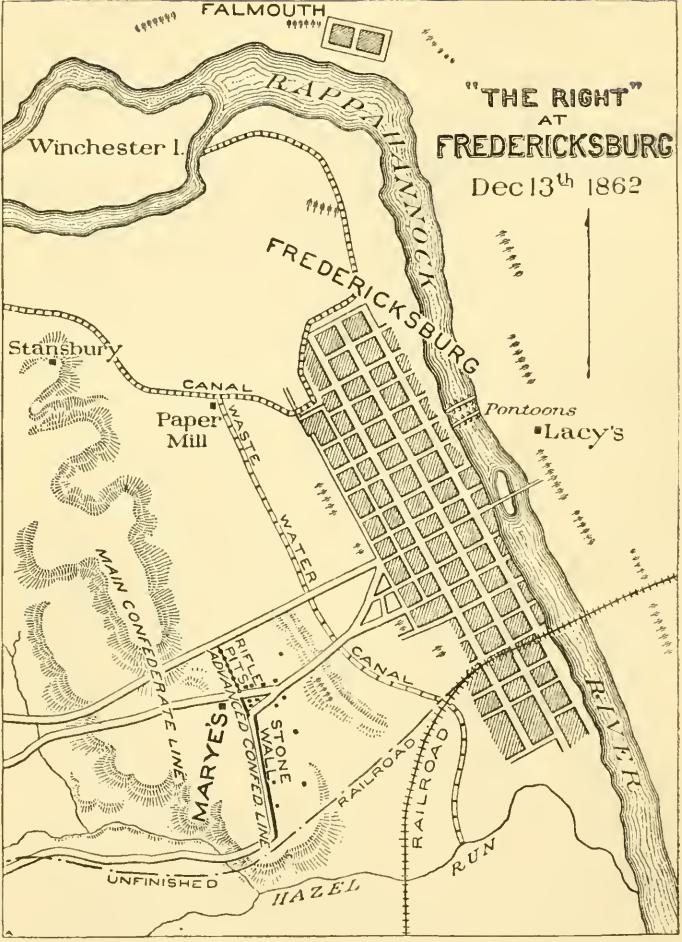
One thing, and one thing only, favored the operation undertaken on the 11th of December. This was that Jackson, with a powerful column, was many miles down the river, awaiting a possible crossing in that direction. But to take advantage of this it was necessary that whatever was to be attempted should be done promptly and decisively. Our space will not serve to tell the miserable story of the long delays which beset the crossing by the Lacy House, owing to the fact that General Burnside trusted to the effect of more than one hundred guns, placed along the bank, to drive the Confederates out of the houses on the opposite side, and thus enable the bridges to be laid. Hancock's division had been ordered to cover the engineers and pontoon-men at their work; but these and Hancock's regiments alike suffered helplessly from

the riflemen of the enemy, in cellars and pits along the shore, who defied the utmost fury of the cannonade. Hour after hour of precious time was wasted in efforts, manifestly futile, to lay the bridges under these conditions. It was not until the afternoon was well advanced that the thing was done that should have been done at break of day. Volunteers from Howard's division at a signal rushed down the banks, jumped into the pontoons, pushed off under a heavy fire, and, rowing straight across, formed under the bank; then, with a rush, carried the river street and smoked the enemy out of their defenses. Upon this the bridges were quickly laid, as might have been done in the early morning, and the remainder of Howard's troops crossed into the city and cleared the nearest streets. But by that time the short winter day was at its close, and nothing more could be done. Meanwhile, Jackson had taken the alarm and was hurrying back to join Longstreet. During the night most of the remaining troops of both wings were thrown over; and the dawn of the 12th of December found Sumner's column in Fredericksburg, on the right, while Franklin's six divisions, upon the left, held enough ground beyond their bridges below the town to enable them to manœuvre.

And now, if anything was to be done it should have been done at once; done according to some carefully studied plan, of which all commanders should have







been fully advised. But, in truth, Burnside was not ready. He had hoped to see Lee retreat from before the powerful army which menaced him. He had expected nothing less; he was prepared for nothing else. Inasmuch as Lee, who could not possibly have asked for a stronger position in which to fight the impending battle, showed no sign of retreating, Burnside, in dire perplexity, wavered between one plan and another, now preparing to draw all of Sumner's troops down along the river bank, to join Franklin (which was what should have been done); now discussing the chances of a direct attack by Sumner, until night came. The next morning found the river, the town, and the plains beyond covered with dense fog, and still Burnside had no definite plans; yet, as the morning wore on, orders were issued from his headquarters which brought about a great battle, alike on the right and on the left. Let us first dismiss from our narrative the operations of Franklin. That officer advanced his troops against the enemy; broke for a moment at one point through Jackson's line, and was then driven back to the river with considerable loss. The battle here was on approximately even terms as to position. The attack failed, as Burnside asserted, because Franklin did not put in enough of his troops and did not press his advantage with energy. It failed, as Franklin asserted, because of unintelligible and contradictory orders.

On the right, there is no question of what was done that day or any complaint of want of energy and desperate determination. Yet the orders to Sumner were strange enough, as orders to fight a great battle on. They were to "push a column of a division or more along the plank and telegraph roads, with a view to seizing the heights in the rear of the town." Considering that six divisions of the Right Grand Division, with three from the Center, were to become engaged in a desperate battle, resulting in the loss of eight to nine thousand men, these instructions can scarcely be deemed explicit or comprehensive. At any rate, the thing ordered was attempted. At noon the skirmishers of French's (Third) Division advanced, driving before them the enemy's pickets; and in a few minutes more his brigades emerged from the town, in three successive lines, and made for the crest known as Marye's Heights, where a road from the river runs up over the hills. And now appeared the first of the fatal obstacles which beset this ill-conceived and ill-omened enterprise. As the Union lines, lashed with shot and shell from a half mile of batteries, made their way unflinching across the plain, they came upon the deep ditch, or canal, of which Couch the day before had given Burnside a warning that had been indignantly received as a false rumor. Over the two bridges, from one of which all but the string-pieces had been removed, our troops were

compelled to cross the canal, by the flank, in plain view of the enemy and within six or eight hundred yards of their works. A pretty beginning, this, for an assault by "a division or more" upon a position, strong in itself, heavily fortified, held by thirty thousand veteran soldiers! Fortunately, a slight depression of the ground, part way between the canal and the hills, allowed French's shattered brigades an opportunity to re-form before their supreme effort. They waited only long enough to dress their ranks; and then, rising over the last crest, made bravely for the sunken road and the stone wall. Every officer in his place and every man in the ranks knew that the task set for them was impossible; but the word was "Forward!" and forward they went, though now, in addition to direct and enfilading fires from batteries which Longstreet's chief of artillery had placed so that "he could rake the whole field as with a fine-tooth comb," burst upon the devoted ranks a storm of bullets from the Confederate infantry, drawn up under complete shelter in the sunken road and behind the stone wall. Down went our men by hundreds, yet they pressed bravely on until the foremost ranks came within half smooth-bore range of the stone wall. Flesh and blood could do no more; the deadly volleys from the well-covered marksmen bore the leading brigade, as if by sheer weight, down to the ground. In vain French's

second and then his last brigade came up, leaving the plain strewn thickly with the dead and the dying in their advance. They could only fling themselves upon the ground with their comrades of the leading brigade, hold their riddled flags up into the enemy's fire, and wait for re-enforcements.

Hancock has been ordered to follow French closely in three lines by brigade. Hardly is French clear of the town when Hancock is at his heels; hardly has French's rearmost brigade closed up on the first when Hancock's division mounts the little crest beyond the canal. First comes the brigade of Zook, as steadily as on parade in Camp California where old Sumner trained them to arms; close behind press Meagher's Irishmen, with sprigs of green in their caps, a loud cheer rising from their ranks as they dash into the storm which bursts out afresh as Hancock, riding freely over the plain with his brilliant staff, throws his men forward against the stone wall. Behind march Caldwell's regiments, which, though last of all, are to lose most of all in the terrible half-hour to come. And now the First Division is all in view. Its foremost line has struggled up, over fences, over fallen comrades, against a steady sheet of flame from the stone wall now held by four solid ranks of riflemen, until it is but a little more than a pistol-shot away. The supporting brigades are fast closing up. Will they succeed? Success, indeed, in any true sense, is impossible, for,

even should they mount the stone wall, now so near, bayonet its defenders and press up the slopes of Marye's Hill, what could become of them except to be surrounded and destroyed by the dense masses which lie in reserve beyond the crest? But will they reach the stone wall? For a moment it looks as though they would, so gallantly do they press forward, while generals and aids cheer them on. The last fence \* is reached; in vain do Nugent and Kelly and scores of brave officers and men throw themselves upon it, seeking to tear up the posts or break the whole down by main force. Every minute a thousand bullets are hurled from the stone wall; every minute a hundred men go down.

That fence marks the line of the Union advance on that glorious and terrible day. A few reaches of it were broken down, and through the gaps some brave soldiers struggled singly on and tried to make their way up to the stone wall, only to fall dead at half-pistol shot; but through the fence no company passed; the faltering lines were swept backward by an irresistible weight of fire, and the men of Hancock's division threw themselves on the ground or retreated to the nearest crest. Of the 5,006 who had gone into action that afternoon, 2,013 had fallen, of whom not less than 156 were commissioned officers. Among those who fell were men so brave that

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\* "Each of these fences destroyed the unity of at least one brigade."—Hancock's Official Report.

language fails rightly to tell their story, justly to sound their praises. In sixteen battalions which Hancock carried into fight, twenty-five officers had been killed or wounded while in command, regiments having seen their second, their third, and even in one case their fourth commander shot down. The regiment which at the close of the day had its fifth commander at its head was the Fifth New Hampshire, destined to lead the roll of all the infantry regiments of the Union armies, East or West, in the aggregate number of its "killed in action." Of the five officers of Hancock's personal staff present in the field, four had had horses shot under them; three had been wounded.

It needs not here to describe the further actions of this memorable day; how Howard's division, which had held the right, advanced to the support of its hard-pressed comrades; how the Ninth Corps fought gallantly on the left of the Second; how Butterfield brought up the Fifth Corps, and Humphreys hurled his division of nine months' troops against the stone wall, while sheets of flame swept his men away and he, the knight without reproach or fear, rode back last of all; how Burnside from the other side of the river looked down on the useless sacrifice of his troops which, even then, he failed to apprehend in its true proportions, and again and again declared that the crest must and should be carried; how night fell at last over a field where



more than eight thousand men had shed their blood in a vain and hopeless struggle; and the great battle of the right at Fredericksburg was over.

The men of the Second Corps, especially of Hancock's division, still held most of the ground they had gained in their advance and lay there, faces downward, awaiting the word of command. After dark they were withdrawn to the town, where two days passed, often under severe shelling from the heights, until Burnside could be persuaded to retire altogether from the enterprise upon which he had embarked with so inadequate a conception of its difficulties. The camps to which Hancock's division returned on the night of the 15th of December, after an absence of five days, were, alas! far too large for those who were left with the colors. Out of every group of five men, two had fallen in the desperate assault on Marye's Heights. There was room enough now, and to spare, in the little huts which the troops had constructed out of mud and logs, roofed in with "shelter tents." Here the command was destined to remain for four dreary months after the disastrous action which has been thus hurriedly and rudely described. From the hills around, the men of the First Division could survey the field on which two thousand of their comrades had fallen in that short winter afternoon, while, beyond, still frowned the Confederate batteries. The spectacle was not an inspiring one; nor had our troops at

any time come near enough winning to make them wish to try the thing over again. The discipline of the army had in no degree been impaired by the hideous losses it had sustained; but its confidence in Burnside had gone forever. The utter lack of anything like a definite plan of operations before the crossing of the 11th; the vacillation of the 12th; the senseless orders for the attack on the 13th; the dispatches to Washington about ground gained and still held; the weak bluster about a renewal of assault—all these things had combined to show the shrewd soldiers in the ranks that this was not the man who could lead them to victory. The general feeling was that a change must come; and the dash and daring, the fine soldiership, the aggressive energy and soaring ambition of General Joseph Hooker, while in command of a division or a corps, had made it almost certain that the choice would fall upon him. Only the most thoughtful asked whether it could really be that so much of boastful self-assertion did not indicate a weakness of character which, in the crisis of some severe and protracted trial, might prove fatal.

But Burnside, though professing his willingness to be relieved at any time, could not altogether give up the hope that some fortunate combination of circumstances might yet redeem his reputation; and during the later days of January, 1863, he actually undertook a movement round Lee's left flank, which,

had it not been foiled at the outset, must have led to a battle near Chancellorsville. But it was destined that the command of the frank and kindly soldier was to close amid something very like general derision. As the center and left grand-divisions moved around behind the right, and took up the march for Banks' and United States fords, above Fredericksburg, a severe storm set in which soon converted fields and roads alike into one great bed of yellow Virginia mud. The infantry dragged themselves wearily along, pulling their legs out of the sticky clay with a great effort at every step, while at night the poor fellows slept on the flooded ground under an unceasing downpour, hungry because the supply trains had not come up. The artillery, the pontoons, and the ammunition wagons could hardly move at all. Only when half the horses of a battery were harnessed to a single gun, with large details of infantry to pull at the ropes, could any progress be made. At every stage caissons and even cannon were left behind; the road was strewn with dead mules and wrecked wagons. When at last the turning columns had been brought, in such a shape as might be, up to the fords, it was found that the pontoons could not possibly be got down to the river's edge, while it was equally evident that, were the infantry forced across, it must be without artillery or reserve ammunition. Against such difficulties Burnside's last hope gave way; and,

soon after the army had been withdrawn to its quarters, he relinquished the command to Hooker, who had long burned to try his hand at it.

From the miseries and humiliation of the "mud campaign" Hancock's troops fortunately escaped, that division forming a part of the force which it had been intended to throw directly across the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg when the turning columns should have opened the way. So from their snug and comfortable huts Hancock's men looked cheerfully and philosophically out upon their fellows of the other corps as they went toiling up the roads to the fords, and as they came back, tired, bedraggled, hungry, and disgusted, after the lapse of three or four wretched days. In the interval between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, Hancock's division lost, by the expiry of its term of enlistment (two years), the gallant Seventh New York; but was re-enforced by two splendid Pennsylvania regiments with full ranks, the One Hundred and Fortieth and the One Hundred and Forty-eighth. Hancock also added three excellent officers to his staff—Major G. W. Scott, Sixty-first New York; Captain H. H. Bingham, One Hundred and Fortieth Pennsylvania; Lieutenant William P. Wilson, One Hundred and Forty-eighth Pennsylvania.

## CHAPTER V.

### CHANCELLORSVILLE.

THE accession of General Hooker to the command communicated a glow of hope and confidence to the much-enduring soldiers of the Army of the Potomac. He had long been known as one of the most gallant, daring, and impetuous of division and corps commanders. Handsome and picturesque in the extreme, though with a fatally weak chin, his brilliant courage, his popular manners, and even the frankness of his self-assertion, had given him a large place in the soldiers' hearts. And certainly few commanders ever made a better use of an opportunity offered to refresh and refit an army after a disastrous and disheartening defeat. Every branch of the service instantly felt the influence of the new chief's energy and enthusiasm. The artillery was thoroughly reorganized and brought to the highest state of efficiency. The cavalry arm received an impulse which never ceased to actuate it down to the close of the war. The staff fairly jumped to their work in every department. Burnside's favorite "Grand Division" organization was broken up,

as clumsy and ineffective; and the infantry of the several corps was thoroughly overhauled in matters of equipment and discipline. Before the end of April Hooker was in command of a splendid army, comprising one hundred and twenty thousand men of all arms—veteran, well-appointed, brave, and believing thoroughly in their leader.

Hooker's plan of operations was clear, definite, sagacious. He purposed sending Meade, with his own corps, the Fifth, and with Howard's Eleventh and Slocum's Twelfth Corps, on a wide turning movement, to cross the Rappahannock at Kelly's ford, above the mouth of the Rapidan; then, bending southward, to cross the latter river at Germanna and Ely's fords; thence to move down along the bank of the Rappahannock, uncovering the fords below. At the United States ford was to be Couch's Second Corps, lacking Gibbon's division which was to remain at Falmouth. Couch was to cross the river and join Meade at Chancellorsville. This re-enforcement would give Meade nearly as many men as Lee had in his entire army, Longstreet's corps being in the West. Meanwhile Sedgwick, with his own corps, the Sixth, Reynolds's First and Sickles's Third Corps and Gibbon's division of the Second, was to make demonstrations at and below Fredericksburg, to induce the belief that Hooker's real object was to be found in that direction. As soon as Hooker should in person relieve Meade

in the command at Chancellorsville, it would then be for him to decide whether he would call up Sedgwick's force in whole or in part, or would use that column to cross the Rappahannock below and move into Lee's rear. Only one thing more requires to be said in such a hasty sketch as this. The splendid cavalry of the Army of the Potomac was to be sent on a great raid against Lee's communications, to threaten Richmond, intercept the Confederate supplies and re-enforcements, and prevent Lee from retreating in case of disaster. Perhaps it would have been better had Hooker kept the cavalry by him, to cover the movements of his own army and to help him win the victory of which he was, as the event proved, too well assured.

Everything at first went prosperously. Meade accomplished his turning movement promptly. Setting out on the 27th of April, he was joined at Chancellorsville, on the afternoon of the 30th, by Couch's two divisions. Here Hooker, too, arrived, full of confidence, and that evening issued a boastful general order declaring that "the enemy must either ingloriously fly or come out from behind his defenses and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him." On the left, down the river, things had gone equally well. Sedgwick, on the 29th, crossed the Rappahannock with two divisions below Fredericksburg, causing Lee to believe that here was the real point of attack. As the success of

the turning movement was now complete, Sickles's corps was called up to Chancellorsville. Thus far Hooker's operations had been well conceived and promptly and energetically executed. But the morning of the 1st of May witnessed the beginnings of the collapse, of which, indeed, the delays of the previous afternoon had given some intimation to the leading officers at Chancellorsville. Instead of moving straight on down the river, against whatever opposition, until he uncovered Banks's ford—which alone would have greatly shortened the route by which the corps below could communicate with him, or re-enforce him at need upon ground much better suited for the development of his army—precious hours were thrown away, while yet the order to march was not given. At last Slocum was sent down the plank road with the Twelfth Corps; Sykes's division of the Fifth, followed by Hancock's division, took the Fredericksburg pike; while Humphreys moved on the river road. Everything betokened hot work. But scarcely had Sykes and Slocum encountered the enemy, about two miles out, when the fatal order came to retire to Chancellorsville. That order had been issued against the earnest remonstrances of General Gouverneur K. Warren, chief topographical officer on Hooker's staff; and it was received by the several corps commanders concerned—Meade, Couch, and Slocum—with mingled amazement and indignation. So completely did the great



movement all at once collapse, so ignobly was the splendid promise of three days broken! The turning column, which had started out, with high hopes elate and in expectation of a decisive battle, suddenly found itself on the defensive, and was set to work digging intrenchments around Chancellorsville.

Painful and odious as the order was, it had to be obeyed. Hancock, who had been behind Sykes, formed line of battle to cover that officer's withdrawal. Couch, ever at the front when any part of his command was likely to be engaged, was with Hancock's division in person. Although the enemy, detecting the movement, at once assumed the aggressive, yet so prompt was Hancock's action and so gallant the bearing of his troops that it was not until he was near the Chancellorsville clearing that the Confederates were able to interfere seriously with him. Here he was beset by forces which had followed up Slocum's shorter line of retreat on the plank road, and had thus been brought upon his right flank. For a few minutes affairs were critical; but the steadiness of the skirmish line, the energetic action of the supporting regiments, and the handsome assistance rendered by Sykes's regulars, won the time necessary to bring the division into its assigned place in Hooker's new defensive line. Here the troops passed the night, disturbed somewhat by a severe shelling from the enemy's batteries, now established on the high ground which, by the in-

sane order to retreat, had been surrendered to them. Various explanations have been given of Hooker's actions on the afternoon of the 1st of May. The writer has always believed that they were due partly to lack of that firm moral stamina which is so often found to accompany a spirit of arrogance and boastfulness, but chiefly to a nervous collapse occasioned by the excitement and fatigue of the four preceding days. Drunkenness, once alleged, certainly was not any part of the cause.

The morning of the 2d of May found General Hooker's army in the position he had chosen, and with which he still declared himself entirely satisfied. In an order, dated 4.20 P. M. of the 1st, he had said: "The Major-General commanding trusts that a suspension in the attack to-day will embolden the enemy to attack him." In little more than twenty-four hours he was to learn what emboldening Lee and Jackson to attack him might imply. Sickles's corps was now all up; Howard's was on the extreme right at Dowdall's Tavern; Hancock's division and the Fifth Corps formed the left, stretching across the Fredericksburg pike and the river roads; the Third and Twelfth held the center. In this attitude, behind breastworks, the army waited and wondered. By noon it was forty-eight hours since the turning column reached Chancellorsville; yet here the Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Corps still were, though re-enforced by their comrades

of the Second and Third, the whole advantage of surprise thrown away, the enemy given every opportunity either to strengthen their own positions or to seek some weak spot in the Union line on which to deliver an attack. This last was what Lee and Jackson were actually preparing; for, while our troops continued to wait and wonder, Lee's chief lieutenant had, since early morning, been on the march with a powerful column of twenty-six thousand men, to reach, by a long detour, a position opposite Hooker's right, where he might deliver an unexpected and crushing blow. In order to occupy Hooker's attention, the Confederate skirmishers, strongly supported, were pushed forward against our left, making the liveliest demonstrations. The heaviest firing was on the front of Hancock, along the Fredericksburg pike, his skirmishers being assailed with great spirit. Probably at this hour no serious purpose of an attack from that side was entertained; but, whether to make the demonstration so vigorous as to draw Hooker's attention entirely off from what might be going on in Howard's quarter, or to push Hancock's line back nearer to the Chancellor House, with a view to taking the utmost advantage of the coming crash at Dowdall's Tavern, the enemy certainly made most unusual efforts. Yet all the while Hancock's intrenched skirmish line, under the command of Colonel Miles, remained as steady as a rock.

But while the skirmishing was exceptionally severe, the troops never for a moment imagined that this was a battle. They knew too well the signs and portents of those great encounters in which men fall by thousands, and hostile divisions grind against each other like mighty ships in collision. That something was going to happen before night everybody felt, but when or how it would come few conjectured. And, yet, had headquarters been as vigilant and attentive as such great interests demanded, there were indications enough of Jackson's daring flank march. Hooker was, however, fully possessed by the idea that Lee was going to run away—actually was running away—and at one time Sickles's corps was pushed out from the Union center as if in pursuit. Unfortunately, Jackson's rear had just passed, and his movement thus escaped the disclosure which a collision at that point would have occasioned. Indeed, Sickles's reports only confirmed Hooker in his notion that the Confederates were retreating on Gordonsville, ingloriously flying, as he had prophesied in his general order.

But Hooker's illusions were terribly dispelled when, between five and six o'clock, Jackson, having completely flanked our army, broke out from the cover of the forest upon the small corps of Howard, which was swung out "in air" upon the Union right, badly posted, with an utterly inadequate force of skirmishers advanced, and without so much as a

company of cavalry to give warning of a hostile approach. No body of troops in such a position could have resisted such an assault, led by Stonewall Jackson. In spite of the utmost resistance which the braver part of Howard's men could offer, the Eleventh Corps was routed and driven back upon the rest of the army, with the Confederates in fierce pursuit. After all the mutterings of the day, the blow came at last as unexpectedly as a bolt launched from a cloudless sky. In an instant all was excitement, and dire was the confusion on the great plain by the Chancellor House. Down the road from Dowdall's Tavern came the wreck of Howard's battle—camp followers, baggage wagons, ambulances and caissons, and fugitives from the ranks—all rushing back pellmell to get as far as possible away from Jackson. But even here they found no peace, for, the moment the sounds of conflict told that the turning column was getting in its work, the divisions of Anderson and McLaws, which General Lee had kept with himself, redoubled their attacks with both artillery and infantry, trusting, in the surprise and alarm, to break through our lines on the left; or, if they could not do that, to prevent any force being dispatched to withstand Jackson.

The brunt of the new assault fell upon Hancock's division by reason of its being directly across the Fredericksburg pike; but the intrenched line under Miles, which had been strongly re-enforced

during the night and which was fed by Hancock with fresh troops just as fast as needed, held its ground and kept the enemy at bay. Again and again the Confederates brought lines of battle down into the slashing, and again and again they had to go back. Rarely in the history of war has anything finer been seen. Rightly does Mr. Swinton say: "Amid much that is dastardly at Chancellorsville, the conduct of this young but gallant and skillful officer shines forth with a brilliant luster." So delighted was Hancock at the splendid behavior of his skirmish line that, after one repulse of the enemy, he exclaimed: "Captain Parker, ride down and tell Colonel Miles he is worth his weight in gold"; while Couch, turning to the major generals who commanded his two divisions, said, in his quiet, emphatic way: "I tell you what, gentlemen, I shall not be greatly surprised to find myself some day serving under that young man." Thirty-one years later (1894), "that young man," a volunteer of the great war, is now within three years of commanding the armies of the United States.

While Hancock was thus holding the enemy off from the Chancellor plain, where even a momentary collapse of our line would have been disastrous, Sickles and Pleasonton were straining every nerve to bring Jackson to a stand in his terrific movement down the road from Dowdall's Tavern. Batteries from the reserve galloped into position; troops from

the Third and other corps hurried to the threatened point, and formed line with an alacrity and confidence not a whit diminished by the mass of fugitives who still continued to pour along the road, calling out for "the pontoons," or fairly howling with fright.\* All observers of that field on that disastrous afternoon agree that the stampede did not in the slightest degree affect the self-possession and discipline of the troops on the Chancellor plain, who, indeed, were rather disposed to chaff their unfortunate brethren from Dowdall's Tavern, and, for themselves, showed no sign of alarm as Jackson's victorious divisions closed in from the west.

But, much to the surprise of all, the worst proved to be over. Jackson's men had become disordered by the very greatness of their success and by their rapid movements; they had suffered not a little from the stand made by some of the Eleventh Corps brigades; night was coming on to embarrass their further advance; at any moment they might, so far as they knew, receive a blow on their left flank; while in front of them a grim line of batteries, supported by infantry and cavalry, barred the way to

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\* Some of the fugitives were so completely beside themselves with fear that they ran past the Chancellor House, down the Fredericksburg pike, through Hancock's line, and into the hands of the Confederates, without being stopped. One ingenuous German approached Hancock and begged to be directed to the pontoons. The answer he received has been handed down by tradition; but it is best not to put it into cold and unsympathetic type.

Hooker's headquarters. After their first onset had been repelled by canister from a score of guns, they contented themselves with feeling our line here and there in the growing darkness, and at last came to a complete halt. An hour later the adventurous and daring captain who had organized this great stroke fell mortally wounded by the fire of his own men while riding back from a reconnoissance of Hooker's position. This great disaster would alone have put a stop to any attempt on the part of the Confederates to push further their advantage that night.

The morning of the 3d of May (Sunday) found the Union forces at Chancellorsville in no degree discouraged, except for the strange, uncanny feeling which the conduct of general headquarters had created. The rout of the Eleventh Corps, which to the Confederates had seemed a great victory, had, in fact, affected the real Army of the Potomac scarcely at all. Indeed, after the first shock there was more of a disposition to make a jest of it than to treat it as an important matter. The Eleventh Corps had never been regarded as belonging to the Army of the Potomac. It had come up only after the battle of Fredericksburg, and had then encamped far in the rear of the army, so that almost no intercourse had taken place between these troops and the older divisions. The venerable joke about "fighting mit Sigel" had gone the rounds so many times that it was difficult to take Sigel's men very seriously when



# CHANCELLORSVILLE

May 3<sup>d</sup>, 1863  
Morning





they appeared. All this was doubtless unjust. The Eleventh Corps, as its subsequent history proved, contained regiments and brigades which for gallantry, discipline, and endurance could not be excelled. But soldiers are creatures of camp rumors and camp-fire stories. Of the remaining troops, of the Second, Third, Fifth, and Twelfth Corps, then at Chancellorsville, not a single brigade had up to this time had more than fighting enough to bring it to its "second wind." Moreover, the First Corps, under Reynolds, was now up and ready to join in the sport, having left Sedgwick, with the Sixth Corps and Gibbon's division, below. Here, then, were, at the lowest count, seventy thousand men, not including Howard's corps, all veteran troops, ready and even eager for the fray. Lee had, first and last, both of those confronting Sedgwick and of those under his own eye at Chancellorsville, barely fifty-five thousand. Small wonder that the Army of the Potomac was confident on the 3d of May!

But the army was to have that day a far, far harder trial than it dreamed of. The position at the Chancellor House was a thoroughly bad one. The high ground which Hooker had surrendered to the enemy, of his own fatal motion, or of which he had allowed himself to be dispossessed, completely commanded the plain on which his troops were drawn up. Over that plain shells from a hundred and eighty degrees of the circle were to fly screaming and exploding

through every moment of the coming fight. There was no considerable portion of the Union breast-works which was not to be enfiladed or taken in reverse by the enemy's artillery. But the unfortunate position to which the army was condemned was the lightest of the disadvantages under which it was to suffer. That army had, in truth, no longer a head. Hooker had succumbed to the strange lethargy which had afflicted him ever since the morning of the 1st of May. The rout of Howard's corps had finished him. He had caused to be constructed a new line of works at the Bullock Clearing in rear; and his principal thought seemed to be to retire to this, while yet he would neither give the order to retreat nor make the necessary preparations for fighting upon the Chancellorsville plateau. The morning was to see troops desperately engaged for hours against superior numbers, without an effort to re-enforce them or even to supply their exhausted cartridge boxes. It was to see a gallant and veteran army defeated in a false position, while yet two fifths of its numbers had not fired a shot.

The battle of Sunday morning was divided into two separate actions. Even the enemy were not united, the force under Lee being still separated from that which Jackson had led out for his great flank march. The smaller of the two actions was that in which Hancock's division and troops from the Twelfth Corps held the intrenchments on the

left against the divisions of McLaws and Anderson. The larger and more desperate action was that in which the Third Corps and portions of the Twelfth, re-enforced later by French's division of the Second, held the center and right against the column commanded by General J. E. B. Stuart, who had succeeded to Jackson's command. All through the long morning the First and Fifth Corps, under Reynolds and Meade, thirty thousand strong, lay on their arms within striking distance of the Confederate left flank without an order to fall on.

The conduct of affairs upon the left was fortunate. The troops there engaged on the Union side were enough to hold back McLaws and Anderson, and they did it. Again Miles played the brilliant *rôle* that had been assigned to him the day before; and, with his skirmish line re-enforced so that it comprised nearly half the division, beat back every attempt of the enemy until, at last, this heroic young officer, after performing prodigies of valor and escaping a thousand deaths, fell severely wounded, and was carried to the rear, as it was believed, to die. But still the skirmish line, under the personal direction of Couch and Hancock, held its ground; and, though a triple line of battle more than once descended into the slashing to force it back, maintained itself unbroken. Upon Sickles's corps, however, and a division of the Twelfth, the whole fury of Stuart's assault was allowed to fall without sup-

port or relief, except for the dispatch of French's division previously mentioned. The attack and the defense were alike of the most desperate resolution. The long Confederate lines were whipped into foam as they dashed against the Third Corps breastworks; their reserves were brought up in vain; and when, at last, Carroll's brigade of three small regiments from the Second Corps was brought over and thrown upon Stuart's flank it was hardly possible for the enemy to scrape together troops enough to bring this intrepid officer to a stand. Yet all the while the First and Fifth Corps lay less than a mile away. Entreaties met no reply, or else a surly rebuff. At last a fresh assault found an undefended point in the weakened Union lines, a brigade or two gave way and the Confederates poured in and were masters of the position. Even so, there was no rout or panic on the part of our forces; the enemy, dazed by their own success after such tremendous efforts, worn and torn by the savage fighting of the morning, made almost no captures, whether of men or of guns, and were cautious about advancing over the Chancellorsville plateau, perhaps suspecting a trap. Slowly the several Union corps fell out of their positions and took up their retreat to the Bullock Clearing, scarcely molested. By half-past nine o'clock the Confederate commanders were occupying the Union breastworks and were crowding the edges of the plain with their artillery.

Two divisions alone remain. These are the divisions of Hancock and Geary. The former division is no longer intact, General Caldwell having at a sudden call marched with three regiments to the United States ford road; General Meagher, with the Irish brigade, having been detached ever since the crossing of the river. The troops with Hancock, comprising eleven regiments, are now formed in two lines of battle, back to back, one fronting west toward Gordonsville, to protect Geary's right; the other, only a few hundred yards away, fronting east toward Fredericksburg, still in the position so long occupied and so gallantly defended. Geary's line faces southward, crossing the plank road. Couch and Hancock have but fourteen guns at command, of which only nine are in condition to be very effective. These are directed to fire up the turnpike; the remaining five—of Lepine's Fifth Maine Battery—are placed in the peach orchard behind the Chancellor House.

The gallant bearing of these troops for the moment checks the progress of the enemy's infantry, who, fearfully punished in the great action of the morning, believe that they have a new battle to fight; but the fire of the Confederate artillery now becomes infernal. Lieutenant Donohue, in command of Thomas's battery, is mortally wounded. Lepine's battery in the peach orchard is almost instantly cut in pieces; every officer is either killed

or wounded, whereupon Couch requests Lieutenant Kirby, of the First United States Artillery, to take command. Hardly has Kirby reached his new post when his horse is killed, and a few minutes later this most heroic and promising young officer falls mortally wounded.\* And now a heavy infantry column falls upon the front which Geary has maintained with so much spirit across the plank road. Stubbornly the men of the Twelfth Corps resist; but at last this part of the line, too, falls out, and Geary's command passes, in no disorderly column, down the road to the Bullock Clearing, where the new position is being taken up. It is still of importance to gain time; to hold the enemy at bay as long as possible, that the roads leading to the rear may be cleared of troops and the broken brigades may be re-formed. This necessity presses strongly upon General Couch, and nobly does he set himself to discharge the duty. His example is superb. His horse is killed, he is himself twice hit. Nobly is he seconded by the chief of his First Division, Hancock, whose horse is killed and who is only able to secure a remount on an animal hardly large enough to allow the general's feet to clear the ground.

The Chancellor plain has become a very hell; shot scream over it from every direction but the north and

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\* Kirby died on the 28th of May. On the 23d President Lincoln sent him a general's commission in recognition of his brilliant abilities, undaunted courage, and faithful service.



the northeast; the house itself is in flames, and the wounded are removed from it under a torrent of bursting shells; yet Hancock's division, alone where seven divisions had been, still stands in two lines of battle, back to back, facing east and facing west, while the artillery, itself torn almost to pieces, holds the enemy at bay toward the south. At last the word comes that the First Division may retire. The long skirmish line quickly withdraws, although, by the blunder of a staff officer, eight companies file out of their trenches in the wrong direction and fall into the enemy's hands; the guns of Lepine's battery, which has lost all its officers, all its cannoneers, and all its horses, are drawn off by hand; and the heroic rear guard falls slowly back to the new line at the Bullock clearing.

The course of our narrative does not require us to deal at length with the further operations and incidents of the Chancellorsville campaign. During the remainder of the 3d of May and throughout the 4th Hooker kept his army inactive in their intrenchments, although urged to resume the offensive with the fresh corps of Meade and Reynolds and the soundest divisions remaining in the other corps, and contented himself with strengthening his new position. Thus Lee was enabled to withdraw from his front a sufficient number of troops to bring to a stand the gallant corps of Sedgwick, which had captured Fredericksburg and had moved as

far as Salem Church into Lee's rear; and then, Hooker still remaining inactive, to detach other brigades to drive Sedgwick across the river at Banks's ford. On the night of the 5th of May Hooker withdrew his baffled army across the Rappahannock, and the troops returned to their former camps after the loss of seventeen thousand men.

One of the results of the Chancellorsville campaign was a change in the command of the Second Corps. General Couch had felt outraged in every nerve and fiber of his being by the conduct of General Hooker from the 1st to the 5th of May: the retreat from the admirable offensive position reached by Sykes and Slocum on the 1st; the inaction of the 2d, giving opportunity for the overthrow and rout of Howard's corps; the defective dispositions of Sunday morning; the refusal to support the hard-pressed divisions at the front; the failure to throw Meade and Reynolds upon the Confederate left; the defensive attitude of the 4th, which allowed the isolated corps of Sedgwick to be overwhelmed without support or relief. It is a matter of regret that General Couch did not for a little while longer possess his soul in patience. A few weeks more would have seen the army commanded by an officer in whom he had the utmost confidence, and under whom, though his junior,\* he would have delighted

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\* To President Lincoln's suggestion that he should succeed Hooker in the command, Couch returned a sincere and decided

to march at the head of his own gallant corps. One can not help thinking that Gettysburg would have been a greater victory had Couch there led the Second Corps, as at Fredericksburg and at Chancellorsville, while Hancock, as in that event he would have done, commanded the Fifth Corps. The great lack of the Union army at Gettysburg was to be that of capable corps commanders\*—a lack most painfully felt after the fall of Reynolds on the first day. Sedgwick, Slocum, and Hancock were easily of the first rank; but some of the others, though all excellent division commanders, left much to be desired. In such a situation the addition of one more first-class corps commander would have been a source of great strength. But this was not to be. General Couch had wrought himself into an almost morbid feeling that he could never again lead his troops under Hooker, to what he regarded as purposeless slaughter. In this spirit, with pain inexpressible, he asked to be relieved from further service with the Army of the Potomac, and on the 10th of June left the Second Corps forever. A few days later, in recognition of his distinguished services, he was assigned to the new Department of the Susque-

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negative. Neither his health, always delicate, nor his retiring disposition qualified him for such a post of responsibility.

\* It is only in studying the operations of the Army of the Potomac after Gettysburg, from Falling Waters to Mine Run, that one comes fully to appreciate the poverty of the Army of the Potomac in this respect at this time.

hanna, formed to resist the threatening invasion of Pennsylvania.

By the retirement of General Couch the command of the corps devolved without question upon Hancock. It was with a stern joy at the fulfilment of his righteous ambition, with a glad confidence in his own powers, yet not the less with an earnest sense of the responsibility thus devolved upon him, that Hancock first drew his sword at the head of that body of troops which, in losing fifteen thousand men in battle, had never lost a color or a gun; whose fair fame, he was well resolved, should never suffer wrong at his hands. As when, at Antietam, he was promoted to the charge of a division, he was instantly recognized as one of the most distinguished officers of that grade, so upon his accession to the Second Corps the whole army instantly recognized his full and absolute competency for the position. We shall see in how few days thereafter he was to be called upon to exercise a much larger authority in one of the greatest crises of the war.

## CHAPTER VI.

### GETTYSBURG.—THE FIRST DAY.

HANCOCK's appointment to the command of the Second Corps came on the eve of great events. Although Hooker, with marvelous optimism, persisted in regarding Chancellorsville as virtually a victory for the Union arms, he was aware that the army, the Administration, and the country at large held a widely different opinion, and that something must be done, and done at once, if he were to rehabilitate himself in public confidence. But while he was searching the positions above and below Fredericksburg to find some opening, Lee determined to take an initiative which should cause the Union forces to loose their hold upon the Rappahannock, and should for a time transfer the contest to Northern soil. Many considerations urged him to this policy, the same which he had adopted after foiling McClellan's advance upon Richmond. Among these were the relief to be afforded to his own people from the terrible strain of a Union army constantly menacing Richmond; the discouragement which would be produced throughout the North by

repeating the invasion of 1862; the prestige to be given the Confederate arms abroad; the supposed demoralization of the Potomac army by the defeats at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville; the further depletion of that army by the approaching expiry of the nine months' and the two years' (New York) enlistments; the opportunity of feeding his men for a while from the fertile fields of Maryland and Pennsylvania, together with some fair chances of at least considerable initial success, to be effected by his fast-marching, indefatigable infantry.

It does not fall within the scope of this narrative to describe the manœuvres by which the Confederate chieftain, between the 3d and the 15th of June, contrived so to place his army that Hooker was compelled to abandon the line of the Rappahannock and fall back to cover Washington. It was on the 15th that the Second Corps, under its new commander, left the camps near Falmouth which it had occupied with one brief intermission since the November preceding, and took the route for Acquia Creek, covering the rear of the army. On this and on the succeeding day the intense heat and the thick dust made the march most oppressive and exhausting to troops so long in camp. It was under such conditions that Hancock's remarkable power of holding his men together told to the greatest effect. With our Northern soldiers nothing was of more importance to their efficiency than steadiness upon the

road. The Confederates, indeed, seemed to combine the instincts which made great freedom on the march, even to the point of wholesale straggling, compatible with tenacity in fight; but of the Union army it may truly be said that troops which were allowed to dawdle and dribble on the road were preparing themselves to be beaten in fight. The movement that had been entered upon was to prove at times one of severe trial, often to the limit of human endurance; but all that could be done by good judgment, firm temper, and a staff always out on the road, was done to spare the troops as much as possible, while bringing them into camp in good order at night. On the 21st the corps moved to Thoroughfare Gap, passing directly over the great historical battlefield of Bull Run. On the 25th the corps moved from Thoroughfare Gap to the Potomac, re-enforced by a body of troops which was destined to take a conspicuous part in all the future labors and dangers of the Second Corps, from the approaching struggle on the slopes of Gettysburg to the final triumph of Appomattox. This was the brigade commanded by Hancock's classmate, General Alexander Hays, consisting of the Thirty-ninth, One Hundred and Eleventh, One Hundred and Twenty-fifth, and One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York.\*

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\* The corps had, during the month then passing, been reduced by the expiry of the term of enlistment of a two years' regiment, the Thirty-fourth, from the same State.

Just as our troops were leaving Thoroughfare Gap an incident occurred which was importantly to affect the *personnel* of the corps. General Joshua T. Owen having been placed in arrest by General Gibbon, Brigadier-General Alexander S. Webb, who had just received his volunteer appointment, after long and honorable artillery and staff service, reached the headquarters, seeking an assignment to duty at the front, and Hancock, knowing the man, seized the opportunity to place him at the head of the "Philadelphia Brigade," thus left without a commander. On the 26th the corps crossed Edwards' Ferry, near the scene of the unhappy battle of Ball's Bluff, in which several regiments of the Second Division had participated in October of 1861. On the 28th the corps reached Monocacy Junction, near Frederick City. Here the Army of the Potomac received the important intelligence that General Hooker had been relieved in the command by General George G. Meade, then at the head of the Fifth Corps. General Hooker, after protesting against the fatuous occupation of Harper's Ferry by a large force under French, in pursuance of the policy which had brought such disaster in September, 1862, had tendered his resignation. In justice it should be said, not only that Hooker was right in demanding the evacuation of Harper's Ferry, but that, from the moment Lee's invasion of Maryland was known, he had displayed at all points the



qualities of a first-rate commander. Whether he would again have broken down under the strain of an impending battle, as he had so mysteriously done at Chancellorsville after a brilliant initiative, can only be conjectured.

It is a critical thing to change the commander of an army in the presence of a powerful and aggressive enemy; but in this instance the responsibility had fallen on one at whose hands the Army of the Potomac was to suffer no loss of honor. Without pausing a single day, General Meade put his troops in motion northward, on the 29th, to find the enemy. Amid the fiery cloud of Southern raiders where was the nucleus of that high-daring, much-enduring army? The Second Corps was to proceed by a forced march through Uniontown to a point two miles out on the Westminster road. Much precious time had been lost by the stupidity of the messenger who brought the order from headquarters; but to the accomplishment of its cruel task, thirty-two miles with artillery and trains on a single road, the veteran corps bent itself with unfaltering spirit. By ten o'clock that night the march had been made, and the wearied men sank to rest where they had halted. At Uniontown the reception of our troops by the patriotic inhabitants had been most friendly and inspiring. Refreshment was freely offered along the road at gates and porches, and kind words and good cheer lifted the hearts of the

tired soldiers crowding forward to take their part in the greatest battle of the war.

There is some poetry but also much truth in the popular tradition regarding the spirit of the Army of the Potomac on the route to Gettysburg. Once more in "God's country," as the soldiers termed it; the bloody slopes of Marye's hill, the dismal woods of Chancellorsville far away in the rear; moving on good Northern roads, instead of wading ankle-deep in the yellow Virginia mud, or thumping over corduroy; surveying a landscape which to most of them was like that of home, or in the enthusiasm of the moment looked so; going up to battle amid the acclaim of loyal citizens; marching between vineclad cottages which did not seem to belong to the same world as the mud-plastered log huts they had left behind—the good troops who marched from Frederick to Gettysburg, gallantly as they had borne themselves in disaster, were yet wonderfully heartened by scene and circumstance, by friendly greeting and the look of home. Earnestly did they talk together by the way until the fire burned and the strong resolve formed itself throughout the ranks to do or die for their country and its laws.

The following was the constitution, by divisions and brigades, of the Second Army Corps on the 30th of June, 1863:

*First Division.*—Brigadier-General John C. Caldwell. First Brigade: Colonel Edward E. Cross.

Second Brigade: Colonel Patrick Kelly. Third Brigade: Brigadier-General Samuel K. Zook. Fourth Brigade: Colonel John R. Brooke.

*Second Division.*—Brigadier-General John Gibbon. First Brigade: Brigadier-General William Harrow. Second Brigade: Brigadier-General Alexander S. Webb. Third Brigade: Colonel Norman J. Hall.

*Third Division.*—Brigadier-General Alexander Hays. First Brigade: Colonel S. Sprigg Carroll. Second Brigade: Colonel Thomas A. Smyth. Third Brigade: Colonel George L. Willard.

*Artillery Brigade.*—Five batteries. Captain John G. Hazard.

The Corps Staff included Morgan, Inspector General and Chief of Staff; Walker, Assistant Adjutant General (absent, wounded); Batchelder, Chief Quartermaster; Smith, Chief Commissary; Dougherty, Medical Director; Bull, Provost Marshal; Mitchell, Miller, and Parker, aids; Bingham, Judge Advocate; Brownson, Commissary of Musters; Livermore, Chief of Ambulances.

The day which followed the long march to and beyond Uniontown was passed by the troops of the Second Corps in a welcome quiet, no orders to march disturbing their peaceful rest, no booming of distant cannon presaging the fierce encounter soon to take place. The morning of Wednesday, July 1st, found the corps still in camp; and Hancock

sat down to address a general order to his troops urging them by all considerations of honor and patriotism to do their utmost in the impending struggle. The rough draft of this order lies before me as I write. I quote the concluding sentence :

“To the patriotic and brave I have said enough. Upon those who desert their posts in the hour of trial let instant death be inflicted by their comrades.

“WINFIELD S. HANCOCK, *Commanding.*”

It was not usual for Hancock to address his troops or to appeal to them in general orders. On this occasion perhaps some little excitement proceeding from the newness of his command, his intense feeling as a Pennsylvanian at seeing his native soil invaded and the very home of his childhood threatened with fire and sword, the general stir and clash of arms in the marching columns, had wrought his mind up to the point of taking this step. But the gist of the projected order lay not in the appeal to the patriotic, but in the threat to the base and cowardly. Hancock was sternly resolved that the betrayal of good troops by bad in the crisis of battle should, so far as his command was concerned, cease then and there ; and that the faint-hearted soldier should find it safer to do his duty on the line than to run away.

But even while Hancock sat writing, shaping his address to his troops, changing one word for an-

other, his very rank as yet casually omitted from the draft, the order came to march at once to Taneytown. By the hour the corps reached that place all thoughts of a general order had vanished. The time had arrived for action, not words. Great news had come—news which in the telling made rhetoric and argument alike trivial. The left wing of the Army of the Potomac, consisting of the First and Eleventh Corps, with Buford's division of cavalry, the Third Corps following, all under command of Major-General John F. Reynolds, had been pushed up to Gettysburg—name then little known!—to see if haply anywhere might be found the main body of the enemy, thus far hidden away amid clouds of raiding parties which covered no small part of the fair State of Pennsylvania. Here at Gettysburg the intrepid, vigilant, enterprising Buford, searching every avenue by which the enemy might approach, suddenly experienced the onset of Heth, coming in from Chambersburg upon his left, the first of Lee's widely scattered divisions to arrive in a general movement of concentration at that point ordered on the 29th of June, in ignorance of Meade's advance northward. Hastily sending word to Reynolds, Buford prepared to hold the enemy back until the Union infantry could come up. Twelve months earlier a Confederate division would have driven the Union cavalry before them like chaff; but the mounted service had now reached the same degree

of hardiness, tenacity, and endurance which the infantry acquired a year earlier. Posting his men along the banks of Willoughby Run, a mile or more to the northwest of Gettysburg, Buford, with the utmost courage and address, holds back the advancing Confederates until the head of the infantry corps, under Reynolds in person, comes rapidly up to the sound of the firing.

What shall be done in view of the fast-proceeding concentration of the enemy? Lee has, in ignorance of Meade's whereabouts, pitched upon Gettysburg; and this fortunate choice has given him a full twenty-four hours' start in a contest for that position. Shall the Army of the Potomac, thus put at disadvantage in point of time, relinquish Gettysburg and fall back upon Pipe Creek, which down to this moment has mainly been in view by the headquarters staff as the true defensive line? This is the question Reynolds is called to decide. The decision costs him his life but wins for him an immortality of glory. Without hesitation he orders up his foremost division (Wadsworth's) and throws it into action, to contest the advance of the Confederates and give time for the rest of his own troops and Howard's to come up. Here within a brief space he falls dead, paying with his life the price of holding Gettysburg for the Union arms. It needs not to tell of the fight which for hours raged along Willoughby Run and Semi-

nary Ridge, as the divisions of the First Corps successively arriving, and the Eleventh Corps following, sought to beat back the Confederate columns now fast coming upon the field from the northwest, from the north, and finally from the northeast. At last, in spite of the most gallant resistance, our troops are swept from the field in overwhelming numbers; Seminary Ridge is lost; the enemy, closing in, capture thousands in the streets of Gettysburg; the feeble remnants of the Union corps are obliged to retreat to Cemetery Hill and Cemetery Ridge. Of the sixteen thousand taken into action, scarce five thousand remain with the colors; the rest have been left upon the field, killed or wounded, or prisoners in the hands of the Confederates, or are scattered over the hills and plains, panic-stricken, broken, and in flight.

Return we now to Taneytown. Thither had been borne the news of the first engagement of the morning: conflicting news of gain and loss, and, at last, the tidings that Reynolds had fallen. Whether killed or only severely wounded was not yet known. Thus inauspiciously had the battle opened. The enemy, so eagerly sought, had been found only too well. General Meade had grave reason to believe that his left wing was in dire peril. The point where the collision had taken place intimated strongly that the Confederates were already there in vastly superior force. He could not himself go to the front, for he

must remain in communication with the more distant corps. Reynolds he had trusted as a man trusts his brother; but in neither of the two ranking officers left at Gettysburg—Doubleday, commanding the First Corps after Reynolds's death, Howard, commanding the Eleventh Corps, and also now by seniority the whole column—had he the confidence he would wish to have in an emergency like this, so suddenly developed. What should he do? The Second Corps was now arriving at Taneytown, at its head an officer who only three weeks before had been a division commander. But he was one whose reputation for high tactical skill, for single-minded obedience to orders, for desperate resolution, whether in attack or in defense, for almost magical power over men, had steadily risen with each succeeding day of service. He was a man who, wherever he appeared, at once, as by a great wave of moral force, lifted the hearts of his soldiers through his own intrepid bearing and joyous courage. Moreover, not having been engaged in the struggle of the earlier day, he would carry to Gettysburg not only a fresh force of mind and will, but a judgment calmer than could possibly be those of officers who had long been disputing that field against heavy odds. They might shrink from retreat before the enemy as a personal disgrace; he could have no other thought than what was best to be done in the situation created by the unexpected collision. Moved by these con-



siderations, General Meade issued the following order :

“HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
“July 1 (1.10 P. M.), 1863.

“*Commanding Officer, Second Corps :*

“The Major General Commanding has just been informed that General Reynolds has been killed or badly wounded. He directs that you turn over the command of your corps to General Gibbon, that you proceed to the front, and by virtue of this order, in case of the truth of General Reynolds’s death, you assume command of the corps there assembled—viz., the Eleventh, First, and Third, at Emmittsburg.\* If you think the ground and position there a better one on which to fight a battle under existing circumstances, you will so advise the general, and he will order all the troops up. You know the general’s views, and General Warren, who is fully aware of them, has gone out to see General Reynolds.

“*Later, 1.15 P. M.*

“Reynolds has possession of Gettysburg, and the enemy are reported as falling back from the front of Gettysburg. Hold your column ready to move.

“Very respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“D. BUTTERFIELD,

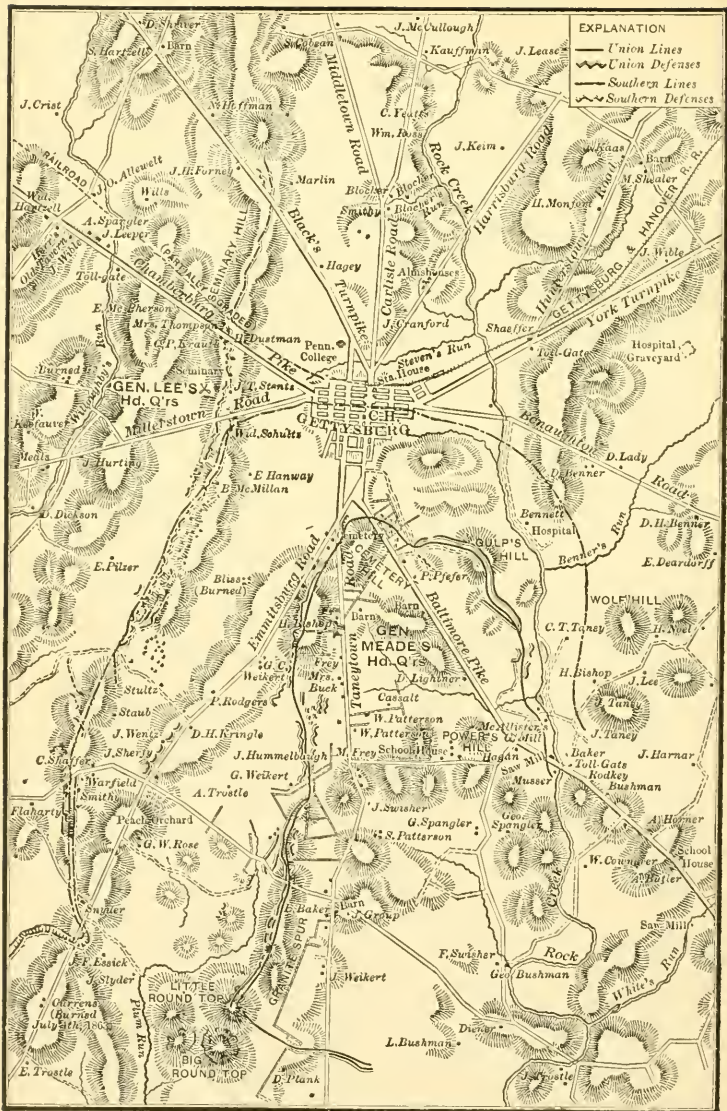
“*Major-General and Chief of Staff.*”

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\* This means that the Third Corps was at Emmittsburg.

Such was the order which on the 1st of July sent Hancock forward to Gettysburg to take command of three army corps over two officers, Howard and Sickles, who were his seniors in rank. To the latter fact General Meade's attention was called; but he replied that he could not help that. In this crisis he must have a man whom he knew and could trust; and he knew Hancock and could trust him. With such a commission no time was to be lost. The command of the Second Corps was turned over to Gibbon; and soon Hancock was being driven at top speed in an ambulance, while with Morgan he studied the imperfect maps of the region, the best which headquarters could provide. The staff and the led horses followed. The duty which had been charged upon Hancock was more than that of extricating from peril the two corps at the front. Down to this moment it had been Meade's prevailing intention to take up the line of Pipe Creek, which had been carefully surveyed by the engineers, as that best suited for defensive action and as fully covering Baltimore. The advance of the left wing had been made only with a view to discovering the enemy's position and purposes; and even now it might be best, in spite of the opening action, to fall back to this line and await Lee's attack there. This Hancock was practically to decide for the commanding general; this it was for which he scanned the poor little map that had been furnished him.





THE BATTLEFIELD OF GETTYSBURG, PA., JULY 1, 2, AND 3, 1863.

Fast as the ambulance rolls along, it can not keep up with Hancock's impatient mind; and soon the led horses are brought up, and the chief is galloping to the front, where, at any time, anything may happen. Only those who have once been in such a case know how long a road can be, how the distance lengthens, and how the throbbing sounds of cannon work the hearer into an ecstasy of impatient rage. Conjecture goes wild with a thousand thoughts of possible disaster, and a sort of shame at being so far away stings the soul of the good soldier hastening to the relief of his overborne comrades. At the distance of about four miles from Gettysburg an ambulance is encountered escorted by a single officer. A word tells that it contains the body of the heroic Reynolds borne from his last battlefield. A deep silence falls upon the galloping staff, and nothing is spoken until\* from the crest of Cemetery Hill the panorama of Gettysburg lies unrolled before them.

Beautiful as that landscape appears to the eye of the peaceful traveler, it is now a scene of terror, strewn with the dead and dying and with the wreck of battle. More painful still to witness are the disorderly groups of fugitives hurrying from the field

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\* Hancock gives the hour of his arrival as half-past three. Howard says four o'clock. Probably no other general in the army had so many staff officers who habitually carried notebooks and recorded every incident or order, with the hour and the minute, as had Hancock.

or skulking behind cover. Down the Baltimore road to the rear pours a stream of panic-stricken men mixed up with led horses, artillery, ammunition wagons, and ambulances loaded with the wounded. In front, across the valley, Seminary Ridge, on which had occurred the sanguinary battle of the morning, is bristling with the battalions and batteries of Hill's corps; while Ewell, having seized the town with his right, is extending his left to grasp Culp's Hill, from which he would command the road to Baltimore. To hold Cemetery Hill, thus threatened, there is a single brigade not yet engaged—that of Colonel Orlando Smith, about one thousand strong, which had been left in reserve when Howard went forward to support Reynolds. Here and there remnants of other brigades have halted, unwilling to retreat farther, yet surveying with gloomy apprehension the fast-gathering masses of the Confederates. To the left, adown the crest of Cemetery Ridge the broken bands of the First Corps, which have done transcendent soldierly service during the long hours of the day, stand firmly in their place, to keep the position for which they have made such awful sacrifices. In front of them, and still farther to the left, is the one inspiring feature of the scene: Buford's splendid division of cavalry drawn up in line of battalions *en masse*, unshaken and undaunted in the face of the Confederate infantry.

Upon this field of wreck and disorder now ap-

pears Hancock. And as the sun shining through a rift in the clouds may change a scene of gloom to one of beauty, so the coming of this prince of soldiers brings life and courage to all. At his call the braver spirits flame to their height; the weaker souls yield gladly to the impulse of that powerful, aggressive, resolute nature. At once the doubtful halt on Cemetery Hill is transformed into the confident assumption of a new line of battle; the fearful stream adown the Baltimore road is peremptorily stopped; shattered regiments as they reach the hill are re-formed; on every side men seek their colors with alacrity; commanders rectify their lines; ammunition is brought up; troops are sent to occupy Culp's Hill, threatened by Ewell's divisions; skirmishers are thrown out on the front and right; batteries are planted along the crest; every position of advantage is occupied with the bravest show of force that can be made, with a view to deterring the enemy from attacking until the re-enforcements now rapidly approaching the field shall arrive.

In the following words Captain Edward N. Whittier, of the Fifth Maine Battery which was among the last to emerge from the streets of Gettysburg and mount the hill, describes the appearance of General Hancock on this occasion: "In the center of the plateau was a group of general officers and orderlies. It was a scene of the utmost activity, and yet there was no confusion. Prominent in the

group—on horseback, erect, unmoved amid the throng of retreating, defeated, and well-nigh worn-out soldiers—sat a man born to command, by birth and education a soldier of high degree, competent to evolve order out of the chaos of retreat, cool, calm, self-possessed, the master of himself and his place. I rode up to him and, saluting, reported with the battery with which I was serving. Turning quickly to his right and rear, and pointing to the knoll on the northwestern slope of Culp's Hill, he said: 'Do you see that hill, young man? Put your battery there and stay there.' I shall never forget the inspiration of his commanding, controlling presence or the fresh courage he imparted, his whole atmosphere strong and invigorating. And I remember (how refreshing to note!) even his linen clean and white, his collar wide and free, and his broad wristbands showing large and rolling back from his firm, finely molded hands."

Among the remaining officers of the First Corps, Colonel Morgan's manuscript narrative particularly mentions General Wadsworth for his undaunted spirit and his eagerness to renew the fight. General G. K. Warren, then Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac, was also upon the field and rendered invaluable service in posting the troops and the batteries. At half-past four Hancock dispatched his senior aid, Major Mitchell, with word to Meade that Gettysburg offered a suitable position for de-



fense, though somewhat exposed to be turned by the left. An hour had sufficed to make a great change within the Union lines; a vastly greater change as seen from the enemy's ground. Though not a man besides Hancock and his staff had come upon the field since Seminary Ridge was lost, Lee hesitated to give the order to attack positions, naturally strong, which appeared to have been suddenly occupied by fresh troops, so brave was the show of force everywhere made. He instructed Ewell to feel our line on its right, but not to bring on a general engagement. That delay saved the field of Gettysburg to the Union arms.

At half-past five re-enforcements began to arrive. These were from Slocum's Twelfth Corps. The First Division, that of Williams, turned to the right on approaching the field, and went into position near Wolf's Hill. The Second Division, that of Geary, Hancock directed to prolong our line to the left, towards the Round Tops. Slocum himself coming up, Hancock turned over the command of the field to him, as senior in rank, and rode off to confer with General Meade. About three miles away he met his own corps, which he halted that it might be available against any movement by the enemy to turn our left flank. Sickles's column meanwhile was arriving at Gettysburg, and the position was for the time secure. All night, however, the good troops of the Fifth and Sixth Corps were

pressing forward in ghostly columns toward the battlefield in a long, unstaying march.

Such were Hancock's services on the memorable first day at Gettysburg. Two points require to be emphasized further than they have been in the course of this narrative. The first was Hancock's keen perception of the danger of a Confederate movement around our left. To the other officers who overlooked the field on the afternoon of the 1st of July it seemed that Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill were especially likely to be the points of attack. Meade himself, coming up during the night, was so impressed with the same idea that he gave little or no attention, then or in the morning, to the left. But Hancock's first message pointed out the danger of a movement by the enemy in this direction which was so painfully manifested on the following day. The first use he made of the re-enforcements arriving on the field was to send them southward, two of Geary's regiments actually passing the night at Little Round Top, though called away the next morning without being replaced. And, on Hancock's return to general headquarters, he halted the Second Corps on the Taneytown road.

The second point to be further insisted on is Hancock's relations to Howard. I have given the text of the instructions under which Hancock went up to Gettysburg; and no one who knew aught of that officer should need to be assured that, if ordered

to take command of any force, he took command of it with all which that implies, and fully exercised the authority given him until he formally relinquished it to some one who had the right to receive it. Yet, in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* of July, 1876, General Howard sought to make out that Hancock did not assume command upon his arrival at Cemetery Hill, but merely acted as a sort of personal representative of, or temporary chief of staff to, General Meade. The following is his description of the meeting and what immediately followed:

“General Hancock greeted me in his usual frank and cordial manner, and used these words: ‘General Meade has sent me to represent him on the field.’ I replied: ‘All right, Hancock, this is no time for talking. You take the left of the pike and I will arrange these troops to the right!’ He said no more, and moved off in his peculiar, gallant style to gather scattered brigades and put them into position. I noticed that he sent Wadsworth’s division, without consulting me, to the right of the Eleventh Corps, to Culp’s Hill; but as it was just the thing to do I made no objection—probably would not have made any in any event—but worked away, assisted by my officers, organizing and arranging batteries and infantry along the stone wall and fences toward Gettysburg and along the northern crest of the ridge. It did not strike me then that Hancock, without troops, was doing more than

directing matters as a temporary chief of staff for Meade."

Upon this view of his relations to Hancock on the first day at Gettysburg, General Howard has insisted down to the present time. When, on the 4th of February, 1891, I had occasion to read a paper on General Hancock before the New York Commandery of the Loyal Legion, General Howard, in conversation with me, took exception to the statements I had made on this subject, and gave his own account of the 1st of July in substantially the terms of the Atlantic article. "There we were," he said, "working away just like two brothers." Now, I desire to remark, first, that if there was any officer in the Union army who was incapable of performing in the "two-brothers act," it was Winfield Scott Hancock; and, secondly, that the whole record is dead against General Howard's position. Certainly General Abner Doubleday, who succeeded to the command of the First Corps upon the death of Reynolds, was not in doubt that Hancock came to take command. In his History of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg he says: "About half-past three General Hancock arrived with orders from General Meade to supersede Howard . . . Howard stated, in a subsequent account of the battle, that he merely regarded Hancock as a staff officer acting for General Meade . . . I know that he rode over to me and told me that he was in command of the field"

(pp. 150, 151). But Hancock is entitled to be heard on this matter in his own words. In the *Galaxy Magazine* of 1876 he published an account of the meeting on Cemetery Hill. The following quotation will suffice: "General Howard claims that there was an understanding between us whereby I was to take charge of the troops on the left of the turnpike while he arranged those on the right. He does not disclose the fact that I exercised independent powers; but, in his letter to General Meade, already quoted, he says: 'General Hancock assisted me in carrying out orders which I had already issued.' Now, I had no such understanding with General Howard, and I did not so assist him in carrying out orders which he had already issued. The only pretext for his statement of such an understanding is that, as I was about riding away to the left, I understood him to indicate to me that he would prefer the right, where his troops were then posted, for his own position, and he said that he would be found there personally; but there was no division of command between General Howard and myself. Indeed, one of the first orders I gave on assuming the command was for the troops of the Eleventh Corps (Howard's) to be pushed forward to the stone walls in the next field, to give room for development and to deter the enemy's advance. And about the same time I addressed a few words to his own troops on the left of the pike, with a

view to encourage them to hold the position while our lines were forming. I then rode on to place the First Corps farther to the left, in order that we should cover the whole of Cemetery Hill, only a small portion of which was occupied when I rode upon the field. General Doubleday, commanding the First Corps after the fall of Reynolds, can give positive evidence that I assumed immediate command and directed the disposition of his troops as soon as he fell back to Cemetery Hill. General Buford was also directed by me to hold his command in the flat to the left and front of Cemetery Hill as long as possible, in order to give me time to form our line of battle on the hill itself. I took charge of all our forces on the field, as my orders directed me to do, and, seeing the importance of the point, immediately sent Wadsworth's division and a battery to occupy Culp's Hill. I had no idea of consulting General Howard as to the propriety of that movement, which he states he noticed but to which he 'made no objection.' I ordered the movement because, as commander of the troops and being responsible for what was done on the field, I considered it proper that it should be promptly made."

## CHAPTER VII.

### GETTYSBURG.—THE SECOND DAY.

THE morning of the 2d of July found General Lee possessing the advantage of superior concentration, Pickett's division and Law's brigade alone being more than three miles away, as well as the great advantage arising from the prestige of victory in the encounter of the first day. On the Union side the Second Corps was brought upon the field early in the morning; but the Fifth and two brigades of the Third were still on the march, while the Sixth Corps could not possibly be brought up until late in the afternoon.

It is now time to speak more at length of the battlefield. The position which the Union army had taken up, after the severe fighting on Willoughby Run and Seminary Ridge, had the general shape of a fishhook. The long shank was represented by the line drawn from the Round Tops on the left northward along Cemetery Ridge. Just where the turn took place the ridge rose into Cemetery Hill, directly beneath which, in front, lay the town of Gettysburg. As our line from this

point curved to the rear it was extended along the north face of Cemetery Hill; thence through low ground to and over Culp's Hill, which formed the extreme right of our position so far as the infantry was concerned, though during the 3d of July and a portion of the 2d the cavalry prolonged our line still farther to and beyond Wolf's Hill on our right rear. Within the Union position were the Baltimore pike, running southeast from Gettysburg, and the Taneytown road, running south. Both these roads ran out through our lines, near together, over Cemetery Hill and entered Gettysburg under cover of our guns. The Confederate forces occupied the town opposite our right center, and curved round the Union line to confront our troops on Culp's Hill. Opposite our left center and left the Confederates held Seminary Ridge, at a general distance of fourteen hundred yards. The two armies were nearly equal in numbers, with the advantage slightly in favor of the Union forces.

The generally clean and neat division, geographically, of the field was marred in one particular by a subordinate ridge which ran from Cemetery Ridge, near Gettysburg, diagonally across the plain to Seminary Ridge, nearly opposite our extreme left, reaching Seminary Ridge at a point known in the accounts of the battle as the Peach Orchard. Along the subordinate ridge described ran the road from Gettysburg to Emmitsburg. This road, there-



fore, ran out from our skirmish line on the right center and ran into the Confederate lines opposite our left. While, in a broad view of the field, this ridge is properly called a subordinate one, it was yet, for a certain distance, after Cemetery Ridge had fallen away to the level of the plain and before the ground began to rise again into Little Round Top, somewhat higher and better as a military position than the part of our line opposite it.

The disposition of our troops was as follows: General Slocum, commanding the right wing, consisting of his own, the Twelfth Corps, together with what remained of the First and Eleventh Corps, held Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, the whole curved portion of the Union line and that which overlooked the town. General Hancock held the center, his corps being drawn up along Cemetery Ridge. The Third Corps, under Sickles, formed the left, extending toward, but not reaching, Little Round Top. The latter point had, as stated, been in a degree covered by troops of the Twelfth Corps during the night; but these had been withdrawn. It was part of the matter subsequently in controversy between Generals Meade and Sickles whether the orders to the latter had not required him to hold Little Round Top in force. In fact, it was not occupied even by the Third Corps skirmishers.

During the morning of the 2d the Union army naturally looked for a renewal of hostilities by the

Confederates. But the day wore on, hour after hour, without anything more serious than a reconnoissance from the Third Corps in front of the Emmittsburg road, and some fighting on the skirmish line in front of the Second Corps. Responsibility for this long delay has remained in dispute. Generally speaking, the blame has been cast upon Longstreet, all the more since his accession to the Republican party and his acceptance of office under President Grant. It is alleged that Longstreet was in the early morning ordered to move around the left flank of the Union forces with a portion of his corps, and at the same time make a vigorous front attack with the remainder. A success on the Union left was to be followed up by the other Confederate troops, in order successively from their right to their left.

However it came about, the attack was, in fact, delayed until about four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the Fifth Corps was up on our side and lay, resting after its long march, along Rock Creek, at the Baltimore pike. Meanwhile, however, a change had taken place in the disposition of the Union forces—a change fraught with momentous consequences. General Sickles, dissatisfied with the ground on which his corps was drawn up and seeing that the ridge over which the Emmittsburg road ran in his front was at some points higher than his own, suddenly and without notice either to Meade or to Hancock, advanced his troops to the Emmitts-

burg road, along which he extended his line (Humphreys's division on the right) as far as the Peach Orchard, from which point it was "refused," or drawn back at an angle toward, but not to, Little Round Top, the left of the corps resting on the "Devil's Den," a wild, rocky bit of country strangely in contrast with the general character of the region. So that when Longstreet, after compassing his long detour, brought Hood's and McLaws's divisions up against the Union left, that line had been advanced to meet him part way, and offered to his attack an angle both sides of which it was in his power to enfilade by artillery fire.

The causes which had delayed the Confederate attack took nothing from its vehemence when once it fell. The men of the Third Corps met the assault with the utmost bravery, battling long and hard as became the old divisions of Hooker and Kearney. But even before the troops along the Emmittsburg road and from the Peach Orchard to the "Devil's Den" were assailed, the Confederates were passing around Sickles's flank to lay hold on Little Round Top, so strangely left undefended. It was the prescience and prompt action of General Gouverneur K. Warren which discerned the hostile advance in this direction and brought up the brigade of Vincent from the Fifth Corps, which, after a deadly struggle, often hand to hand, defeated this dangerous movement and made the Union flank secure.

But now the long-prepared attack fell with deadly fury upon the left of the Third Corps at the "Devil's Den," and extended gradually along its entire line. At last the center was broken at the Peach Orchard, and both the lines which formed the fatal angle were taken in reverse and rear by the eager Confederates, who poured in great numbers through the gap they had made. In this appeared the natural effects of the error committed by Sickles in advancing his line. The troops which were hurried to his aid came into positions in which they fought on unequal terms and from which each division was in turn driven out by the Confederates appearing on its flank. Barnes's division of the Fifth Corps, Caldwell's of the Second, and Ayers's "regular" division were successively thrown into action, only to be forced back with the loss of nearly half their numbers. This, however, did not prevent the display of the utmost gallantry; and the battle on the left, during the afternoon of the 2d of July at Gettysburg, will always be celebrated for its deeds of daring and for the stern and long resistance offered to the Confederate advance.

But, meanwhile, what of the left center? We have seen that Longstreet with two divisions had attacked the Union left, both in flank and in front, and had succeeded in driving Sickles out of the Peach Orchard and in beating back the troops of the Fifth and Second Corps sent to his support, al-

though Little Round Top had been made secure by the sagacity and energy of Warren. It was part of the scheme of battle that, so soon as Longstreet should gain ground, the other divisions of Lee's army should advance, in order from right to left, and take up the assault upon the Union position. The corps on Longstreet's left was Hill's, and Hill's right division was Anderson's. This division, accordingly, should have advanced immediately upon the breaking through of Sickles's line; and its advance would have been straight against the left of the Second Corps. What, in fact, occurred?

Hancock had, with great anxiety, seen the throwing forward of Sickles's corps to the Emmittsburg road. As he watched the movement of Humphreys's division he turned to his staff and said: "Gentlemen, that is a splendid advance. But," he added after a moment's pause, "those troops will be coming back again very soon." Sickles's change of position had opened a wide gap between the Third Corps and the Second. Partially to fill this space, the Fifteenth Massachusetts and Eighty-second New York were thrown forward to the Emmittsburg road, at the Codori House, and Brown's Rhode Island battery was pushed to the front to cover with its fire a portion of the field thus exposed. And so the left center of our line waited to see what would come of Sickles's venturesome initiative. It was even later in the afternoon when General Meade learned the

error which his subordinate had committed. The order to recall the Third Corps was on his lips when the roar of musketry told that the battle was joined, and that, for good or for ill, Sickles must be supported in his advanced position.

The course of this narrative does not require us to give a detailed account of the terrible fighting on the left: in the Peach Orchard, on the rugged slopes of Little Round Top, amid the rocky gorges of the "Devil's Den," or in the historical Wheat Field where Caldwell's division of the Second Corps lost half of all the officers and men it carried into action, including the heroic Zook, of New York, Cross, of New Hampshire, and Roberts, of Pennsylvania. With that division, his own—that of which he took command amid the wreck and disorder of Antietam and which he had led with so much glory at Fredericksburg and at Chancellorsville—duty did not allow Hancock to go when it was sent down to the left to assist its hard-pressed comrades of the Third Corps. It was his part to remain with his other divisions and hold the left center, on which at any time the storm might burst. But now, up from the left comes the news that Longstreet has driven everything before him and Sickles has been desperately wounded; and soon an order from General Meade places Hancock in command of the whole left wing. At once he rides away, taking with him Willard's brigade of Hays's division. He sees Hum-

phreys re-forming his broken brigades, scarcely of a regiment's strength, many banners and few men, along the line he had left in that ill-fated advance. At every point the enemy are streaming forward to press their advantage, running over half a score of Union guns which the loss of horses and men has left in their hands. At once he directs Willard's brigade to charge the exulting Confederates. Willard is killed by Hancock's side, and half his men fall; but the shock of that gallant charge throws the enemy into confusion, stays their progress, and recovers a battery of guns. Directing Colonel Sherrill, who has succeeded to the command on Willard's death, to hold his ground at all cost, Hancock rides rapidly back to the right, looking for re-enforcements. There are large spaces on which not a company of Union troops is to be found. Out from the bushes, just in front, he sees a column emerge in haste and disorder. Taking it for a portion of the Third Corps driven in, he rides toward it to halt and post the troops; but is undeceived by a volley which twice wounds his brave and faithful aid, Captain Miller, the only officer whom the turmoil of the fight has left with him. Hastily directing Miller to ride away as fast as his horse will carry him, he spurs his own horse down a swale, which for the moment half shelters him, till he encounters a regiment advancing in column by fours from the Union side. Riding up to the colonel

and pointing to the brigade of Alabama troops from which he has just escaped, he cries out: "Colonel, do you see those colors? Then take them." At once the gallant First Minnesota, without waiting to come from column into line, hurls itself upon the foe. Eighty out of every hundred of the brave Minnesotians go down—colonel, lieutenant colonel, major, adjutant, every officer but three; but the effort avails, and the enemy are driven back in disorder. But already two more of Anderson's brigades are getting to work. They charge across the space between the lines, overrun the regiments at the Codori House, killing both colonels and killing or wounding half the men, capture Brown's guns, and swarm forward to attempt the main line of the Second Corps. Into the gap Hancock directs the Nineteenth Massachusetts and Forty-second New York, which advance bravely but are driven out by overwhelming numbers with terrible losses. For the moment the wave of the Confederate advance flings its foam over the position held by Gibbon's division. It looks as though the great contest of the war were here and now and finally to take place. But, through some strange misconception, Anderson's remaining brigades fail to come forward; and the other divisions of Hill, waiting by orders for them, also stand in their place. Those already engaged lash our lines from the base of Little Round Top to the "Clump of Trees."



It is only for the moment. Up from the rear advance the re-enforcements which the news of adverse fortunes has drawn over from the right. Meade, Hancock, Morgan, and Mitchell direct them to the positions which they are to fill. Doubleday's division of the First Corps comes to the support of the Second; farther to the left McGilvray's artillery brigade forms behind Sickles's broken troops; and Lockwood's Maryland brigade, supported by Williams's division of the Twelfth Corps, charges forward almost to the Emmittsburg road and finally restores our line in this part of the field. From Little Round Top, too, Crawford's division of the Pennsylvania Reserves advances over ground which had been lost; while the Sixth Corps, just come in from its long march, joins in the movement or forms in support behind the left. Before the stern array of the arriving troops the men of Longstreet and Hill, worn out by the desperate struggles of the afternoon, give way surlily and in good order.

But though the great battle of the left, with all its thrilling episodes, with all its tremendous possibilities, with all its terrific losses, is over, the day's work is not yet at an end. Just as the fighting dies down on the Union left it springs up on the right and right center, where Ewell finally gets to work to do what he should have done hours before. The brigades of Hays and Hoke, supported by Gordon, advance upon Cemetery Hill from the north,

drive Howard's troops from their works and their guns, and establish themselves upon the crest. But their triumph is soon past. Hancock, hearing the outburst and knowing the danger that lies in the enfeebled condition of the Eleventh Corps, has promptly and without waiting for orders sent Carroll's long-legged Western brigade rapidly by the right flank to come up behind Cemetery Hill. That gallant command, right gallantly led, arrives in the nick of time, pushes its way through the disordered troops and, throwing itself furiously upon the enemy, drives them down the slope, recovers Howard's batteries and restores his line. But still all is not over. Farther around to our right Johnson's Confederate division pushes its way into a portion of the works abandoned by the troops of the Twelfth Corps which had been sent late in the afternoon to the support of Sickles, though it is beaten back from the portion of the corps line which is held by that stout old soldier, General George S. Greene. And now from right to left the clamor of voices, the thunder of guns dies down; and the second day of Gettysburg passes into history.

After night had fallen the corps commanders of the Army of the Potomac were called to the headquarters of General Meade to deliberate upon the morrow. The outlook was indeed gloomy. On the first day the Eleventh Corps had been put nearly *hors de combat*, and the First Corps had been reduced

to the size of a division. During the afternoon of the day just closed the Third Corps had been almost literally "cut to pieces." Two divisions of the Fifth Corps and one of the Second had lost half their men in the contests in the Wheat Field and around the base of Little Round Top. In all, twenty thousand men had gone out of the forces that on the 1st of July had been directed upon Gettysburg, to meet the columns which Lee had so unexpectedly turned upon that town of fate. Moreover, upon our extreme right the enemy were in possession of a portion of the breastworks abandoned by the Twelfth Corps when it marched to the left, and had almost laid hands upon the Baltimore pike.

Yet the spirit of the army was high and martial. Alike commanding officers and men in the ranks felt that the battle was still to be fought, and on this very ground; and from that encounter, however protracted and however severe, they did not shrink. Malicious tongues and pens have asserted that in the council of war on Thursday night General Meade's disposition was to retreat from the field to the line of Pipe Creek; but this slander, with which the military fortunes of several important persons had been intimately connected, has fallen dead before the calm and dignified assertions of Meade and the corroborative testimony of Sedgwick, Howard, Williams, and Gibbon. When the council of war broke up, the order for the day was that the Army of

the Potomac should stand in its place and receive whatever blows the Army of Northern Virginia might deliver; and as the news of this resolution ran through the ranks, from Culp's Hill to Round Top, every soldier's heart responded with a fervent Amen!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### GETTYSBURG.—THE THIRD DAY.

WHEN day broke upon the 3d of July it found the Army of the Potomac in the identical positions to which Hancock had directed the broken brigades of the First and Eleventh Corps and the first reinforcements arriving upon the field in the afternoon of Wednesday. While, in general, the plan of battle was strictly defensive, it was imperative that Johnson should at once be driven out of the breastworks upon the right which had been captured by him late in the previous evening. To this task the Twelfth Corps, under Slocum, supported by Shaler's brigade from the Sixth, promptly and gallantly addressed itself. Johnson had been heavily re-enforced, and the nature of the country made combinations for the attack upon him exceedingly difficult; but the Union troops would not be denied and, after a bloody fight, the enemy were driven out and our line became through all its length complete. And now the Army of the Potomac awaits in silence, in suspense, in anxiety, but not in dread, the attack which it is known to all, from the

highest to the lowest, Lee must needs make. For him to retreat without a decisive encounter is morally impossible. Neither the political nor the military exigencies of the Confederacy will admit of it. But will he seek first to manœuvre the Army of the Potomac out of its position by a movement around one or the other of its flanks? If he commits himself to an immediate attack, will it be against our left, where the terrible battle of the second day has barely ceased to rage; against our left center, along Cemetery Ridge, now held by Hancock; against our right center on Cemetery Hill, which Early and Rodes only last night attempted; or against our right, from which the Confederates have this very morning been driven? As the veteran regiments of the Potomac army lie awaiting the coming assault, does each soldier more hope that the honor of the conflict may come to him and to his comrades under the same tattered flag; or that the decision of the Confederate commander may direct the blow upon some other part of the long line, and the cup thus pass from his own lips? Does the long delay bring relief to the feelings with which the troops arose from their bivouac; or does it but intensify the sense of strain as the period of suspense is prolonged? Only for himself can any of the survivors of that memorable day answer these questions.

Meanwhile Hancock was intently engaged in preparing for the defense of the long line assigned

to him, which embraced the positions occupied by the First Corps, now under Newton, as well as those held by the Second, of which Gibbon had taken immediate command. The popular notion regarding the third day at Gettysburg greatly exaggerates the strength of the Union left center. Abrupt, and at points even rugged, as were the faces of Culp's and Cemetery Hills, the descent from Cemetery Ridge toward the west was not considerable, even at the first; while, as our line ran still farther south, the ridge shrank more and more into the plain, until, in the positions where the Third Corps had the day before at first been stationed, the ground presented scarcely any advantage over that directly in its front.

In fact, the point which the Confederate commander had selected for his great attack was at about the middle of Hancock's long line, and was also about at the mean as regarded elevation. "The clump of trees," which Lee had that morning pointed out to Longstreet, stood upon ground which a casual observer three or four hundred yards in front might have deemed little higher than his own, although the eye of a trained artillerist would at once have seen that it afforded just elevation enough for the best effect of canister. To the right of this position lay the division of Alexander Hays. "The clump of trees" itself and the ground immediately to the left was occupied by the

division of Gibbon, while farther on was Doubleday's division of the First Corps (comprising the Second Vermont brigade, of which we shall have much to say), and then Caldwell's division of the Second Corps. The shorter convex line of the Union army allowed the service of far less artillery than was massed upon the longer concave line of the Confederates; but, on the other hand, the formation of the Union line facilitated in a high degree the passage of troops from flank to flank, as the exigencies of battle should require. Finally, the convexity of the Union line might make the positions of the artillery reserve, of the ammunition trains and of headquarters and staff an almost intolerable one, as the fire of three or four miles of batteries should converge into the narrow space between the Union wings.

I esteem it a great good fortune to have from the pen of a soldier, a jurist and a man of affairs, the account of an interview with General Hancock just before the mighty cannonade of the 3d of July broke out. There are countless tributes—in letters, in books, and in official reports—to the bearing and demeanor of the commander of the Second Corps upon the field of battle; but the impression made by Hancock upon a man like Wheelock G. Veazey\*

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\* Then Colonel of the Sixteenth Vermont regiment; subsequently Justice of the Supreme Court of Vermont, Commander in Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, and now (1894) a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission.



can not fail to be of interest. Colonel Veazey had, on the night of the 2d, been on duty as the Field Officer of the Day for Stannard's brigade, and had established the picket line of that command over a portion of the ground afterward swept by the great charge of the 3d. Owing to the exigencies of the service, the men on picket had not been relieved in the morning, but were still kept out as skirmishers, closely engaged with the enemy's sharpshooters. About one o'clock Colonel Veazey rode back to report the exhausted condition of his men and see if he could not obtain an order for their relief. The following are his words :

“The general said he had had them in mind all day and would have sent out reliefs but that he was afraid it could not be done without considerable loss; but, as it was quiet on the front at that time, he would order a relief and have them report to me at his headquarters, and asked me to remain there with him until they came up. I had served in the same division with him since the organization of the Potomac army until after the Peninsula campaign. I saw him when he turned the rebel left flank with his brigade at Williamsburg, had seen him in other battles of that campaign, and had often been thrilled by his proud and fearless bearing in action. But I had never seen him when he looked every inch the magnificent, ideal soldier so truly as on this occasion. I knew from every word and look that

General Hancock had correctly divined the determination of the men who lay along the crest to the right and left to stay there and never be driven therefrom. He knew that they as well as he appreciated the consequences of defeat. They knew him; and believed that whatever tactical skill and courage could attain he would accomplish. Leader and men were never better suited to each other. As he repeatedly examined his line with a field glass, I could see the expression of satisfaction, confidence, and impatience. But he had not long to wait, for, just as the first detail he had ordered was approaching, the signal gun from the opposite crest was fired, followed in a minute by one hundred and forty others."

The great battle of the third day had begun. To prepare the way for his daring and resolute infantry, Lee had organized one of the mightiest cannonades in the history of war. Nearly a hundred and fifty guns had been brought into action along Seminary Ridge and now turned their grim muzzles upon the crest which Longstreet's column was to assault. Owing to the nature of the Union position, only eighty guns could be brought to bear in reply, while, from the same cause, the rear of our line was peculiarly subject to the effects of the hostile fire. The whole space behind Cemetery Ridge was in a moment rendered uninhabitable. General headquarters were broken up; the supply and re-

serve ammunition trains were driven out; motley hordes of camp followers poured down the Baltimore pike or spread over the fields to the rear. Upon every side caissons exploded; horses were struck down by hundreds; the air was filled with flying missiles; shells tore up the ground and then bounded for another and perhaps more deadly flight, or burst above the crouching troops and sent their ragged fragments down in deadly showers. Never had a storm so dreadful burst upon mortal men. As soon as the cannonade opened, Hancock mounted his horse, and with his staff behind him and his corps flag flying, rode slowly along the front of his line that every man might see that his general was with him in the storm. Thousands of soldiers, crouching close to the ground under the bitter hail, looked up at that calm, stately form, that handsome, proud face, that pennon bearing the well-known trefoil; and found courage longer to endure the pelting of the pitiless gale. Only once was the cavalcade interrupted; so furious was the fire, his favorite black charger became unmanageable, and Hancock was obliged to dismount and borrow the horse of an aid to complete the circuit of his line.

For nearly two hours the cannonade lasted. Long before it died down, the batteries of the corps to the right and of the corps to the left had ceased to respond, reserving their ammunition for what was to follow; but Hancock knew well where the com-

ing assault was to fall, and by his direction the batteries of the Second Corps continued firing to the last, for he would not allow his troops to be disheartened by the silence of their own guns.\* And now, at nearly three o'clock, the fire of the Confederate artillery slackens; and across the plain, upon Seminary Ridge, the hostile columns are seen forming. Braver men never trod the earth than form the fourteen brigades which are to be launched against our lines. Pettigrew's five constitute the left. Pickett's three, the flower of Virginia chivalry, are on the right. Thomas and McGowan are to cover the flank of Pettigrew; Wilcox and Perry, the flank of Pickett; while Lane and Scales are to support the attacking column.

But Longstreet hesitates. Too well he knows the courage and endurance of the army he is to encounter. For a moment, and again for a moment, he delays to give the order to advance. He has to be reminded that precious time is passing, and that the giant cannonade must be promptly followed up or its effect will be lost. At last the word is given, whether by him or by a staff officer; and the gallant troops he has marshaled move down the slopes of Seminary Ridge. At once the Union

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\* In the Century Company's War Book, vol. iii, pp. 385-387, may be found the discussion between General Henry J. Hunt, Chief of Artillery, and myself as to the expediency of Hancock's course in this matter.

batteries on Cemetery Hill and about Little Round Top open fire. The plain between the two lines once more shrieks with flying missiles. A fairer mark was never offered; better artillerists never served their guns. In front of every regiment in the long Confederate line bursts the deadly shrapnel, sending its whistling bullets on into the living mass. But the ranks are closed without a tremor, and steadily and swiftly the divisions of Pettigrew and Pickett move forward to their great enterprise.

And now the guns of the Second Corps, which have thus far, from want of shell and shrapnel, been silent during the Confederate advance, open once more; and the ranks of Pettigrew and Pickett are torn with canister from the guns of Woodruff, Arnold, Cushing, Rorty, and Cowan. These gallant officers serve their batteries as coolly as if they were not looking into the faces of ten thousand rapidly advancing foemen. "No. 1, Fire! No. 2, Fire!" re-sounds monotonously from right to left of each battery, while the hot guns belch their flame and smoke and leaden hail into the very faces of the enemy. At last the infantry of Hays and Gibbon open the fire they have spontaneously reserved for the critical moment. Before the blazing muzzles of those thousands of veteran rifles the Confederate lines for a moment stagger and reel; the ground is strewn with dead and dying. But the blood of Virginia and North Carolina is up; the colors that have

fallen are lifted again and waved defiantly in air; the still advancing lines bend themselves against the storm of lead as a man leans forward to breast a furious gale; they are so near that a few minutes must decide whether Gettysburg is lost or won.

Now three things occur which must be narrated in succession, though they happen, if not all at once, then with inappreciable intervals: (1) Of the five brigades of Pettigrew, that on the extreme left, Brockenborough's Virginians, enfiladed by the guns from Cemetery Hill, breaks and goes to the rear; the remaining brigades, partly under the influence of the same cause, partly recoiling from the steady fire of Hays's line, draw in upon Pickett's troops, heaping up on the center, as one has seen in so many Confederate assaults, while Lane's and Scales's brigades close up from the rear: (2) Stannard's Vermont brigade, away down on the left, is thrown forward upon the Confederate right, driving the brigade of Kemper before it; (3) at "the clump of trees," which hours before had been designated as the point of attack, the more daring of the assailants, led by Armistead, Hancock's old companion in arms, force back the line of the Seventy-first Pennsylvania, kill Cushing and his gunners among their pieces, and wave the Stars and Bars in the very center of the Union position.

Where, in this crisis of the action, is Hancock? He has marked the recoil of the Confederates

from Hays's front; he sees the enemy swarming up against the stone wall. Directing upon the head of their column Devereux's Nineteenth Massachusetts and Mallon's Forty-second New York, he gallops to the left, calling to Gibbon as he goes to advance his troops against the head of the assaulting column; then dashes down to the Vermont brigade, which lies in advance of the general line, covered by brush and by the irregularity of the ground, and orders them to change-front-forward to the right and advance against the Confederate flank. Already the Vermonters are up, probably to execute that very manœuvre by the command of their gallant leader, General Stannard. It is a place where no mounted man has been seen for hours, where no mounted man can possibly live for five minutes. Hardly has Hancock reached Stannard's side, and with word and gesture seeks to convey his command amid the roar of battle, when a bullet strikes him near the groin and he falls out of his saddle into the arms of Benedict and Hooker, of Stannard's staff. Randall's Thirteenth Vermont, followed close by Veazey's Sixteenth, swing themselves forward and wheel into line to the right, opening fire upon the Confederate flank, which cringes and curls under the stroke. Yet still lying there, his wound spouting blood, Hancock raises himself upon his elbow to watch the progress of the fight; and as Veazey passes by with his gallant regiment, calls him to himself,

clasps his hand as in the old days, and, in a voice still martial and stirring, cries, "Go in, Colonel, and give it to them on the flank." And soon, rising to a roar that extends from Cemetery Hill to the Round Tops, a shout along the Union line tells that the great attack has been repulsed. The wall of fire which Hancock, Gibbon, and Hays had drawn around the head of the Confederate column as it lay within the Union lines had been too much for the endurance of the men of Pickett and Pettigrew. Armistead had gone down, and with him the bravest of the adventurous few who crossed the stone wall; many a flag had dropped to earth never again to be lifted save as a trophy. Hunt, chief of artillery; Mitchell and Haskell, of the staff; Webb, commanding the brigade on which the attack fell, had displayed prodigies of valor in bringing up troops to meet the enemy; and at last, with one great spontaneous surge, the men of the Second Corps went forward, gathering in "prisoners by thousands and battle flags in sheaves" \*—and Gettysburg was won.

It was not until the repulse was complete that Hancock allowed himself to sink to the ground and gave himself up to the good corps surgeon, Dougherty, whom the news had brought to his side. The wound was an ugly one and ghastly to see. An onlooker has compared it to the stab of a butcher's

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\* General Charles Devens, Oration on Meade, 1873.



knife. A few minutes of field surgery sufficed to stop the flowing blood, and made it safe to lift him into the ambulance which was to bear him from the corps he had commanded one short month, yet at the head of which he had won immortal honor.

The battle of Gettysburg had been as costly as glorious to the Second Corps. The corps had taken into the fight fewer than ten thousand muskets; it had lost four thousand three hundred and fifty men, of whom three hundred and forty-nine were commissioned officers. The corps commander had been severely wounded, as had General Gibbon who succeeded to the command when Hancock assumed his larger charge. Both of these high officers had fallen on the very line of battle or in front of it. The heroic General Zook had been killed, and twelve of as brave colonels and lieutenant colonels as the army knew: Cross, of New Hampshire; Willard, Sherrill, Huston, and Thoman, of New York; Roberts, O'Kane, and Tschudy, of Pennsylvania; Ward and Revere, of Massachusetts; Merwin, of Connecticut; and Steele, of Michigan. In its artillery brigade two hundred and fifty horses had been killed; of its five battery commanders, all had been wounded, four of them mortally. But the corps had trophies to show for these tremendous losses. It had captured twenty-seven Confederate battle flags and as many prisoners as it had men remaining in its own ranks when the fight was over. To it had come the honor of

holding the central point upon which the great assault of the third day had been directed; and all the world knows how bravely, faithfully, and skillfully it repulsed the supreme effort of the army of the Confederacy. There, at "the clump of trees," the tide of rebellion rose to its greatest height; and thence it was beaten back by the dauntless valor of the soldiers of fifteen States who that day along Cemetery Ridge upheld the banner of the Union.

In every great career, whether civil or military, there is some one day which is peculiarly memorable; which, by reason in part of favorable opportunities or especially conspicuous position—in part, also, through some rare inspiration quickening the genius of the statesman or the warrior—becomes and to the end remains the crown of that career; the day which that leader's name instinctively suggests; the day to which, in disappointment or retirement, his own thoughts go back as the—for him—day of days. Such to Hancock was Gettysburg. From the hour when, by his resolution, force of character and power over men, he checked the rout of the first afternoon, restored order and confidence and formed the new lines which were to be held unbroken to the last, down to the moment when the divisions of Gibbon and Hays, leaping the stone wall and rail fences which had partially sheltered them during the cannonade and the great charge, gathered in nearly thirty Confederate colors and four

thousand prisoners, Gettysburg was to Hancock all-glorious, all-fortunate. Even the desperate wound which he received in the moment of victory hardly seemed to cast a shadow over the great triumph he had achieved during the first month of his career as the commander of an army corps.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AFTER GETTYSBURG.

THE wound from which Hancock had fallen among the ranks of the Vermont brigade proved to be a severe one. On the first examination, it was thought to be due wholly to a nail which had been driven by an enemy's bullet from the wood of the saddle, or from a neighboring fence, into the general's thigh near the groin. Six weeks later, however, the wound still remaining open, with great weakness on the part of the patient, a deeper probing discovered that the musket ball itself had lodged in the thigh, causing often excruciating pain and at times complete disablement, as we shall see in the campaign of 1864. It is one of the penalties to which a man of powerful frame, accustomed to active exercise, is especially liable, that if from any cause he is long disabled and kept in confinement he acquires flesh with great rapidity, sometimes with important consequences to his physique and habits of life. After his Gettysburg wound Hancock underwent a marked change physiologically, gaining weight rapidly during his enforced idleness and

suffering a permanent loss of some portion of his former activity and elasticity. To the observer, however, the change in no degree diminished the impressiveness of his carriage and bearing. He was, if anything, statelier, with an appearance of greater power and more composure.

During Hancock's long absence the Second Corps saw much of severe and trying service, though no great battle was in that period fought by the Army of the Potomac. General Gibbon, next in rank, having been seriously wounded, Brigadier-General William Hays was provisionally assigned to the command. Under General Hays, a sensible, quiet, firm officer, the corps took part in the pursuit of Lee, and afterward moved to the left bank of the Rappahannock, at Morrisville. On the 12th of August, Major-General Gouverneur K. Warren, who had been promoted in recognition of his distinguished services at Gettysburg and who in an especial degree possessed Meade's confidence, was assigned as temporary commander. Under Warren the corps took part in the forward movement across the Rappahannock about the middle of September; and between the 10th and the 15th of October bore a conspicuous and glorious part in the somewhat bewildering operations of those days. On the 14th it was twice engaged with the enemy while acting as rear guard during the retreat on Centreville—in the morning at Auburn and in the

afternoon at Bristoe Station. At the latter point, where the Orange and Alexandria Railroad crosses Broad Run, the corps, through the error of General Sykes, found itself entirely cut off from the rest of the army, and was obliged to confront both the pursuing columns of Lee without the possibility of support from any quarter until night fell. In this perilous position the superb soldiership of Warren not only rescued the troops from impending destruction, but won a brilliant victory. The Second Corps marched that night to join its comrades on the heights of Centreville, carrying with it five captured cannon, two Confederate flags, and five hundred prisoners, the trophies of as pretty a fight as the whole war witnessed.

In the last days of November the corps took a creditable part in the Mine Run expedition, during which Meade almost succeeded in interposing his army between Hill and Ewell and getting a fight out of the latter on his own terms. On the 29th of December, 1863, Hancock returned to the army and resumed command, Warren being absent on leave. This, however, was but a brief episode. On the 8th of January, 1864, Hancock again relinquished the command to Warren and went back to the North, to continue the efforts in which he had been engaged to fill up his depleted regiments. On the 6th of February the corps took part in a demonstration on Morton's ford, which was intended to favor a move-

ment upon Richmond by General Butler from the South. The division of General Alexander Hays was thrown across the river and some sharp fighting ensued; but when night fell the troops were withdrawn and went again into camp.

It was early in March, 1864, that Hancock definitively relieved General Warren. The Army of the Potomac was now in the body looking across the Rapidan toward Richmond, and in the spirit contemplating the opening of the great campaign which all believed, even after the disappointments of 1862 and 1863, was to close the rebellion. Again and again the Confederate armies had escaped seemingly inevitable destruction—in part by their own extraordinary gallantry and endurance; in part by good luck and the accidents of war; in part by manifest blunders of management or the hopeless incompetency of Union commanders. The almost incessant battling of two years had told for the national cause in training soldiers and officers for this great final effort; it had told against the Confederate cause through losses both of men and of material which could not be replaced. Moreover, the renowned chieftain who in July had opened the Mississippi to the Gulf, and in November had driven Bragg's army from the heights of Chattanooga, had come from the West to give a last crushing blow to the army of Northern Virginia.

On the 26th of February, 1864, Congress passed

a bill to create the grade of lieutenant general. The bill became law on March 1st, and on the same day Grant was nominated to that high office. The nomination was confirmed on the 2d. On the 8th General Grant arrived in Washington. After a brief visit to Brandy Station he returned to the West to make his final arrangements for the campaign against Atlanta. On the 26th his headquarters were established at Culpepper. The Army of the Potomac was largely reconstructed. The five corps of which it was composed (the Eleventh and Twelfth having gone West, after Gettysburg, to re-enforce the army of Rosecrans) were consolidated into three. Two of these gallant, much-enduring organizations had therefore to lose their name and place. It was a hard fate for the officers and soldiers who had borne their corps colors and badges with so much distinction through so many severe actions. Whether it was actually necessary may, as we now look back upon this episode, be gravely questioned. But it was done for the public good, and was believed to be for the efficiency of the army. The main object was not to increase the mass, and with this the zeal and self-confidence, of the three corps remaining. It was primarily a question of the higher officers. The experiences of 1863 had painfully shown how great a step it is from the charge of a division to that of a corps. The Mine Run campaign had been brought to utter failure by



the incapacity of one out of the five commanders ; and it was generally felt that two others of the group were beyond their depth, though intelligent and accomplished officers who were incapable of making gross mistakes or palpably falling short of their high office. General Meade believed that he could find three first-class commanders for the army assembled around Brandy Station ; he did not feel sure of a fourth, much less of a fifth.

The two corps which were selected for the sacrifice were the First and the Third. The First Corps was to go entire to the Fifth, which was in the approaching campaign to be commanded by General Warren. The Third Corps was to be divided : its third division was to go to the Sixth Corps under Sedgwick ; its first and second divisions, the old divisions of Kearney and Hooker, were to be assigned, still as distinct divisions, to the Second Corps. Of the grief and anger of the officers and men of the Third Corps at this dismemberment of the noble body of troops with which they had been so long connected, of which they had justly been so proud, and which to them had become a sacred thing, it is not fitting that we should speak here.

The assignment of these two divisions of itself wrought a great change in the life of the Second Corps. But greater changes were to come with bewildering rapidity. During the two years which had elapsed since its organization by President

Lincoln in March, 1862, the corps—notwithstanding the trying demands made upon it, each battle finding the wounds of the last still unhealed; notwithstanding the enormous sum of its losses in men and even more in officers—had maintained an unbroken continuity of life and a high degree of harmony between its constituent parts. Twelve thousand six hundred men had been killed, wounded, or captured in action during 1862; and out of its depleted ranks seven thousand two hundred had been lost in the battles of 1863. Yet through all this the corps had retained its integrity and its characteristic quality. New regiments had from time to time been sent to recruit its ranks; four entire brigades had joined it; yet there was always enough remaining of the old body and the old spirit to take up, assimilate, and vitalize the new material. Moreover, between the rapid, exhausting marches and the oft-recurring desperate battles had been, at least, distinct, if brief, intervals of rest and discipline, in winter and in summer camps, when the shattered regiments regained form and tone, when the new men learned the ways of the old and caught the spirit of the organization they had entered. The time had now come for a fierce and o'ermastering change in the constituents, and, by a necessary consequence, in some degree also in the character of the Second Corps:

The following was the composition of the com-

mand on the 31st of March, 1864, after the accession of the troops from the Third Corps :

*Artillery Brigade.*—Colonel John C. Tidball.

*First Division.*—Brigadier-General Francis C. Barlow. First Brigade: Colonel Nelson A. Miles. Second Brigade: Colonel Thomas A. Smyth. Third Brigade: Colonel Paul Frank. Fourth Brigade: Colonel John R. Brooke.

*Second Division.*—Brigadier-General John Gibbon. First Brigade: Brigadier-General Alexander S. Webb. Second Brigade: Brigadier-General Joshua T. Owen. Third Brigade: Colonel S. Sprigg Carroll.

*Third Division.*—Major-General David B. Birney. First Brigade: Brigadier-General J. H. Hobart Ward. Second Brigade: Brigadier-General Alexander Hays.

*Fourth Division.*—Brigadier-General Joseph B. Carr. First Brigade: Brigadier-General Gershom Mott. Second Brigade: Colonel William R. Brewster.

The aggregate force of the enlarged command was 43,055, distributed as follows :

Corps staff, 18; Artillery, 663; First Division, 12,250; Second Division, 11,367; Third Division, 10,174; Fourth Division, 8,563.

The same aggregate was further distributed as follows :

Present for duty, equipped, 23,877; on extra or daily duty, 4,422; sick, 1,278; in arrest or confinement, 152; absent, 13,306. It does not need to be

said that the absent were largely those who had been wounded in half a score of battles or skirmishes, or had broken down under exertions, privations, and exposures attendant upon forced marches, and bivouacs amid storm and frost.

On the 22d of April, 1864, all the troops constituting the enlarged corps were for the first time brought together that they might be reviewed by the new lieutenant general. The occasion was one never to be forgotten by any who participated in it. The weather had been gloomy and disagreeable, but this day broke clear and bright. The ground was admirably adapted to show, from every part of it, the whole corps, alike when in position and when in motion. General Grant came accompanied by a remarkable group of officers, comprising Generals Meade, Humphreys, Warren, Hunt, Williams, and a score of others whose names are a part of the history of the war. Nearly twenty-five thousand men were formed for parade, the four divisions of infantry in four lines parallel to each other and all directly opposite the stand of the reviewing officer. The artillery was formed on the right flank of and perpendicular to the infantry.

In a high degree it was a veteran corps. Of the eighty regiments there mustered, nearly fifty had served on the Peninsula—at Yorktown, at Williamsburg, at Fair Oaks, at Glendale, and at Malvern Hills; and nearly twenty more had fought

at Fredericksburg. What had those gallant companies not done, what had they not endured, under four successive commanders of the Potomac Army—McClellan, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade? What form of service had they not seen, what shape of danger could be strange to them, what exigency could arise to find them unprepared? What artifice could deceive, what celerity of movement surprise, what audacity of attack daunt them? Yet, trained and accomplished soldiers as they were, it was no array of grizzled veterans on which the lieutenant general looked as he rode down the lines that day. One half had not reached their twenty-fifth birthday—thousands were never to see it.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WILDERNESS.—FIRST DAY.

IT was on the night of the 3d of May that the Second Corps left its winter camps. The lieutenant general's plan was to cross the Rapidan by its lower fords, and then, turning to the right, find and strike the enemy. No manœuvring for advantage of ground was to be undertaken; no effort made to draw Lee into compromising positions. The prime object was a battle, a battle on the first day possible—a battle on whatever field. In order to this, Warren's Fifth Corps was, in the early morning of the 4th, to cross at Germanna Ford and push out to Old Wilderness Tavern. Sedgwick, with the Sixth Corps, was to follow and encamp near the river, facing to the right. Hancock's corps, which had already crossed at Ely's Ford farther down, was to move around the rear of Warren and come up on the left at Chancellorsville. This programme was easily carried out; the enemy offered no opposition; the distances to be covered were not great; all the troops came into their positions early on the 4th. The Second Corps, which had by far the heaviest

march, reached Chancellorsville with its head of column between nine and ten o'clock, and was all closed up at that point by one. The Fifth Corps was in position by two. Grant's army was, therefore, early on the 4th of May, south of the Rapidan, extending from Germanna Ford, through Old Wilderness Tavern, to Chancellorsville, fronting west. Meanwhile Burnside was advancing along the railroad to re-enforce the Army of the Potomac from which the Ninth Corps had long been separated. These troops would in their advance serve to protect Grant's communications with Washington against any counter movement by Lee.

Why was it, we may ask, that the Army of the Potomac had been halted so early in the day? The whole of the terrible fighting of the two succeeding days was to be done within territory over which the troops might have been carried during the remaining hours of the 4th. General Humphreys, the chief of staff, says: "The troops might have easily continued their march five miles farther—the Second Corps to Todd's Tavern, the head of the Fifth Corps to Parker's Store, the head of the Sixth Corps to Wilderness Tavern." It may be said: "If the army was to fight the enemy, what did it matter whether it fought them five miles farther to the west or to the east?" I answer—it made a vast difference. The immediate region of the Wilderness was known to our army and its leaders as one of the most

difficult and perplexing in which soldiers were ever called to operate—a region through portions of which troops could not be forced without completely breaking up their formation, over all of which there were few opportunities for the use of artillery. It was a region in which the power of discipline almost disappeared, in which the personal influence of commanders was at a minimum, in which tactics were literally impossible. The region beyond was bad enough, like most of Virginia; this, viewed as a battle-ground, was simply infernal.

Nor was it in any sense true that the difficulties and perplexities would be equally felt by both armies. In the first place, Lee was on the defensive; and the woods and swamps of the region were to him better than field works in retarding the movements of his adversary. In the second place, the Confederate army was made up of men who in a high degree possessed woodcraft—the faculty, both inherited and cultivated, of making one's way rapidly and confidently through jungles and thickets, keeping the direction of the sun, finding fords in swamps and streams. In the third place, General Lee had at hand those who knew that district well as their home; at any moment he might call to his bridle rein the very man who owned the land which he was traversing, who could tell not only how every road ran, but whither every woodpath led, at what points the creek was fordable, where lay the highest ground



for miles around. In the fourth place, the artillery of the Army of the Potomac was largely superior, both in number of pieces and in effectiveness of fire, to that of the Southern army, however gallantly served; yet in the Wilderness most of the guns of the Potomac army might as well have been spiked. Of Hancock's vast battery, only six guns fired so much as a shot in the two days' action. In the fifth place, not only were the Northern regiments, as a rule, better drilled, but they were, by the genius of their people, far more mechanical in their actions; they depended, in a higher degree than did their antagonists, upon the nature of the ground. The Southerner was, both by instinct and training, more of an out-of-doors animal, more independent, self-governing, self-reliant. He would come up on the line in good time and ready for fight, but it was by his own way. He did not need "the touch of the elbow," the dressing by-the-right, or the file-closer behind him. In the sixth place, the Northern army had been accustomed to depend very much more upon the personal attention and devotion of its high officers than had the Southern army. Take Gettysburg for an example. On the 3d of July Gibbon, commanding the Second Corps, was wounded on the very front line, falling among the soldiers of the Nineteenth Maine; Hancock, commanding the left center, fell even a little in advance of the line. On the opposite side Pickett did not cross the Emmitts-

burg road while his troops were making their great charge; Longstreet never left Seminary Ridge.

I have said the troops could have made the further march necessary to carry them out of these jungles into a region rough and tangled enough, yet paradisiacal in comparison with the Wilderness. Of this there is no question. The one objection was the possibility of Lee's interposing between our right and the river. This reason prevailed; yet for one I do not believe it was sufficient. With our distinct superiority in infantry, in cavalry, in artillery, it ought to have been seen to be possible to make our right perfectly secure while advancing our columns five or six miles to the west.\* With us Burnside was coming up behind; while it was known that Longstreet with his corps was at an even greater distance in the rear of his own army.

But it was not so ordered. It was destined that the Battle of the Wilderness should be fought. The Second Corps, as recited, halted at Chancellorsville,

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\* "Had he [Grant] really wished to fight a battle on the 5th, the Second Corps, after crossing at Ely's Ford on the 4th, should have moved out the Orange plank road to New Hope Church; the Fifth Corps out the pike to Robertson's Tavern; the Sixth Corps to Old Wilderness Tavern, and, on the morning of the 5th, to position between the Second and the Fifth Corps; Wilson's cavalry out the Orange plank road in advance of the Second Corps, and moving to the left at New Hope Church. That would have brought on a battle in more open and better ground for the Army of the Potomac than that of the Wilderness."—*Humphreys's Virginia Campaign of 1864-'65*, p. 56.

and spent the afternoon and the night of the 4th upon the very battlefield where Hancock's and French's divisions had fought just one year before. The ground about the Chancellor House was still strewn with the wreckage of battle; and here and there the bones of half-buried men were to be seen protruding from their shallow graves. In the early morning Hancock set out, under orders to move, by way of Catherine Furnaces and Todd's Tavern, to Shady Grove Church, on the Catharpin road; thence to extend his right toward the Fifth Corps at Parker's Store. The Fifth Corps was in turn to extend its right toward the Sixth at Old Wilderness Tavern. But this movement was never to be executed. The Fifth Corps in the center had moved but a little way toward Parker's when Ewell was discovered advancing in force. At half-past seven a dispatch was sent to Hancock informing him of this and directing him to halt at Todd's Tavern. When this message reached Hancock, at about nine o'clock, his head of column was a mile and a half beyond that point. About two hours later he received orders to move to his right, by the Brock road, to its junction with the Orange plank road. Hancock accordingly countermarched to Todd's Tavern, and then took the route northward toward the main body of the army. Birney's division—which, having formed the rear in the morning, took the lead in the retrograde movement—arrived at the intersection

of the Brock and Plank roads about two o'clock. Here it found Getty's division of the Sixth Corps holding the plank road against a movement of Hill's corps which had been intended to interpose a Confederate force between Grant's two wings. Getty had not as yet become seriously engaged; but Warren's Fifth Corps, farther to the north, had been fighting a severe battle with Ewell, in which the Union troops were rather roughly handled.

Even while Birney's division was coming up, the bullets of the enemy's skirmishers were flying across the Brock road, by which we were moving. Birney at once placed his division in two lines of battle, the formation being greatly retarded by the narrowness of the road and the density of the woods on either side. Mott's division was the next to arrive, and took position, also in two lines, on Birney's left. General Hancock found Getty anxious to make an early attack in obedience to repeated instructions from Meade, who addressed similar urgent representations to Hancock himself as soon as he arrived upon the ground. The latter was strongly desirous of getting his whole corps up and in hand; and would, if left to himself, have awaited the arrival of Gibbon and Barlow. But at a quarter past four Getty moved forward. Scarcely had his troops advanced four hundred yards through the thickets when Hill was encountered, and so fierce at once became the fighting that Hancock had no resource but

to throw Birney forward with his own and Mott's division. Birney went in on both Getty's right and left, a section of Ricketts's Pennsylvania battery moving up the road abreast of the troops. Dow's Sixth Maine Battery was put into position at the junction of the two roads to fire over the heads of our men. Meanwhile Gibbon's and Barlow's divisions were forming in the road farther to the left, Frank's brigade of the latter having been halted to hold the junction of the Brock road and a road leading out to the Catharpin road. All of the Second Corps artillery, except the six guns accounted for, was established on some high, cleared ground which ran backward from the extreme left of our line, forming a marked exception to the general topographical character of the Wilderness.

No sooner had Getty, Birney, and Mott become fairly engaged in front of the Brock road than the disadvantages resulting from a lack of more complete preparation became painfully evident. It was scarcely possible to bring up the remaining troops through the dense woods with sufficient rapidity to meet the demands from the leading divisions for reinforcements. One of the fiercest battles of history had begun, and both armies were entering upon the first action of the opening campaign with ferocious resolution. Owen's brigade, from Gibbon, was thrown in upon either side of the plank road to support Getty. Then Smyth's and Brooke's brigades,

from Barlow, went in from our extreme left, and with desperate resolution drove back Hill's right a considerable distance. Finally, Carroll's brigade, from Gibbon, was pushed up the plank road, where our troops had received a savage countercharge and had for the moment been forced back, leaving behind them Ricketts's two guns. Before the Confederates could secure the coveted trophies, detachments from the Fourteenth Indiana and Eighth Ohio succeeded in retaking the guns and hauling them by hand down the road. And so, amid those dense woods, where foemen could not see each other, where colonels could not see the whole of their regiments, where captains often could not see the left of their companies, the two armies thus suddenly brought into collision wrestled\* in desperate battle until night came to make the gloom complete. Thousands on either side had fallen. Of those who survived, many had not once beheld an enemy, yet the tangled forest had been alive with flying missiles; the whistling of the bullets through the air had been incessant; the very trees seemed peopled by spirits that shrieked and groaned through those hours of mortal combat.

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\* "A wrestle as blind as midnight; a gloom that made manœuvres impracticable; a jungle where regiments stumbled on each other and on the enemy by turns, firing sometimes into their own ranks, and guided often only by the cracking of the bushes or the cheers and cries that rose from the depths around."—*Badeau, vol. ii, p. 113.*

The fighting ceased at dark. Neither side had secured any decisive advantage. Hill had been driven some distance backward, and his two divisions had been considerably broken and disordered. General Humphreys, a very cautious commentator, expresses the opinion that had there been but an hour more of daylight Hill would have been driven wholly from the field; but Hancock's late arrival, owing to his long detour through Todd's Tavern, moving on a single, narrow road, prevented a complete success. Grant certainly had not expected to be attacked at that time and place, or he would not have sent Hancock away toward Shady Grove Church. Calling the Second Corps back from its turning movement, he had sought with one tremendous effort to lift and throw his antagonist. But he had underrated the valor and endurance of the Army of Northern Virginia, not to be daunted and not to be surprised; commanded by resolute, audacious, untiring leaders; defending a country with which it had become familiar by long occupation, and which was of a kind with that in which its soldiers had been reared. Upon the Union right the Fifth and Sixth Corps had met with varying fortunes in their contest with Ewell, but with no serious reverses.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WILDERNESS.—SECOND DAY.

WHEN night fell on the 5th of May the woods were full of the wounded, yet the utmost exertions of the medical staff and the ambulance corps could not avail to bring off the sufferers. The undergrowth was so dense that it was almost impossible to find the victims of the afternoon's battle, and the hostile lines were so close that any movement quickly brought down a heavy fire. During the night Grant, Meade, and Humphreys were earnestly engaged in preparing for the struggle of the coming day. On either side fresh troops were coming up: Longstreet's powerful corps, with Anderson's division of Hill's corps, from Orange Court House; Burnside's Ninth Corps from the line of the Rappahannock. The relative value of these re-enforcements was, however, far from equal, the preponderance being vastly on the Confederate side in point both of numbers and of discipline. The general plan of battle for the 6th was, in brief, as follows: Hancock, with his own four divisions, Getty's division of the Sixth Corps, and Wadsworth's division of the Fifth,



was to attack Hill at five o'clock in the morning, and if possible destroy or drive him off the field before the Confederate re-enforcements should arrive. On the right the remaining divisions of the Fifth and Sixth Corps, under the personal observation of Grant and Meade, were to occupy Ewell so closely as to prevent his sending re-enforcements to Hill. As soon as Burnside should arrive from the bridge over the Rapidan, as he was expected to do at an early hour, his corps was to be directed toward the Confederate center. Assuming Hill's corps to have been at that time disrupted by the tremendous assault preparing against it, Burnside was relied upon to pierce Lee's line north of the plank road, whereupon the demonstrations of the Fifth and Sixth Corps were to be converted into a furious attack upon Ewell, by which it was hoped to close the day with a complete victory for the Union arms.

It will be seen that Hancock's part in the coming battle was fully equal to what had been intimated by the responsibilities he had borne and the success he had achieved at Gettysburg. He was to command half of the army, and the active operations of the day were all to be made dependent upon his resolution and energy. The only miscalculation of the commander in chief was in regard to the nature of the country, the tenacity of the enemy and their capability for initiative, and the time of the arrival of the Confederate re-enforce-

ments. Exactly at five o'clock Hancock advanced to the attack; but already, a few minutes before, Ewell had opened on Sedgwick, to relieve the anticipated pressure upon Hill and to gain time for Longstreet to get up. The fire thus kindled swept fast down the line from the right across the front of Warren. Wadsworth advanced gallantly to his appointed work of striking Hill's flank, and the divisions of Birney, Mott, and Getty, with Carroll's and Owen's brigades from Gibbon's, all under the general command of Birney, flung themselves upon the Confederate intrenchments which crossed the plank road. The attack and the defense were alike of the most desperate nature. The night had given time for commanders to rectify their lines; the Confederates were near, and the contest became at once close and savage. But the impetus of that well-prepared assault could not be resisted. Hill's troops gave way; Hancock's men leaped, first, a log intrenchment, and then, three or four hundred yards farther back, a line of rifle pits. In less than an hour the Confederate right was routed and in flight, colors and prisoners were taken, and for the moment all presaged a complete victory for the Union arms. The enemy had been driven a mile through the forest, almost to their wagon trains.

But three causes now combined to relieve the pressure upon the Confederate right and to give the Army of Northern Virginia that one chance of

which it so well knew how to take advantage. The Union columns had become terribly mixed and disordered in their forward movement, under the excitement and bewilderment of battle, through woods so dense that no body of troops could possibly preserve their alignment. In some cases they were heaped up in unnecessary strength; elsewhere great gaps existed unknown to the staff; men, and even officers, had lost their regiments in the jungle; thousands had fallen; the men in front were largely out of ammunition, which it was impossible to bring up in such a place. The second cause now entering to give the Confederate arms relief was the arrival of Kershaw's division. These troops, undismayed by the signs of wreck which met their view on every side, moved gallantly into action against Hancock's left, which was farthest advanced, and, throwing themselves with the utmost determination upon that part of our line, forced it back until it came abreast of the center. The third, and even more important cause which operated to check the course of Hancock's victory, and finally to turn it into defeat, was a misunderstanding between himself and General Gibbon as to the disposition to be made of the forces under the command of the latter officer. That misunderstanding has never been explained, but the bearing of the results will now be indicated.

Even while Hancock was forming his columns for attack, he had been embarrassed by intelligence

from army headquarters that the advance of Longstreet's corps, instead of coming up in rear of Hill, was bearing off southward, as if to pass around his left flank and penetrate into his rear; and he had been especially warned that in his arrangements for the day he must provide fully for all the exigencies which might arise in that quarter. He accordingly placed Gibbon in charge of the left, giving him all the artillery massed there and the splendid infantry division of Barlow. Gibbon's own troops had been sent, or were to be sent, out the plank road to join in the great attack. General Gibbon, than whom no man better knew the use of artillery, disposed a great battery of forty pieces upon the comparatively high and clear ground running backward to our rear, which we spoke of in connection with the first day's fight, and placed his infantry in support.

Such was the situation when Birney, after taking time to rectify his lines at the front, was preparing to renew his attacks upon the corps of Hill and the division of Kershaw. Birney's weak point was his left. Too many troops had been sent up the plank road, Hancock trusting to their being properly distributed by the staff along the line, on their arrival at the front. This I am disposed to regard as Hancock's great tactical mistake during the battle of the Wilderness. He ought to have apprehended the danger that—owing to the nature of the country, the difficulty of moving troops through the woods, and

the impossibility of seeing anything—an undue proportion of the re-enforcements thus arriving would remain at or near the road, instead of being marched through the jungles a sufficient distance to the left properly to extend and strengthen the line. Of course, in open country the latter would, without fail, have been done; but under the circumstances it would have been better had the re-enforcements been taken well down the Brock road toward the left, and then sent forward through the woods, toward the firing, till they came up with the general line.

Hancock, however, though he had no conception, on account of the intervening woods, of the extent to which his troops had been heaped up near the plank road, was yet not unapprehensive regarding the exposure of Birney's left flank to the attack of Confederate re-enforcements arriving on the field; and at a certain hour gave, or thought he gave, an order to send Barlow's division forward, to come up on Birney's left. This statement is contained in Hancock's official report and is corroborated by the notes of his staff officers. General Gibbon, on his part, positively denies having received such a definitive order, though he says the forwarding of Barlow's division had been spoken of between Hancock and himself as a thing to be done. It is not improbable that Hancock may have given what he considered an order to that effect; may have acquiesced in a temporary postponement of the movement,

owing to fresh rumors of Longstreet's advance from Todd's Tavern; and may then have failed distinctly to notify Gibbon that he expected it at once to be made. The history of war abounds in such misunderstandings. No one who knew Gibbon can possibly believe that this accomplished officer consciously failed to do anything that was required of him.

However it came about, the evil consequences of the weakness of Birney's left were soon made manifest. The battle was now about to be resumed on our side after the pause needed to rectify the formations, to reorganize as well as could be done in the dense woods the shattered troops, and to replace those which had suffered most by brigades from the second line. Wadsworth's division formed Birney's right; still farther to the right, as announced by a staff officer from General Meade, Burnside, with two divisions, was advancing into the space between Hancock and Warren, meeting little resistance and heading directly for Parker's Store. This heavy concentration of forces seemed to promise a speedy and complete triumph; but the promise was a most fallacious one. Burnside's reported attack proved to be unreal; the interval between Birney and Barlow was still unfilled; powerful re-enforcements were at once stiffening Hill's front and aiming at the dangerous gap in the Union line. Though it was true that Hancock had with him one half of Grant's army, it was also true that two-thirds of

Lee's army were now being directed against him; and of these, two-thirds were fresh troops. Field's division of Longstreet's corps had followed close on Kershaw's, coming upon the field at the double quick, and was in turn followed by Anderson's division of Hill's corps. In this critical moment intelligence was received that Cutler's brigade, upon the left of Warren, had been driven from its position in disorder, Burnside as yet being nowhere to be seen; and Birney was obliged to detach two brigades to reoccupy the ground.

In spite of the formidable re-enforcements which the Confederate right had received, our troops made heroic efforts to follow up the successes of the earlier morning. Birney, Wadsworth, and Mott delivered a furious attack in which men fell by thousands and Lee's fresh divisions were shaken like trees in a gale. But the Confederate line would no longer yield. In this moment of anxiety every ear was turned to catch the roar of Burnside's attack. Two hours had passed since Hancock had been told that this was then taking place; but as yet not a sound from that direction told that Burnside had got to work.\* It was to be several hours, still, before

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\* As late as 11.45 Rawlings, Grant's chief of staff, wrote to Burnside: "Push in and drive the enemy from Hancock's front and get on the plank road. Hancock has expected you for the last three hours, and has been making his attack and dispositions with a view to your assistance."

this promised assistance to our hard-pressed troops was to be given—assistance it could scarcely be called, for when Burnside made his attack Hancock had been driven back to the Brock road.

The crisis of the battle was now fast approaching. The enemy, having discovered the gap in our line where Barlow's division should have been, drew down four brigades, to find their way around Birney's left. These troops, moving by their right, reached the bed of the unfinished Fredericksburg railroad, and there formed, facing north, for a decisive charge. At eleven o'clock they moved forward with the impetuosity characteristic of Confederate flank attacks. Frank's brigade, the only one of Barlow's division that had gone forward, was struck on end, broken into fragments, and hurled back in dire disorder. The next troops encountered comprised McAllister's brigade of Mott's division; and these too, although they had partially changed front upon the alarm given by the attack on Frank, were quickly overlapped, crushed, and driven back. Advised now by the firing and shouting of the turning column of the success of the movement against our flank, the divisions of Kershaw, Field, and Anderson threw themselves impetuously upon the front of the Union forces, and, after a desperate struggle, our men began to give way. Perceiving the hopelessness of the attempt to repair the disaster on his left, Hancock



made the utmost exertions to hold the advanced position which we occupied on the north of the plank road, "refusing" the other wing. Had it been on open ground and in plain view, his inspiring presence and great tactical skill might have availed; but in the tangled forest, with the troops in the condition in which hours of hard fighting had left them, there was not time. On the left, Mott's division was fast crumbling away under the fire upon their flank; on the right, the heroic Wadsworth had been killed at the head of his division, and his regiments were staggering under the terrific blows of the encouraged and exultant enemy; in the center, Birney's division and the brigades of Carroll, Owen, and Webb, worn with fighting and depleted by their enormous losses, were being slowly pressed back. Down the plank road a stream of broken men was pouring to the rear, giving the onlooker the impression that everything had gone to pieces. In this situation Hancock, upon Birney's representations, reluctantly gave the order to withdraw the troops to the Brock road.

It was now high noon, and the battle of the Wilderness, in all its essential features, had been fought and finished. A great assault had been made in the early morning with overwhelming success; but the disorder of the troops and the powerful re-enforcements arriving upon the field on the Confederate side had first stayed and then turned

the tide of battle. While the Confederates had brought three new divisions into action, Burnside had not borne a finger's weight upon the fight. At last the enterprise of four brigades led to the turning of Mott's left and caused the whole line to be thrown back violently and in disorder. But while the stream of fugitives would not have allowed any one standing at the junction of the Brock and plank roads at noon of the 6th of May to think anything else than that the whole left wing had collapsed, things were far from being so bad as that. Through the forest the steadier regiments were falling back in as good order as the tangled thickets would permit, still facing the foe; and soon the intrenchments along the verge of the Brock road, which the troops had left in the morning for their great charge, were filled with armed men—much broken up, it is true, alike by advance and by retreat, but not men whom it was safe to attack in position. Their losses had been enormous; but the enemy had captured few prisoners, and had themselves been so severely punished that they made little effort to follow our people up as they fell back to the breastworks.

The next hour or two was, it must be confessed, an anxious time along the Brock road. Until regiments and brigades could be brought together; until the men could get a chance to breathe, to eat something, and look once more at the sun; until ammunition could be brought up and served out, it was

impossible to feel entire confidence. Fortunately, a respite was given. Just as Jackson, riding out in front of his troops after his great victory at Chancellorsville, May 2, 1863, to survey the ground over which he purposed to follow up his victory, fell under the fire of his own men, so Longstreet, on this 6th of May, 1864, while riding down the front of the brigades which had made the decisive movement, received a volley which severely wounded him and killed General Jenkins.

The command of Longstreet's corps devolved upon R. H. Anderson; General Lee, arriving on the ground, postponed the attack. It was not until 4.15 P. M. that our skirmishers were driven in and the Confederates advanced in considerable force\* against the intrenchments on the Brock road. The attack was a real one, but was not made with great spirit; nor was the response from our side very hearty. The enemy advanced to within about a hundred yards, and then halted and began firing, to which our troops replied with noise enough, but keeping too much down behind the log intrenchments, thus discharging their muskets into the air. The breastworks had taken fire at more than one point from the dried leaves and twigs in front, which had been kindled by the discharges of the

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\* "Field's and Anderson's divisions, excepting Law's and Perry's brigades, with probably some part of Heth's division."—Humphreys' Campaign of 1864-'65.

musketry. The heat at times became intense, and the smoke, blown backward over the intrenchments, not only concealed the enemy from view, but blinded and stifled our men. Taking advantage of this unexpected incident, a Confederate brigade dashed forward and planted its colors upon the breastworks just to our left of the Brock road. For a moment all was confusion in that part of the line; some of Mott's men gave way and went to the rear, and with them one general officer.\* But startling as was the exigency, it was as promptly and decisively met. Just as at Gettysburg Carroll forced his way through the retreating troops of the Eleventh Corps on the evening of July 2d, and, mounting Cemetery Hill, met and threw out the brigades of Hoke and Hays, which had effected a lodgment in Howard's line, so on this occasion the same intrepid officer, bringing his brigade at the double-quick across the plank road, faced to the right and drove out the adventurous enemy.

This spirited action, which made Carroll a brigadier-general, put an end to the battle on the left in the Wilderness. The Second Corps had lost 5,092, of whom 699 were reported killed, 3,877 wounded, and 516 missing, many of whom had fallen in the thickets, unobserved by their comrades. Among the killed was General Alexander Hays, who had com-

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\* See page 244.

manded Hancock's small Third Division with so much distinction at Gettysburg, but had, in the general reorganization of 1864, been assigned to the command of one of the large new brigades. General Hays was one of those astonishingly brave men whose courage and force in battle make them observed of all. At Gettysburg, at Bristoe, at Mine Run, at Morton's Ford, this devoted officer rode, with his staff and flag behind him, the mark of a thousand riflemen, the admiration of two armies, only to fall in a tangled wilderness, where scarcely a regiment could note his person and derive inspiration from his martial enthusiasm. Among the killed, also, were half a score of field officers. The heaviest blows had fallen upon Birney's Third Division, which had lost 2,242 men.

A comparison of the proportion of the killed and wounded who were commissioned officers with the like proportion at Gettysburg is highly instructive as to the nature of the fighting in the Wilderness. At Gettysburg three hundred and forty-nine officers had fallen; in the Wilderness, out of a larger total, only two hundred and forty-six. At Gettysburg, of the killed\* eight and a half per cent, and of the wounded eight per cent were officers. In the Wilderness but five and a half per cent of the killed\* and five per cent of the wounded were officers. This

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\* These figures relate only to those killed outright. They do not include those who subsequently died of their wounds.

great disparity was due to the difference in the topographical features of the two battles. At Gettysburg the fighting was almost wholly in the open. Here, not only had the sharpshooter a chance to do much mischief, but the higher responsibility of the officers led them in critical moments to expose themselves with a freedom which largely increased their losses. In the Wilderness the greater part of those who fell were struck by men who could not even see them; sounds directed the firing rather than sight. Under these conditions there was little special exposure of officers, and their share in the casualties sank to something very near their numerical proportion. To aggravate the horrors of the later day of May 6th the woods had taken fire in many places, here slowly smoldering, there fiercely burning. Hundreds of the wounded, who had fallen in the thickets and were not able to drag themselves within one or the other of the contending lines, were left to a lingering and dreadful death.

## CHAPTER XII.

### SPOTTSYLVANIA.

WHEN the sun went down upon the smoking woods of the Wilderness on May 6th, the first battle of the campaign of 1864 was over. Lee had no disposition to renew the action, which he had brought on only to gain time for Longstreet's corps to come up from Gordonsville. Besides, he knew the Army of the Potomac well enough to be aware that his greatest advantage would probably be obtained in the first encounter. After Gettysburg the Confederate commander was very unlikely to attack that army on a third day. Upon the Union side Grant was nowise daunted by the terrific fighting of the 5th and 6th; and in the early morning of the 7th General Birney was directed to make a reconnoissance in force down the plank road to develop the position of the enemy. This was found to be so far retired from our front as to cause Grant to decide not to make a further effort in that direction, but to throw his whole army to the left, with a view to getting between Lee and Richmond.

In this movement Warren, with the Fifth Corps

and the cavalry, was to be in advance and seize Spottsylvania Court House on the early morning of the 8th; Sedgwick, with the Sixth Corps, was to move around by the rear and come up on Warren's left, followed by the Ninth Corps; Hancock's corps, having now become the right of the army, was to move down to Todd's Tavern, to be in readiness to resist any counter-movement by Lee into our right rear. Owing to the failure to seize certain bridges, by whose fault it is not necessary here to inquire, Warren did not succeed in reaching Spottsylvania before Lee; and consequently the Union army, instead of receiving at that point the attacks of the Confederates, as Grant had contemplated, was destined to spend many days and suffer monstrous losses in vain attempts to capture the position.

In execution of his own part of the plan, Hancock occupied Todd's Tavern on May 8th and prepared himself to resist a movement which he did not doubt Lee would undertake against Meade's communications with the Rapidan. I do not remember ever to have known Hancock appear so anxious regarding the discharge of any duty as he did this day. His preparations were unceasing and betokened the expectation of a severe struggle. Lee, however, had no such intention, his plans involving no counter-movement against Grant. And yet an action came very near being fought there that day. The reason was that the Confederate commander,



on being advised that the Union army was in motion, made up his mind that Grant's objective was Fredericksburg, and thereupon prepared to move his troops to Spottsylvania. As a part of this plan he ordered Early, who was in temporary command of Hill's corps, to move by way of Todd's Tavern, to relieve the pressure on the other roads. Early, on arriving in front of Todd's Tavern, found his road barred. Mahone, who was in advance, at once came into collision with Miles, who, with his own brigade of infantry, a battery, and a brigade of cavalry, had been sent forward on the Catharpin road nearly to Corbin's bridge. Miles twice faced about while retiring upon the main force and beat off the enemy who were following him.

Expectation of battle was now at its height, as it was not doubted that the Confederates were attempting to "counter" upon Meade, answering his advance upon Spottsylvania by a movement into his right and rear. But though the Second Corps stood to arms through the rest of the afternoon and into the early evening, believing that another of its great days had come, the sun went down and darkness fell, and the battle of Todd's Tavern was never fought. Early, having reconnoitered Hancock's position, interpreted his orders as meaning essentially that he was to get to Spottsylvania, and that going through Todd's Tavern was only a means to that end; and so, finding his way barred in this direc-

tion, he wisely determined not to force the position, but bivouacked about a mile in front of Hancock, and in the morning moved off to Spottsylvania by the next most convenient route.

By noon of the 9th, Early having disappeared, Mott's division and Burton's brigade of heavy artillery were left to hold the Catharpin road, and the remaining troops were dispatched toward Spottsylvania. On the way down it occurred to Generals Grant and Meade that, instead of the three divisions of the Second Corps, then available, being sent straight on, they should be thrown across the Po River to get upon the road by which Lee himself had retreated, and, moving down this, should try to come into the Confederate left and rear. This was accordingly done after six o'clock in the afternoon of the 9th. Hancock's command, crossing the Po by extemporized bridges, moved forward on the Shady Grove road until it reached Block House bridge, where this road crosses the Po, which here takes a long turn southward. Owing to the distance and the density of the woods, Hancock was only able by dark to get his skirmishers up to the bridge. And here, in the space between Glady Run on the south and the Po on the north and east, the troops rested for the night. Engineering details were, however, actively employed in making secure the communications with the north bank of the river.

The morning of the 10th of May found three divi-

sions of the Second Corps across the Po, threatening Lee's left flank and rear, Barlow's division being formed to face eastward on the Block House and Shady Grove Church road, just where that road crosses the river, to run into the Confederate rear. Active preparations were at once begun to press the movement vigorously, and Brooke's brigade had already been thrown across the Po half way between the bridge and the mouth of Glady Run when intelligence was received that General Meade proposed to assault the Confederates' Spottsylvania line upon Warren's front at five o'clock; and that Hancock was to bring down two of his divisions, leaving one division only across the Po. It is clear that, if two thirds of Hancock's force were to be withdrawn from the position occupied during the preceding night, the remaining third should have gone with them, since a division left alone on the south bank of the river would be exposed to altogether unnecessary danger. Hancock, however, obeyed his instructions and proceeded with two divisions to join the Fifth Corps, leaving Barlow's fine, strong division confronting Block House bridge.

While Meade and Hancock were reconnoitering the position to be assaulted, intelligence from Barlow regarding the threatened advance upon him caused Meade so much anxiety that he requested Hancock to return immediately and to withdraw that division to the north bank. When Hancock

arrived the situation was already critical. Heth's Confederate division with a battalion of artillery had crossed Glady Run and was advancing upon Barlow. The two forces were not very unequally matched, the advantage in point of numbers being somewhat in favor of the Confederates; and Barlow and his men would not have been at all unwilling to have it out with the enemy then and there. But a defeat to our troops in such a situation, far from the rest of the army and with the river behind them, would have meant something very like destruction. Consequently peremptory orders were given Barlow to withdraw. This was, however, by no means an easy matter. The two bodies were heavily skirmishing with each other at the time, and retiring in the face of the enemy was a critical operation. Hancock had caused the north bank of the river to be lined with artillery, and now proceeded to withdraw Barlow's first line behind his second. It was a manœuvre in which the slightest slip or misadventure might be fatal; and the two generals with their staffs threw themselves upon the line, to direct the troops and watch every step of the movement. Brooke's and Brown's (late Frank's) brigades, which had by this time become fully engaged, fell back with the utmost precision and firmness. The enemy were pressing on rapidly, and the firing was furious; but these two gallant bodies of veterans bore themselves with perfect coolness, reaching the position

assigned them without haste or disorder. Again the movement by successive lines was cleanly carried out.

At last Miles's and Smyth's brigades were formed upon the crest next the river, while Brooke's and Brown's brigades, with Arnold's battery (all the rest of the artillery having by this time been sent across), prepared to fall back upon them. At this point the enemy, now fully up and resolute not to be balked of their prey, fell upon Brooke and Brown with the greatest fury. The situation was at this time fearfully complicated by the fact that the woods which for some distance lay between us and the river were on fire in several places, here smoldering and filling the air with choking masses, there blazing with fury. Through this *inferno* of smoke and flame the troops had to pass before they could reach the bridges and the river bank. Yet with such an enemy before and such an enemy behind, Brooke's and Brown's men showed neither fear nor haste. Every regiment stood in its place, as one man, facing the foe, until the word was given, and then, letting go all together, made their way swiftly but steadily backward. Only one misfortune occurred in this movement. As Arnold's battery, after firing to the last instant, limbered up and dashed to the rear, the horses attached to one of the guns became frightened by the flame and smoke around them, and, swerving aside, lodged the piece between two trees. The gun was found to be so firmly

held that it could only have been extricated by cutting down the trees; and, as the Confederates were close behind and the supporting troops were in full retreat, it became necessary to abandon it to the enemy. This was the first gun belonging to the Second Corps or in position along its line of battle which had ever been captured during actions in which the corps had lost twenty-five thousand men. Brown's and Brooke's brigades having gained the river, and the north bank being crowned by a powerful artillery, the Confederates made no further attempt to molest Barlow's division, and the crossing was effected. So ended the battle of Po River.

But this was not to be the end of Hancock's day. After the withdrawal of Barlow's division Hancock proceeded to the point where Warren's assault was to be delivered. Upon his arrival he found that Warren had made his attack upon a position of tremendous natural strength with troops of his own corps and with Webb's and Carroll's brigades from the Second, and had been driven back with heavy loss. Meade, who was in personal direction, was not satisfied, and ordered Hancock to renew the assault with his own two divisions on the ground. This was done about seven o'clock; but the troops did not behave with their accustomed vigor, and were easily thrown off. At another point along the Confederate line an attack was about this time made of a very different character. A column commanded by Colo-

nel Emory Upton, of the Sixth Corps, assaulted the Salient near the Landron House, and with the utmost resolution carried the enemy's works, capturing for the moment colors, guns, and prisoners. Had Upton been properly supported he would have won a brilliant victory. He was, however, largely left to himself (the blame of which was at the time charged, justly or unjustly, upon Mott's division of the Second Corps); and his temporary success was turned into defeat, the enemy rallying with their accustomed desperation and driving him out with loss.

The casualties in the Second Corps on the 10th of May may be approximately stated at two thousand and fifty, including many valuable officers. No greater loss need have been sustained in attempting something that would have been worth doing. General Humphreys is right in saying: "It is to be regretted that Hancock had not been directed to cross the Po at daylight of the 10th, instead of being ordered to cross late in the afternoon of the 9th. Had he been, there appears to be every reason to conclude that the Confederate left would have been turned and taken in rear while the Fifth Corps attacked it in front. As it was, Hancock's crossing in the evening of the 9th put Lee on his guard and enabled him to bring up his troops to the threatened flank by daylight of the 10th and throw up intrenchments. It was a mistake, too, as Hancock had crossed, to abandon the turning movement

on the morning of the 10th, and make, instead of it, a front attack on the strong intrenchments of Longstreet's left. It would have been better to have continued the turning movement, the Fifth Corps aiding by sending one of its divisions to Hancock, and making a front attack with the other two at the critical moment."

The assaults upon the enemy's intrenchments, alike by the Fifth and by the Second Corps, had been bloody and fruitless. Assuming the withdrawal of Hancock's corps across the Po to have been necessary, the opportunity of the day was in the attack of Upton. Nothing that could be said of that heroic young officer or of General David A. Russell, his division commander, could exaggerate the deserts of these two soldiers, the shining ornaments of the Sixth Corps. The support of Upton should not have been left to a single division. The assaulting column should have been backed up by divisions of the Sixth Corps, by Gibbon as well as Mott from the Second, and by at least one division from the Fifth, uselessly engaged in assailing the center. This the more needs to be said because the characteristic fault of the campaign then opened was attacking at too many points. Few lines can be drawn by engineering skill which, owing to the nature of the ground, have not a weak point; few will be drawn by good engineers which have more than one. It is the office of the commander of an army to discover



that weak point, to make careful and serious preparations for the attack, and to mass behind the assaulting column a force that shall be irresistible if the line be pierced. To assault at two points instead of one only is to double the loss while halving the chance of victory. To assault "all along the line," as was so often done in the summer of 1864, is the very abdication of leadership. It is gratifying to record that the conduct of Colonel Upton received cordial recognition, and that he was at once promoted to be a brigadier general of volunteers.

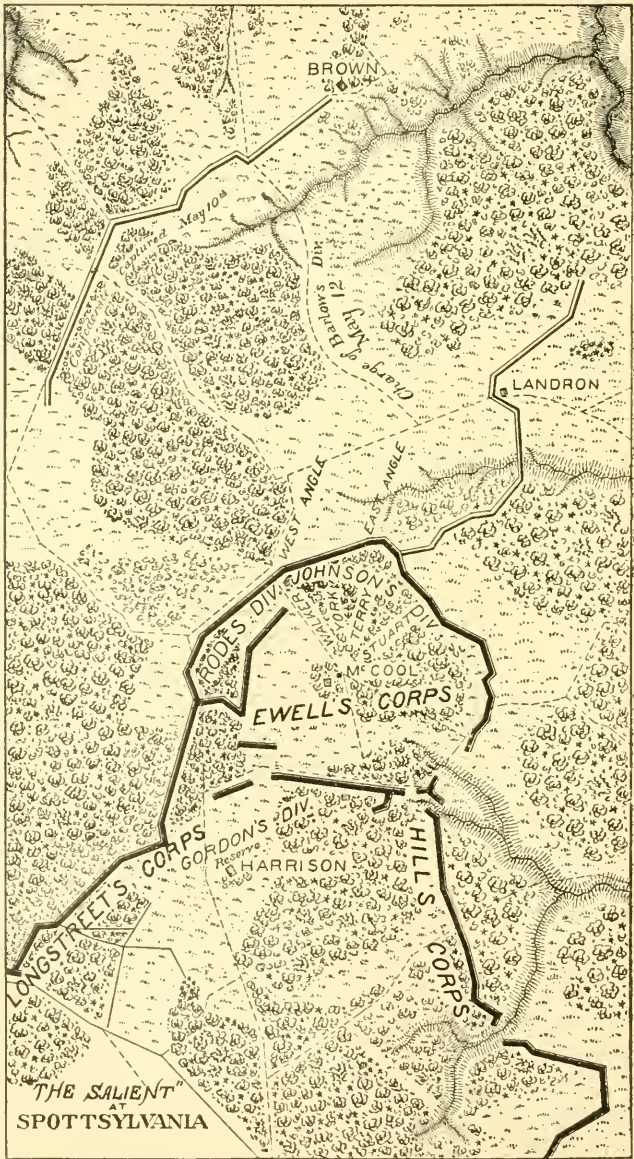
## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SALIENT.

DOWN to the 12th of May everything had gone wrong with the Union army since it left the battle ground of the Wilderness. "Some one had blundered" regarding the movement to Spottsylvania. Instead of seizing that important point without a contest, the Union forces, finding the enemy there before them, had fallen to making a series of ill-conceived and ill-prepared attacks upon intrenched lines, which had resulted in nothing but severe losses, especially to the Fifth Corps, which had behaved with great but useless heroism. Sedgwick had been killed, an irreparable disaster; and almost every division of the army had suffered severely. The partition of authority between Grant and Meade had worked badly from the first, as it was destined to do through the remainder of the campaign. The troops felt that the attacks had not been carefully studied and adequately provided for; and the intelligence of the rank and file of the Northern army made them very poor subjects for official "fooling."

On the eve of the 11th of May Hancock was or-





dered to proceed with his corps to the neighborhood of the Landron House. At this point the Confederate lines, coming up from the south and coming in from the west to form a right angle, had for some reason been extended onward to inclose the Harrison and McCool Houses. The addition thus made to the Confederate works was in shape much like an acorn, and appeared to be a mere excrescence upon their general line. It was upon this that Hancock's attack was to be made, as Upton's had been on the 10th. The Salient was approximately a mile in vertical direction and half a mile in width. The troops occupying it were Rodes's and Edward Johnson's divisions of Ewell's corps in the works, and Gordon's division in reserve at the Harrison House.

General Grant's order directing the assault at four o'clock on the morning of the 12th bears date three P. M. of the 11th; Meade's order to Hancock bears date four o'clock, leaving, it will be seen, very little time for preparation before night fell. It was intended that the assault should be preceded by a thorough reconnoissance of the ground, to be made by Colonel Comstock, engineer officer on Grant's staff, and by Colonel Morgan and other officers of Hancock's staff. It was assumed, also, that General Mott, having attacked with his division near the designated spot upon the 10th, and being still in its immediate neighborhood, would be in possession of valuable information regarding the ene-

my's works. Unfortunately Colonel Comstock missed his way, and after much wandering arrived at the Brown House only a little before dark. There it was ascertained that the enemy's skirmishers were so far advanced as to offer no opportunity to survey their works; and Comstock and his party had to select the positions for the column of attack, without learning much definitely regarding the extent and direction of the works to be assaulted.

So much of ill luck having attended the attempted reconnoissance, it remained to bring up the corps. The night was dark and the roads very bad, but Barlow's and Birney's divisions arrived about midnight. Almost the only clear ground upon which to form our troops was about four hundred yards wide, and ran in a curved line from the Brown House to the Landron House; and thence, with the curve reversed, on toward the Salient. Across this clearing Barlow's division was formed in two lines of masses, each regiment being doubled on the center. Brooke's and Miles's brigades constituted the first line, Smyth's and Brown's the second. On the right of Barlow Birney formed his division in two deployed lines. Mott's division was formed in the rear of Birney, and Gibbon, arriving at a later hour, was placed in reserve. As the enemy's pickets still occupied the Landron House, it was impossible to get any view of the works, and the information regarding their position was rather vague; but it was believed that

Barlow's heavily massed division would, by following down the line of the clearing, be brought directly upon the apex of the Salient, and so it proved.

It was near daylight before the necessary preparations were completed. When four o'clock arrived it was still too dark, owing to a heavy fog which spread over the ground, to allow objects to be clearly discerned. At half past four the order was given. Birney met some difficult ground in his advance, and for a few minutes Barlow's line, steadily moving down the clearing in dead silence, was somewhat ahead; but Birney's men made superhuman exertions, and, pushing through the obstacles, again came up abreast the First Division. Near the Landron House the enemy's picket reserves opened fire upon the left flank of our column, mortally wounding the heroic Colonel Stricker, of Delaware, who was leading the skirmishers. As soon as the curve of the clearing allowed Barlow's men to see the red earth at the Salient, they broke into a wild cheer and took the double-quick without orders. Tearing away the abatis with their hands, Miles's and Brooke's brigades sprang over the intrenchments, bayoneting the defenders or beating them down with clubbed muskets. Almost at the same instant Birney entered the works on his side and the Salient was won! Nearly a mile of the Confederate line was in our hands. Four thousand prisoners, including Major-General Edward Johnson and Brigadier-

General George H. Steuart, upward of thirty colors, and eighteen cannon were the fruits of the victory. Crazed with excitement, Birney's and Barlow's men could not be restrained, but followed the flying enemy until their second line was reached. Here they were brought to a stand by the resolute front presented by the Confederate reserves, true to the traditions which made the men of that army even more dangerous in defeat than in victory.

Thus far the affair had been a magnificent success. But now the moment of failure of connection, of delay in bringing up reserves, of misunderstanding and misadventure, inevitable in large operations in such a country, had come. Everything that Hancock and his subordinate commanders could do was done to hold what had been gained and to prepare for a new advance. The leading brigades, broken by the fury of the assault, were got together as well as was possible under the savage fire now poured in from the second Confederate line. The reserve divisions were ordered to man the captured works and to "turn" them as speedily as possible. There was not a moment to spare, for into that bloody space were advancing many thousands of stout soldiers, desperately determined to retrieve the fortunes of the day that had set so strongly against the Confederacy. Upon the Union side the confusion had become extreme; the long lines formed for the assault had converged as the Salient was reached,



and were heaped one upon another. Carroll's and Owen's brigades, from Gibbon's division which was formed in reserve, had been caught by the wild excitement of the charge and, dashing to the front, had struggled even past some of the leading troops and entered the works upon the left almost at the same moment with the brigades of Brooke and Miles from Barlow's division.. McAllister's brigade, of Mott's division, had also pushed forward from the second line and thrown itself over the intrenchments. This enthusiasm of the charging column was in itself commendable; but, taken in connection with the originally dense formation, it had led to a dangerous massing of the troops. Such a body was, for the purposes of the impending collision, but little more formidable than would have been a single well-ordered line.

From the Confederate side the divisions of Gordon and Rodes, soon re-enforced by brigades from Mahone and Wilcox, attacked our troops with savage desperation. Now on the right, and now on the left, these resolute soldiers threw themselves upon the disordered masses in the heart of the Salient, and forced them step by step backward till at last all of Hancock's men who had crossed the breastworks had been driven out; and the Second Corps only held the outer side of the intrenchments they had captured in the assault. It was about this time that Wheaton's and Russell's divisions of the Sixth

Corps arrived and took post on Hancock's right, along the west face of the Salient.

The contest had become beyond all comparison the closest and fiercest of the war. The Confederates were determined to recover their intrenchments at whatever cost. For the distance of a mile, in a cold drenching rain, the combatants were literally struggling across the breastworks. They fired directly into each other's faces; bayonet thrusts were given over the intrenchments; men even grappled their antagonists across the piles of logs. Hancock had brought some of his guns up to within three hundred yards of the captured works, and these were firing solid shot and shell over the heads of our troops into the space now crowded with Confederate brigades. Two sections were even run up to the very breastworks; and, though the muzzles protruded into the faces of the charging Confederates, the begrimed cannoneers continued to pour canister into the woods and over the open ground upon the west of the McCool House.

The contest had settled down to a struggle for the recovery of the apex of the Salient. On our part, the battle assumed a less tumultuous character. The brigades that had suffered most severely or had exhausted their ammunition were relieved by others and drawn to the rear, to be reformed and to replenish their cartridge boxes. Never since the discovery of gunpowder had such a mass of lead

been hurled into a space so narrow as that which now embraced the scene of combat. Large standing trees were literally cut off and brought to the ground by infantry fire alone.\* On either side a long ghastly procession of the wounded went limping or crawling to the rear; on either side fast rose the mounds of the dead, intermingled with those who were too severely hurt to extricate themselves from their hideous environment.

At ten Hancock received this dispatch from Meade to Grant, sent for his information: "Warren seems reluctant to assault. I have ordered him at all hazards to do so; and if his attack should be repulsed, to draw in his right and send his troops as fast as possible to Hancock and Wright. Tell Hancock to hold on." And Hancock held on, with his men four ranks deep, keeping the furious assailants at bay across the captured intrenchments. Warren's attack failed, as that judicious officer had anticipated; and in the afternoon Cutler's division of the Fifth Corps marched upon the field, where the contest was still raging with unabated fury. The trenches had more than once to be cleared of the dead to give the living a place to stand. Over

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\* The Confederate General McGowan states that an oak tree twenty-two inches in diameter, in rear of his brigade, was cut down by musket balls, falling during the fight and killing or wounding several soldiers. This is drawing it rather strong, but there is in Washington a tree eight to ten inches in diameter which was so cut down on the line of Miles's brigade.

that desperate and protracted contest Hancock presided, stern, strong, and masterful, withdrawing the shattered brigades as their ammunition became exhausted, supplying their places with fresh troops, feeding the fires of battle all day long and far into the night. It was not until twelve o'clock—twenty hours after the command "Forward!" had been given to the column at the Brown House—that the firing ceased; and the Confederates, relinquishing their purpose to retake the captured works, began in the darkness to construct a new line, to cut off the Salient, which for them had much better never have been built.

General Humphreys estimates Lee's losses on the 12th of May, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, at between nine and ten thousand, making a hideous gap in his army. It was the first, and it was to remain the only important engagement of the campaign in which the losses of the Confederates exceeded those of the Northern army—in which, indeed, the Union losses were not largely in excess. The casualties among general officers on the Confederate side had been excessive, owing to the ferocity of the contest within the Salient. Two had been killed, two captured, and four severely wounded.

The same authority estimates Grant's losses for the day at sixty-eight hundred men. Of these, the Second Corps lost about twenty-six hundred. General Alexander S. Webb, while leading his bri-

gade into action at the east angle with his customary gallantry, received a wound in the head which long disabled him. The officer of highest rank killed was Colonel John Coons, of Indiana, who fell while giving his men an example of heroic courage. Another officer deeply lamented was Lieutenant-Colonel Waldo Merriam, of Massachusetts. As field officer of the day for Mott's division, he had rendered valuable service in forming the corps for assault and in directing the movement of the column. The death of Lieutenant-Colonel Stricker from the fire of the Confederate picket reserves at the Landon House has already been mentioned. In addition to these, sixty-three commissioned officers were killed or mortally wounded—a fact which speaks volumes for the manner in which the officers of the corps discharged their duties on this memorable day. Of Hancock's staff, Major Harry H. Bingham, judge advocate, an officer rarely equaled in courage, energy, and intelligence, since distinguished in the national Congress, was severely wounded.

When day broke on the 13th it was found that the Confederates had retired wholly from the Salient. In order to develop the enemy's new position, General Gibbon sent two brigades forward toward the Harrison House. The enemy's skirmishers were driven into their works; but Colonel S. Sprigg Carroll was severely wounded in what proved to be his last action. During the remainder of the day

nothing occurred beyond an affair in which Miles succeeded in getting out two guns which had been left between the lines on the 12th, thus swelling the captures to twenty pieces.

The heavy losses which had been sustained by Mott's Fourth Division during the campaign, together with the expiry of the terms of several of the old regiments of 1861, rendered necessary a discontinuance of this division. Its two brigades, one of which General Mott was assigned to command, became attached to Birney's Third Division. Several changes in the position of the corps were made in the interval between the 13th and the 17th of May, but no fighting resulted. On the 16th the corps received very important re-enforcements, consisting of Tyler's division of heavy artillery, fresh from the defenses of Washington, embracing the First Massachusetts, First Maine, and the Second, Seventh, and Eighth New York; and the Corcoran (Irish) Legion, embracing the One Hundred and Fifty-fifth, One Hundred and Sixty-fourth, One Hundred and Seventieth, and One Hundred and Eighty-second New York regiments of infantry. The heavy artillery regiments mustered, when full, eighteen hundred men; and even then, so late in the war, were of the size of brigades which had been continuously in the field. The material was of the best. Yet all this could not make good the losses which the corps had sustained in the first fortnight

of the campaign. Those who had fallen were men inured to camp life, to hardship, exposure, and fatigue; in bivouac they knew how to make themselves almost comfortable with the scantiest means; how to cover themselves in rain and storm; how to make fires out of green wood, find water on dry ground, and cook their rations to the best advantage. On the march they had learned to cover the distance with the least wear and tear. On picket and skirmish they had countless arts by which they at once protected themselves and became more formidable to the enemy. In battle, officers and men had become veterans through a score of fierce encounters. Of the troops named, the Corcoran Legion was assigned to Gibbon's division. The heavy artillery remained for a short time unattached.

In accordance with orders from army headquarters, preparations were made during the 17th for an attack, in the early morning of the 18th, at the very point where the advance of the 12th had been stayed. The enemy having to a large extent been drawn off to their right by a movement of the Fifth and Sixth Corps on the 13th and 14th, it was proposed that the Second and Sixth should suddenly return to a point opposite what was now the Confederate left, in the hope of finding the lines there weak. According to the plan of army headquarters, the Second Corps, starting from the works gained on the 12th, was to advance inward through

the Salient and attack the intrenchments which had been built by the enemy to cut off that portion of their line. At the same time Wright's Sixth Corps was to advance upon the right of the Second and Burnside's Ninth Corps upon the left.

The attack was made as directed, but with no other result than a considerable loss, especially among the newly arrived re-enforcements, which had been placed in front in the hope that their fresh enthusiasm might carry them over the breastworks. The divisions of Barlow and Gibbon advanced in line of brigades; but the enemy were found strongly posted in rifle pits, their front completely covered by heavy slashing, while a powerful artillery opened promptly upon the column. The assaulting brigades could not penetrate the slashing in the face of the musketry and artillery, though the troops behaved with great steadiness. Becoming satisfied that persistence was useless, Hancock advised a discontinuance of the attack, and Meade thereupon instructed him to withdraw his men. The killed and wounded of the Second Corps were about six hundred and fifty. "In ordering this assault," remarks Morgan, "it was perhaps supposed that the corps would be urged to greater efforts to repeat its previous achievements on the same ground; but such was not the fact. Large numbers of the dead were still unburied, and, having been exposed to the hot sun for nearly a week, presented a hideous sight. Such a stench



came up from the field as to make many of the officers and men deathly sick. All the circumstances were such as to dishearten the men rather than to encourage them."

During the night the main body of the Second Corps lay near the Fredericksburg road, upon the east side of the Ny River. General Meade had determined that the corps should be sent, the night of the 19th, upon a march of twenty miles toward the left, to turn Lee's flank; but the Confederates ordered otherwise. In the afternoon of that day Ewell undertook a movement around Meade's right, his primary object being to ascertain whether the Union army was still in position; his secondary object, to do as much incidental mischief as possible. Leaving his intrenchments occupied by one division, the successor of Stonewall Jackson made a wide detour, and then, turning in sharply, bore down upon the Fredericksburg road, at that time our line of supply. Ewell had doubtless expected to find, so far to the rear, a small force or none; but, as it proved, Kitching's brigade of the Fifth Corps, and Tyler's division of heavy artillery recently assigned to the Second Corps, were in position to receive him. Hancock, galloping to the front, sent word to Birney to bring up his division at the double-quick. "The heavies" were found fiercely engaged in their first battle. Birney, on arriving, threw in two of his brigades, but the stress of the

battle was by that time over. On finding so powerful a body in position to meet them, Ewell's leading brigades recoiled from the encounter. Their reserves were brought up; but soon the whole line, hard pressed in front and overlapped upon the left, gave way and retreated across the Ny. Ewell states his loss at nine hundred. It was doubtless considerably greater. The heavy artillery regiments had borne themselves handsomely; they had sustained without panic a sudden attack which was intended to be another Chancellorsville surprise; they had faced the dread music of battle for the first time without flinching; and in the end had beaten off Rodes's and Gordon's divisions, with some assistance from the infantry coming up in their rear.

The action of the 19th of May, which had not been of our seeking, closed the operations of the Union armies in front of Spottsylvania. The entire losses of the Army of the Potomac and of Burnside's corps (then not officially recognized as a part of Meade's army, but reporting directly to General Grant) from the 8th to the 19th of May are estimated by General Humphreys at 14,679. The losses of the Second Corps had been as follows: Killed, 843; wounded, 3,958; missing, 656. Total, 5,457.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE NORTH ANNA AND THE TOTOPOTOMOY.

HAVING satisfied himself that he could make nothing by further attacks at Spottsylvania, General Grant undertook and carried out, between the 20th and 31st of May, two successive movements toward his left, in which he sought to anticipate the enemy, first at the North Anna, and afterward at Totopotomoy Creek. These operations are not without interest to the student of military science; but the object of this narrative will not require us to deal with their incidents at length.

We have seen that the Second Corps had been ordered to move to the left, prior to Ewell's irruption into our rear. The unexpected action of the 19th caused a postponement until the evening of the 20th. The march was through Guinea Station, where vedettes were first encountered by Torbert's cavalry in advance. At Milford Station the enemy were found in rifle pits, and were dislodged by the cavalry. The bridge across the Mattapony having been saved from destruction, the corps was pushed across, the cavalry well out in front, to give timely notice of

the enemy's approach and to allow opportunity for the construction of breastworks. The movement thus accomplished had placed Hancock well out on the left of the Union army and in a somewhat advanced position. He was therefore exposed to attack by the enemy hurrying down from Spottsylvania. This, however, was exactly what Meade desired. He hoped that Hancock would get an opportunity to severely punish one or two Confederate divisions which might be too enterprising in meeting the Union advance. But Lee gave little thought to Hancock's movement, having set his own troops in motion to get behind the North Anna.

The other corps having come up abreast of Hancock or in support of him by the 22d, and Lee having concentrated his army at Hanover Junction, fifteen or eighteen miles away, Grant, on the morning of the 23d, moved forward to the North Anna, determined to force the passage. At five o'clock in the morning the Second Corps set out, Birney in the lead, and about midday arrived at the river at Chesterfield, where there was a substantial bridge. Long lines of the enemy's jaded troops coming in from their forced march could be seen on the opposite bank forming simultaneously with ours. They had, however, artillery already in position, while on our bank of the river they still held a small earthwork which protected the bridge. Hancock's advance pushed the enemy backward until their

skirmishers were all driven across. He then determined to carry the bridgehead, which was held by troops from Kershaw's division. Two of Birney's brigades, commanded by Colonel Thomas W. Egan, of New York, and Colonel Byron R. Pierce, of Michigan, were formed for attack; and at half past six charged across the fields from nearly opposite directions, converging upon the earthwork. The two brigades advanced in splendid style over open ground, vying with each other in gallantry of bearing and rapidity of movement, and carried the intrenchments without a halt. The Confederates were driven pellmell across the river and the bridge was seized, some prisoners being captured.

The enemy made resolute efforts to burn the bridge when they retreated, and at intervals during the night renewed the attempt, but were beaten off. They succeeded, however, in partially destroying the railroad bridge. In the morning Birney's division crossed; and after two pontoon bridges had been thrown over, Barlow's and Gibbon's divisions followed. Tyler's heavy artillery remained on the north bank, to hold the captured bridgehead and to connect the Second Corps with the Fifth, which had crossed the river above and, after a severe fight with A. P. Hill, had established itself firmly on the south bank. It seemed that, the Union army being in position across the river, both above and below the point which Lee held on the 23d, that officer

must either retreat or fight a general battle. Such, however, was not the case. Lee's army, in fact, occupied a very peculiar position—one which, so far as I know, was nowhere duplicated during the war. The Confederates held the bank of the river for about three quarters of a mile, and then drew back their wings, each at a sharp angle. Their lines were heavily intrenched, and were protected from enfilade by the great natural strength of the ground and by repeated traverses. Why Lee, seeing that the Union army was divided, did not emerge from one or the other side and attack either Hancock or Warren with the greater part of his force has never been explained. Perhaps he hoped that the Army of the Potomac would commit itself to another grand assault and throw away a large part of its remaining preponderance of numbers. Grant, however, was not disposed to make an attack upon a position so formidable; and the two armies remained through the 24th, 25th, and 26th without a serious collision, though Gibbon's skirmishers were once driven in and a smart action took place.

Finding himself held as in a vice on the North Anna, Grant determined upon a yet further movement to the left, to cross the Pamunkey River near Hanover town, more than thirty miles away. The Sixth Corps, in advance, set out on the evening of the 26th of May, moving by the roads nearest the enemy. The Fifth and Ninth Corps were to move

by an inside route and cross the Pamunkey four miles below Hanover town. The Second, which had during the 26th been tearing up the railroad toward Milford, took the route at 10 A. M. of the 27th, following the Sixth. At ten o'clock that night the corps bivouacked three miles from the Pamunkey. The long march over the dusty roads had made great demands upon the troops; but these were bravely met in the expectation that the strategy of Grant would at last gain an opportunity to close the campaign with one victorious battle, in open country, outside intrenchments.

The next day, the 28th, the corps crossed the Pamunkey, the most important tributary of the York, and went into position between the Fifth and Sixth, in front of Hanover town, which is about seventeen miles from Richmond. Between Hanover town and Richmond flows Totopotomoy Creek, which presents much the same characteristics as the Chickahominy, so well known to the Army of the Potomac through its experiences of 1862, having but little slope, with a broad expanse of low bottom lands on one side or the other, more commonly on both, heavily timbered, and certain to become an impassable swamp after a rain. From Hanover town a good road runs southwest, through Hawes's shop, Pole Green Church (on the Totopotomoy), and Huntley's Corners, toward Richmond. Lee had, by forced marches, again got in between Grant and

Richmond, and the contest was to be renewed on the same terms as before.

On the 29th Barlow moved out for a reconnoissance of the Totopotomoy, and after dispersing some cavalry, reached Swift Creek, a tributary of the Totopotomoy, where he found breastworks fully manned. As Barlow reported that the enemy could not easily be dislodged, Birney and Gibbon were brought forward, and formed on his right and left respectively. The other corps were by this time well up. On the 30th, Brooke's brigade, supported by Owen's, moved against the enemy's line of skirmish pits and carried them in handsome style. These were immediately converted into cover for our own men. The Confederate position was found to be exceedingly strong, its front covered by the course of the Totopotomoy, much of the ground being marsh. The artillery was brought up and a great part of it placed along the ridge.

After a hot duel at unusually short range, Colonel Tidball succeeded in silencing the enemy; but as no opening appeared which promised success in an assault, General Hancock was directed not to press matters, it being understood that other corps were to attempt to turn the enemy's position. At a little after seven in the evening, however, General Hancock was informed by General Meade that Warren, on the extreme left, at Bethesda Church, had been violently attacked; and he was directed "as soon as



he could find a suitable place" to assault, with a view to relieving the pressure on the Fifth Corps. Such an exigency was one well suited to bring out Hancock's peculiar style of commanding troops and obeying orders. With incredible celerity Barlow's division was launched at the enemy—corps, division, and brigade commanders co-operating to make the action prompt and, if possible, successful. In less than thirty minutes from the receipt of the first order another arrived, directing Hancock to cease the attack; but Brooke's brigade had already carried the advanced line of breastworks. Darkness came on, and operations were suspended.

On the morning of the 31st Hancock resumed his efforts to force the passage of the Totopotomoy. Birney was sent forward on the right, crossed Swift Run, and, by a neat dash, carried the intrenched skirmish line across the Richmond road. Gibbon and Barlow then pushed close up to the enemy's works at all points; but the position was found everywhere too strong to afford a reasonable prospect of successful assault. The remainder of the day was spent in incessant and heavy skirmishing. The other corps having met in general no better fortune, Grant again determined to retire from his direct advance toward Richmond, and throw his army with all speed toward Cold Harbor.

The losses of the Second Corps on the North Anna and the Totopotomoy had been 259 killed,

1,132 wounded, 260 missing; total, 1,651. During the latter days of May it was decided to break up the division of heavy artillery under General Tyler. The Second and Seventh New York were sent to the First Division; the First Massachusetts and First Maine to the Third Division. A new brigade, the Fourth, was formed in Gibbon's division, under command of General Tyler, consisting of the Eighth New York Heavy Artillery and the Corcoran Legion. Owing to the large re-enforcements received during the month, as stated, the corps aggregate on the 31st of May showed an increase to 53,831. But of these the "present for duty," owing to the tremendous losses of the month, amounted to only one half—namely, 26,900.

## CHAPTER XV.

### COLD HARBOR.

WHILE Grant was engaged with the enemy upon the line of the Totopotomoy a powerful re-enforcement was approaching his left flank from the Army of the James. Butler's campaign had proved a costly failure; and the better part of his army, about sixteen thousand strong, under General W. F. Smith, had been directed to embark on transports at City Point and to land at White House on the Pamunkey. Grant's plan for the 1st of June was that Sheridan should seize Cold Harbor with the cavalry, and be there supported by the Sixth Corps from the Army of the Potomac and by Smith's Eighteenth Corps from the Army of the James. Sheridan carried out his part with vigor, holding Cold Harbor against repeated attempts to dislodge him by both cavalry and infantry in superior numbers until the Sixth Corps came up and made the position secure. The Eighteenth arrived later, and at six o'clock a battle was fought with varying fortune and heavy losses, but on the whole successfully for the Union arms. Portions of the

enemy's intrenched lines were carried and prisoners taken. The two corps under Wright and Smith having occupied Cold Harbor, and even gained considerable advantages in spite of an unexpectedly large concentration of hostile forces, Hancock was dispatched in haste to join them. General Meade's order was unusually urgent. In it he wrote: "You must make every exertion to move promptly, and reach Cold Harbor as soon as possible. At that point you will take position to re-enforce Wright upon his left, which it is desired to extend to the Chickahominy. Every confidence is felt that your gallant corps of veterans will move with vigor and endure the necessary fatigue."

So much is rarely expressed in orders from headquarters, and Hancock took it in earnest. Meade's hope was that the corps would arrive at Cold Harbor by daybreak and immediately go into action. This plan, in spite of the tremendous demands it made upon the men, would have been carried out but for the misdirection given to the column by an officer of Meade's staff, who undertook to conduct it by a short cut through a wood road. After moving for some distance, the road was found to narrow gradually, until finally the guns were caught between the trees. In the darkness much confusion arose throughout the column, and the troops became mixed to a degree which made it difficult to straighten them out again. The

night had been intensely hot and breathless, and the long march through roads deep with dust, which rose in suffocating clouds as it was stirred by thousands of feet of men and horses and by the wheels of the artillery, had been trying almost beyond the limits of endurance. It was not till between six and seven o'clock of the 2d of June that the troops began to arrive at Cold Harbor, and then in an exhausted condition. Upon Hancock's representations as to the state of his command, General Meade postponed the attack to 5 P. M., and then put it off until half past four the next morning.

The Confederate army was at last at bay, close on Richmond, the city being distant only about six miles. It was no longer practicable to turn either flank of Lee's position. His right rested on the Chickahominy. His left was hidden amid the wooded swamps of the Totopotomoy and the Mata-dequin. No opportunity had been afforded to make an adequate reconnoissance of the enemy's line; but, in view of the momentous consequences of a victory here, Grant determined to hazard a grand assault. It was, beyond question, the most unfortunate decision made during that bloody campaign. He has himself left on record an expression of his regret.\* At any rate, if the assault were to be made, there seems to have been no reason why it should

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\* "I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made."—*Grant's Memoirs*.

be undertaken on the 3d of June. The enemy were all up and in position, so that no advantage from surprise was to be hoped for. Had the 3d or the 4th been utilized for a reconnoissance, in which the enemy should have been driven everywhere into his works while the engineers and the fighting staff carefully surveyed each portion of the line, some weak point might have been discovered\* upon which an attack could be delivered with a reasonable chance of success. Opposite such a point should have been concentrated at least six divisions, to take advantage of any opening that might be made. As it was, with the enemy's position practically unknown to commanders and staff, the Second Corps on the left, the Sixth in the center, and the Eighteenth on the right, were to assault, each on its own front, at half past four in the morning.

Much to the relief of the troops, who had suffered intensely from the torrid heat and the choking dust of the preceding day and night, rain began to fall in the late afternoon of the 2d and continued, with intervals, until morning. When day broke the corps had been formed in columns of assault as follows: Barlow's division had, in front, the brigades of Miles and Brooke, deployed; the brigades commanded by Colonels Byrnes and McDougall constituted the second line. On the right, Gibbon's

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\* As, for a possible example, the point opposite Wright, referred to in Meade's dispatch, given on page 223.

division was also in two lines—Tyler's and Smyth's brigades deployed in front, Owen's and McKeen's in close column of regiments behind. Birney's division was in support. Promptly at the signal Barlow advanced and found the enemy strongly posted in a sunken road, from which Brooke drove them, after a severe struggle, following them into their works under a heavy fire. Two or three hundred prisoners, one color, and three cannon fell into Brooke's hands. The captured guns were at once turned upon the enemy and the most strenuous efforts made to hold the position; but an enfilading fire of artillery swept down the line, the works in rear opened, and large bodies of fresh troops advanced with the utmost determination to retake the position. The first line held on with great stubbornness, but was finally forced out, General Brooke being severely wounded, Colonels Byrnes and O. H. Morris killed. Miles's brigade also effected a lodgment in the works, Hapgood's Fifth New Hampshire being foremost in the assault; but these troops in turn were driven out by the fire of the Confederate artillery and by the strong bodies of infantry advanced against them.

Upon the right, Gibbon had no better fortune. That officer had directed his second line to follow closely, and at a given point push rapidly forward, pass the first line, effecting, if possible, a lodgment in the enemy's works, and then deploy. In its advance Gibbon's division was cut in two by an impassable

swamp, which widened as it approached the works. The existence of this, in the absence of any reconnaissance, had not been known. The fire of artillery and musketry was terrific. General Tyler fell, seriously wounded; Colonel McKeen, bringing his brigade gallantly up by the side of Tyler, was killed; Colonel Haskell, Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, succeeding to McKeen's command, fell mortally wounded; but the troops still struggled on through a furious blast of fire from the fully manned works on the high ground. Colonel McMahan, of the One Hundred and Sixty-fourth New York, separated by the swamp from the rest of Haskell's brigade, gained the breastworks at the head of a portion of his regiment, with his colors in his hand, but fell dead among the enemy. A part of Smyth's brigade, also reforming and advancing after their first repulse, gained the intrenchments, but the failure of Owen\* to bring up his brigade left Smyth's shattered command unsupported.

Scarcely twenty-two minutes after the signal had been given, the repulse of the corps was complete. Three thousand had fallen. Among officers, the losses had been portentous. Six full colonels—namely, McKeen, Byrnes, Haskell, O. H. Morris, McMahan, and Porter—had been killed. Generals Tyler and Brooke had been severely wounded. When the losses of the preceding month are remembered, it

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\* See page 244.



will be seen how extraordinary was the proportion of officers of high rank killed in this brief contest. And in every case those named were well worthy of the positions they held. They were, in truth, the very flower of the corps—men who were to be terribly missed in the subsequent severe trials through which their troops were so soon to be called to pass—men who never could be replaced. Among officers of lower rank, forty-six had been killed or mortally wounded. The other corps had been no more successful in their attacks. Wright and Smith had assaulted, each on his own front, but had been repulsed after a severe struggle. At nine o'clock Hancock received the following dispatch:

“HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
“*June 3, 1864, 8.45 A. M.*”

“MAJOR-GENERAL HANCOCK: I send you two notes from Wright, who thinks he can carry the main line if he is relieved by attacks of the Second and Eighteenth Corps. Also, that he is under the impression that he is in advance of you. It is of the greatest importance that no effort should be spared to succeed. Wright and Smith are both going to try again, and, unless you consider it hopeless, I would like you to do the same.

“GEORGE G. MEADE, *Major General.*”

It need not at this stage of our narrative be said that such an appeal would come to Hancock with as

much force as to any man that ever lived. But he also owed a duty to his troops; and, feeling perfectly sure that another attack would be fruitless, he took advantage of the discretion given him by General Meade to save his men. Birney's division, which had not suffered in the assault, was sent over to the extreme right to report to Warren, whose long line was threatened by the enemy. Hancock's decision not to attack again at Cold Harbor was at the time made the subject of a sensational newspaper story, to the effect that the order to attack was given and that the troops refused to move. An unprincipled writer has, in a book published within the last few years, not only repeated the story, but described the episode as occurring under his own observation. Nothing of the kind took place.

Wright's and Smith's second attack met with no better fortune than the first. In the Second Corps, although the repulse of both divisions had been decisive, the troops still clung tenaciously to the ground nearest the Confederate works wherever so much as half cover could be found. In some cases our men lay within thirty yards of the enemy; in other places, according to the configuration of the ground, the line ran away to fifty, seventy, a hundred, or more. Here the troops intrenched themselves as well as they could with bayonets and tin plates; and waited for night to go to work on a larger scale and with better tools. As evening came

on, a furious fire broke out along the two lines, now so near that in many cases no pickets could be thrown out. Each side believed that it was being attacked. The day of the 4th was characterized by heavy artillery practice and by extreme sharpshooting. Whenever a head appeared for an instant it became the target for a score of shots. A portion of Gibbon's line was so near that it was necessary to dig "covered ways," by which alone the troops could be withdrawn or re-enforced, or rations and ammunition brought up. Among the killed of this day was Colonel Lewis O. Morris, Seventh New York Heavy Artillery, who had, on the 3d, succeeded Brooke in command of his brigade. The approach of night brought another outburst, which was again interpreted by our troops to mean an attempt of the enemy to carry our works by a sudden dash.

June 5th was in its essential character a repetition of the 4th. Through all this interval it was known that scores of our desperately wounded were lying in the narrow space between the two lines, uncared for and without water. All who could crawl in to the one side or the other had already done so; hundreds had been brought in at great risk to their rescuers; but there were still those who lay helpless where it was simple death for a Union soldier to show his head. Moreover, the dead of the 3d nearly all lay where they had fallen. If it be asked why so simple a duty of humanity as the rescue of

the wounded and burial of the dead had been thus neglected, it is answered that it was due to an unnecessary scruple on the part of the Union commander in chief. Grant delayed sending a flag of truce to General Lee for this purpose because it would amount to an admission that he had been beaten on the 3d of June. It now seems incredible that he should for a moment have supposed that any other view could be taken of that action. But even if it were so, this was a very poor way of rewarding his soldiers who had fallen in the attack, or of encouraging their comrades to take similar risks. It was not until the 7th that an arrangement was reached for a cessation of hostilities, between 6 and 8 P. M., for burying the dead and removing the wounded. By this time most of the latter were past caring for. Hardly was the "flag of truce" over when another outburst occurred, which soon rose to the greatest fury. The troops in the trenches were comparatively safe, but the plain behind was swept with musketry and artillery fire. The headquarters of the corps were riddled by bullets, and the assistant provost marshal, Captain Alexander McCune, was killed by a solid shot while standing in the door of Hancock's tent. It was a hideous time; and no one who was exposed to the fury of that storm will ever forget how the horrors of battle were heightened by the blackness of the night.

It has been said that the immediate position

which Lee had taken could not be turned either by its right or by its left; but afar off to the south, across the Chickahominy and across the James, lay the city of Petersburg, controlling the communications of Richmond with the main country of the Confederacy. Hither the lieutenant general had already determined to transfer his army, hoping, by carefully planned and rapidly executed movements, to seize the Cockade City. To this end the Army of the Potomac was to be held in its trenches in front of Cold Harbor several days longer, and all the appearance of active operations was to be maintained. The duty was, of necessity, exceedingly trying to the troops, especially those of the Second Corps, which lay nearest the enemy. Through all the day not a man, over large parts of the line, could show his head above the works or go ten yards to the rear without being shot. This continued until the early evening of the 12th, when the corps was stealthily withdrawn.

In the column that wound its way in the darkness out of the intrenchments and took the route to the Chickahominy little remained of the two splendid divisions which had crossed that river on the 31st of May, 1862, to the rescue of McClellan's broken left. Down to the point we have reached, this body of troops had, it is true, been most fortunate in its opportunities; but its transcendent deeds had been mainly of its own daring

and its own deserving. It had captured twenty-five cannon; it had lost one, disabled. It had taken more than eighty flags in action; it had yielded, perhaps, a dozen to the enemy. Its "missing" in all its terrible battles had been about five thousand; it had captured over eleven thousand Confederates. It had not been more impetuous in assault than steady, enduring, and resourceful in disaster. But as the corps turned southward from Cold Harbor, to take its part in the second act of the great campaign of 1864, the historian is bound to confess that something of its pristine virtue had departed under the terrific blows that had been showered upon it in the series of fierce encounters which have been recited. Its casualties had averaged more than four hundred a day for the whole period since it crossed the Rappahannock. It had lost 5,092 in the Wilderness, 5,457 at Spottsylvania, 1,651 on the North Anna and the Totopotomoy, 3,510 at Cold Harbor; in all, 15,710. But even these figures fail to tell the amount of the injury that had been sustained. Twenty-seven general and field officers had been killed or mortally wounded, and several times that number disabled. In a disproportionate degree it was the bravest and most enterprising officers, the bravest and most enduring soldiers, who had fallen in the assaults upon intrenched positions. These were the men who went farthest to the front, stayed there longest, and fell back most slowly and grudgingly.

Moreover, the confidence of the troops in their leaders had been severely shaken. They had again and again been ordered to attacks which the very privates in the ranks knew to be hopeless from the start; they had seen the fatal policy of "assaults all along the line" persisted in even after the most ghastly failures; and they had almost ceased to expect victory when they went into battle. The lamentable story of Petersburg can not be understood without reference to facts like these.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### PETERSBURG.

GRANT'S purpose in leaving the ill-omened neighborhood of Cold Harbor was to occupy Petersburg. It had not been anticipated that the actual capture would devolve upon the Army of the Potomac, inasmuch as General Butler had been directed to seize it in advance. Butler's expedition, however, on the 9th and 10th of June failed, with the sole effect of drawing down considerable re-enforcements to the garrison. There was still reason to hope that Grant's own flank movement would be successful, so well had it been planned, so vigorously were its first stages executed. The route chosen involved an extent of fifty miles; but, under the admirable arrangements projected by General Humphreys, as chief of staff, the Confederates were not only outmarched but outgeneraled. Strategically, the movement from Cold Harbor to the James, between the 12th and 14th of June, 1864, was distinctly the finest thing the Army of the Potomac had ever done.

Warren, with the Fifth Corps, crossed the Chickahominy at Long Bridge, covering the crossing of



the other corps below (except Smith's, which had been sent back to Butler at Bermuda Hundred); while the vast trains moved at a still greater distance from the enemy. Warren then advanced from Long Bridge toward Richmond, threatening a direct attack on the city. So completely was Lee deceived that he failed at all to apprehend Grant's real object. Meanwhile, the Second Corps reached Jones's Bridge, on the Chickahominy, in the early morning of the 13th, and, pushing tirelessly forward, came into bivouac on the James River, at Wilcox's Landing, near Charles City Court House, by evening of that day. As soon as boats could be obtained Hancock began crossing his troops to Windmill Point. The operation was long and tedious, but by 4 A. M. of the 15th Hancock had got all his infantry and four of his batteries over the river.

What now was Hancock to do? By what further steps was the movement, thus far so successfully carried on, to be brought to a triumphant conclusion? Grant's plan was that Smith's corps, starting from City Point, should on this day, the 15th of June, advance rapidly upon Petersburg and seize the place, which was reported to be slimly held. Hancock, with his still powerful corps from the Army of the Potomac, was to move by a much longer route toward Petersburg, to be in readiness to support Smith, if required. But, by one of the strangest fatalities in the whole history of the war, it came

about that Grant omitted to inform Meade\* of Smith's expedition. So far as Meade knew, Hancock was simply to move toward Petersburg, without any orders to attack the place or to support another force in doing so. Consequently, Hancock's instructions only required him to move toward Petersburg and take up a position "where the City Point Railroad crosses Harrison's Creek." Hancock, having no intimation that he was to do more than accomplish this march, desired to have his troops rationed before setting out, as any good general would have done, and obtained Meade's permission to that effect. This should not have required a long time, as Butler had been ordered to send sixty thousand rations to Windmill Point; but the Fates had declared that the 15th of June should be a day of blunders. First, there was a delay about the arrival of rations from City Point; and when they came up it was found that the vessel drew too much water to get to the wharf. Had Hancock received the slightest intimation that he would be needed to sup-

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\* So completely was Grant possessed with the idea that he had given Meade this information that it was almost impossible for him to believe that he had not done so. He did not, however, fail later to accept the assurances of Meade and Humphreys that they had not heard a word of the matter. In his Memoirs he frankly recognizes this omission; but the spiteful Badeau labors to show that it was impossible that Meade and Hancock should not have known Grant's intentions. It would be interesting to know how far the few acts of personal injustice which the lieutenant general committed were due to this malign influence.

port Smith, he would have marched in the early morning, rations or no rations. As it was, not until half past ten did he start on his prescribed march. But this was not all. The information at headquarters about Harrison's Creek was erroneous, the maps being miles out of the way in this particular. Consequently Hancock took a road much longer than that which he would have taken if he had simply been told to go to Petersburg.

Setting out thus late, and with a false direction, Hancock conducted his column steadily through the day, but without forcing the pace, as he wished to spare his troops and knew of no reason for haste. As the afternoon advanced, random artillery firing was heard upon the left and front. Inquiry of the country people elicited the information that Kautz's division of cavalry had gone out in that direction; and Hancock saw no reason to attach special significance to the firing. Meanwhile Smith, who since morning had been reconnoitering the works of Petersburg, had no intimation that any troops were on the way to join him until, late in the afternoon, he was advised by a staff officer from Grant that the Second Corps was on the march. Upon this, Smith sent to Hancock, asking him to come up as rapidly as possible. This dispatch\*

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\* "This seems," says Grant in his Memoirs, "to be the first intimation that Hancock had received to the effect that he was to go to Petersburg, or that anything in particular was expected of

Hancock received while he was still about four miles from Smith's left, the day being then nearly gone. Birney's head of column was just passing a cross road, by which it was sent on to Petersburg. Gibbon followed. Unfortunately, Barlow's division, which was moving with the trains, had got out of the way,\* owing to another error of the map, and could not be brought up for a considerable time.

When Hancock at last reached the neighborhood of Petersburg he found that Smith had captured several of the enemy's redoubts with many guns and prisoners, but was still far from reaching the city itself. Hancock was ignorant of the topography of the country, much of which was covered with dense woods. There was no time to make a reconnoissance during the few minutes of daylight remaining. He accordingly deferred to Smith upon the point of deciding whether another attack should be made, offering to put in his two divisions at any point which that officer might indicate. Smith, who believed that Petersburg had been heavily re-en-

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him. Otherwise he would have been there by four o'clock in the afternoon." (Vol. ii, 295.) In fact, however, Hancock had a few minutes before received a dispatch from the lieutenant general himself informing him of Smith's expected attack, and was already taking measures to proceed to General Smith's support when he received the latter's message.

\* There was a long correspondence on this subject between Hancock and Barlow, Hancock being in these matters exceedingly punctilious; but I see no good in ventilating a controversy on such a point between two such soldiers.

forced during the afternoon, contented himself with asking Hancock to relieve his troops in the front line of the captured works. This relief was effected by eleven o'clock at night.

Such is the story of June 15th. To Hancock it always remained a very gloomy day. He bitterly felt the imputations which ignorance or malice led certain persons in high places, as well as some irresponsible critics, to cast upon him. Stung by reflections on his conduct, he wrote a letter reciting the occurrences and requesting an investigation. This letter Meade forwarded to Grant, with an indorsement which closes as follows: "I do not see that any censure can be attached to General Hancock and his corps." The subject can not be better concluded than in the words of the lieutenant general: "The reputation of the Second Corps and its commander is so high, both with the public and in the army, that an investigation could not add to it. It can not be tarnished by newspaper articles or scribblers. No official dispatch has ever been sent from these headquarters which by any construction could cast blame on the Second Corps or its commander for the part they have played in this campaign."

Unfortunately, the misunderstandings and mistakes of the 15th were carried into the 16th, permitting the Confederates to strengthen and finally to confirm their hold upon Petersburg, which the

excellent strategy of Grant had for twenty-four hours placed fairly at the mercy of the Potomac Army. It is difficult to say how much of the failure to seize the opportunity offered was due to the fact that the fatigues and excitements of the past forty days had brought about a partial disability from Hancock's Gettysburg wound in the thigh. That devoted officer, who never spared himself, whether in camp, on the march, or in battle, was now suffering intense pain, due to six weeks of almost continuous labor in the saddle, compelling him frequently to seek rest in an ambulance or on the ground when otherwise he would have been galloping over the field or leading the march of his foremost division. Another fact that seriously interfered with the operations of the Second Corps on the morning of June 16th was Hancock's complete ignorance of the position at Petersburg. Until late in the afternoon of the 15th he had not had an intimation that any responsibility respecting the capture of the place was to devolve upon him; he had never served in the region in which Petersburg is situated; the only map furnished him had proved grossly wrong. Finally, it must in fairness be confessed that topographical insight was not one of Hancock's strong points. On a field over which he could cast his rapid and searching glance no man surpassed—few soldiers, living or dead, ever equaled—the commander of the Second Corps in the

promptitude and directness with which he made appropriate dispositions, whether for attack or defense, however sharp and sudden the emergency. But of that peculiar form of genius which enables some men, even in a strange country, to know intuitively the direction of roads, "the lay of the land," the course of streams, the trend of ranges, Hancock possessed little.

For one or another reason it came about that Hancock's orders to his division commanders, about midnight, to govern their actions in the early morning of June 16th, threw upon them much responsibility—not more responsibility than is appropriate to the leader of five or seven thousand men, but rather more than Hancock's habits as a corps commander had usually assigned them. These orders were addressed in the following terms to Generals Gibbon and Birney, Barlow's division not yet having got into place after its misdirection of the preceding afternoon: "If there are any points on your front commanding your position now occupied by the enemy, the commanding general directs that they may be taken at or before daylight, preferably before, as it is desirable to prevent the enemy from holding any points between us and the Appomattox. It is thought there are one or two such points." These orders were delivered to the division commanders between one and two o'clock. In his narrative, Morgan severely criticises Birney for his failure to

seize the high ground about the Avery House on his front. Morgan states that he rode out after daylight from Birney's division toward the Avery House without finding any pickets from that division, until he came close to the enemy who were hurrying down from Petersburg to throw themselves into certain redoubts opposite our left, which had been abandoned in consequence of Smith's capture of other portions of the line the night before. No vigorous effort appears to have been made at daylight to carry out Hancock's instructions to seize all commanding points in front. It was between seven and eight o'clock before Birney's troops fairly got to work. By this time much ground, particularly that around the Hare and Avery Houses, which should have been within our picket line, and could have been had for nothing at day-break, was occupied by the enemy who proceeded to man the abandoned works and to connect and strengthen them. At eight o'clock Egan led his brigade in a brilliant assault upon one of the Confederate redoubts, capturing it in the very style displayed on the North Anna. Birney was unable to carry his success far, and was obliged to leave the enemy in possession of ground which was to be taken later at great cost of life.

Barlow's division was now up on our extreme left, and the Ninth Corps was reported close behind upon the road. General Hancock received



orders to assume command of all the troops at Petersburg and to make a reconnoissance to develop the enemy's line, in order to ascertain the most suitable place for a general assault to be delivered at six o'clock in the afternoon. The reconnoissance was made by Birney's division on the left of the Prince George Court House road, bringing on a very animated skirmish, with heavy fire of artillery. General Meade himself arrived while it was in progress, and decided that the assault should be directed against the Hare House on Birney's front. The artillery fire and the skirmishing continued until the appointed hour arrived. The burden of the attack fell upon Barlow's and Birney's divisions; Gibbon's troops were, however, engaged, and four brigades from the Ninth and Eighteenth Corps were used as supports. Barlow and Birney were unable to break the enemy's main line, although three redoubts were captured with their connecting works. Here was killed the gallant Patrick Kelly, colonel of the Eighty-eighth New York, commanding the Irish brigade. Here, too, fell, severely wounded, Colonel James A. Beaver, commanding Barlow's Fourth Brigade, the third officer who had fallen at its head within two weeks. It is not possible to state definitely the losses of the 16th of June. Among the killed, besides Colonel Kelly, were Colonel John A. Savage, Thirty-sixth Wisconsin, and Lieutenant-Colonel Baird, One Hundred

and Twenty-sixth New York, with seventeen other commissioned officers. The intrenchments were "turned," and were closely connected with those taken by General Smith on the 15th.

We have seen how, on the 15th, the golden opportunity to seize Petersburg was lost. We have seen how, on the 16th, the late arrival of Barlow's division and lack of enterprise on the part of General Birney during the first hours of daylight allowed the enemy, so completely discomfited the evening before, to seize and fortify strong and well-advanced positions. We saw how, at eight o'clock in the morning, Egan repeated his brilliant *coup* of the North Anna; and how, near evening, the Second Corps, supported by brigades from the Ninth and Eighteenth, made a general assault, which resulted in the capture of three more redoubts, but without success corresponding to the heavy losses sustained. At daybreak of the 17th Potter's division of the Ninth Corps by a most brilliant assault captured the enemy's lines at the Shand House, with guns, colors, and prisoners. Encouraged by this success, the Ninth Corps made other assaults, two of which were supported on the right by Barlow's division. At the last of these, which began about dark and continued until ten o'clock, Barlow lost heavily, especially in men captured. A portion of the enemy's works was for a brief time occupied, but was retaken. It is impossible even to approximate

the losses of this day. Eleven officers were killed or mortally wounded, including Lieutenant-Colonel Bates, of the Eighth New York Heavy Artillery.

The morning of June 18th found General Meade in a state of mind to demand the most strenuous and persistent assaults, with a view to carry, if possible, at any cost, the lines of the enemy defending Petersburg. Most inopportunately it happened at this date that Hancock had become completely disabled. Fragments of bone had for the past few days been making their way to the surface, and after the action of the 17th the gallant general had been obliged to relinquish his command to Birney. This officer at daybreak pushed forward strong bodies of skirmishers, which disclosed the fact that the enemy had withdrawn to a new line behind the Hare House. At twelve o'clock, noon, under peremptory orders from Meade, Gibbon's division was thrown forward in two lines of battle, but was repulsed, General Byron R. Pierce, of Michigan, being wounded. Again, under orders from Meade still more peremptory in their tone, Birney advanced the division of Mott, supported by one of Gibbon's brigades and by the division of Barlow, and made a strenuous assault, which was repulsed with terrible slaughter. The attack of Mott from the Hare House is especially memorable for the heroic bearing and the monstrous losses of the First Maine Heavy Artillery, which advanced for three hundred and fifty yards over ground swept

by musketry, and only retired after six hundred had fallen, the heaviest loss sustained by any regiment of the Union army in any battle of the war.

Thus ended the last of the series of assaults upon intrenched positions in the campaign of 1864. The limits of human endurance had been reached. At five o'clock General Meade became satisfied that it was impracticable to carry the enemy's lines, but his latest dispatch to Birney shows how firmly he had set his soul on the attempt: "Sorry to hear you could not carry the works. Get the best line you can, and be prepared to hold it. I suppose you can not make any more attacks, and I feel that all has been done that can be done." We do not know the losses of June 18th, but not less than twenty-six officers were killed or mortally wounded in the Second Corps, twelve of them being from the heroic First Maine. Colonel John Ramsey, of New Jersey, was wounded at the head of a brigade.

After the battle of the 18th the Second Corps, still under Birney, was withdrawn from the front and massed in rear of the left center of the general line. On the morning of the 21st the corps marched across the Norfolk Railroad and the Jerusalem plank road, and then, advancing to the front, continued Warren's line to the left, this being the first of that series of southward extensions which had for their object the cutting of the Weldon Railroad. June 22d was destined to be a very humiliating day in the

experience of the Second Corps. General Meade had devised a great wheeling movement, in which three corps were to be swung around in unison, to envelop and, if possible, overlap the enemy's line. The Second, which in this movement formed the center, kept its hold firmly upon the Fifth Corps on its right, and made its own way toward its assigned position; but the corps upon the left, the Sixth, having a longer distance to compass, failed to keep up. General Birney more than once halted to maintain the connection, but at last Meade, growing impatient at the delay, directed him to go forward without further regard to the troops on his left. Hardly had the Second Corps resumed its movement when a Confederate division, which had been lying in a place from which it would have been driven by the advance of the Sixth Corps, assailed our own left flank with the utmost vehemence and threw the troops into momentary confusion, the line recoiling like a man from the bite of an adder. The affair lasted but an instant. The corps, recovering itself, went forward and drove the enemy out; but meantime the exultant Confederates had drawn off the four guns of McKnight's Twelfth New York Battery, and had captured seventeen hundred prisoners, more than the corps had lost on the Peninsula—more than it had lost at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville combined. The enemy's success was facilitated, if not alone made possible, by the thickets

through which our troops were moving, and by their own intimate knowledge of the ground.\*

On the 23d Colonel William Blaisdell, of Massachusetts, who had distinguished himself at the Salient, was killed on the picket line. By June 27th Hancock had sufficiently recovered to resume command. On July 11th the corps was withdrawn from its intrenchments and massed near the Williams House, and on the following day went into camp behind the Fifth Corps, Hancock making his headquarters in the shot-riddled building upon the Norfolk road known as the "Deserted House."

On July 18th Brigadier-Generals J. H. Hobart Ward † and Joshua T. Owen ‡ were mustered out by order of the President. These officers had for some time been awaiting trial on charges of misconduct, but it had not been found convenient to assemble a court-martial of sufficient rank to try them. A change in the *personnel* of the Second Corps of a very different character occurred when, on July 23d, Major-General Birney gave up his division to take command of the Tenth Corps in the Army of the James, for which position he had been recommended by Generals Hancock and Meade. General Birney had rendered marked services to the Army of the Potomac. He was eminently a sagacious man, and

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\* General Mahone, who commanded the division engaged, had been the engineer of the Petersburg and Norfolk Railroad.

† See page 180.

‡ See page 222.

had an excellent understanding of military principles. In temper he was signally cool and composed. He was succeeded in command of the Third Division by Brigadier-General Gershom Mott, of New Jersey, a man perfectly brave, with much of the natural instinct of leadership, though lacking a little in that stirring ambition which brings to their highest activity the qualities of a commander.

On the 25th of July General Grant addressed the following letter to President Lincoln :

“CITY POINT, VA., *July 25, 1864.*”

“PRESIDENT A. LINCOLN: After the late raid into Maryland had expended itself, seeing the necessity of having the four departments of the Susquehanna, the Middle, West Virginia, and Washington under one head, I recommended that they be merged into one. . . . It would suit me equally well to call the four departments referred to a ‘military division,’ and to have placed in command of it General Meade. In this case I would suggest General Hancock for the command of the Army of the Potomac, and General Gibbon for the command of the Second Corps.

“Hoping that you will see this matter in the light I do, I have the honor to subscribe myself, etc.,

“U. S. GRANT, *Lieutenant General.*”

## CHAPTER XVII.

### DEEP BOTTOM.

THE terrible experiences of May and June in assaults upon intrenched positions naturally brought about a reaction even in Grant's resolute mind, so that the months of July and August were largely occupied in rapid movements, now to the right and now to the left of a line thirty miles in length, in the hope of somewhere, at some time, getting upon the flank of the unprepared enemy—the sentiment of headquarters and perhaps the orders \* being adverse to assaults. Unfortunately, this change of purpose did not take place until the numbers, and even more the *morale*, of the troops had been so far reduced that the flanking movements became, in the main, ineffectual from the want of vigor in attack at critical moments when a little of the fire which had been exhibited in the great assaults of May would have crowned a well-conceived enterprise with victory. That fire for the time had burned itself out; and on more than one occasion during the months

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\* Thus Grant, in his dispatch to Meade, July 27th, says: "I do not want Hancock to attack intrenched lines."



of July and August the troops of the Army of the Potomac, after an all-day or all-night march which placed them in a position of advantage, failed to show a trace of that enthusiasm and *élan* which had characterized the earlier days of the campaign.

In two of these expeditions—one in July and one in August—the Second Corps, which had always maintained the highest reputation for its quick and clean marches, took the leading part. The July expedition to Deep Bottom, as it was called, on the north bank of the James River, had in view two possible results: First, that the enemy's lines might be found so slimly held as to allow our powerful corps of cavalry, after the Confederate infantry should have been pushed back on Chapin's Farm, to capture Richmond by a rush, or, at least, cut up the railroads on the north of the city. Second, that whether Hancock should succeed or should fail in the first object, the movement might serve as a feint to draw a large part of Lee's army away from Petersburg, which the other corps were preparing to enter through the ghastly avenue to be laid open by the explosion of Burnside's mine.

In execution of his instructions, Hancock led his corps out of camp on the 26th of July; and, crossing Bermuda Hundred behind Butler's line, reached the James with the head of his column on the morning of the 27th. Hancock at once threw his infantry across the river by the only bridge that was availa-

ble. Sheridan \* followed with his numerous cavalry. It was found that the enemy had since Grant's last advices advanced their troops to occupy the strong defensive line of Bailey's Creek, which was thus necessarily to be carried before the Confederates could be forced back on Chapin's Farm, as contemplated in Hancock's instructions. One division—Kershaw's—had been thrown forward from this line to hold the edge of the woods which skirted on the west the great plain of Deep Bottom. This force was intrenched, with artillery. As soon as Kershaw was discovered, the First Division was formed in line of battle, and its skirmishers, under command of Colonel James C. Lynch, of Pennsylvania, but with General Miles superintending the movement, were pushed toward the enemy. Hereupon ensued one of the most dashing operations of the war. So skillful and adroit were the dispositions made, so rapid and impetuous was the advance of the skirmish line, that, without a regiment of the reserves showing itself, Kershaw's works were carried at the first rush and his line of battle was driven back through the woods. The fruits of this brilliant dash were four twenty-pounder Parrotts—great splendid fellows—which, it may well be believed, were brought in with much jubilation. Following up this initial success, the enemy were driven back behind Bailey's Creek.

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\* It will be remembered that General Hancock was the ranking officer.

On the right the skirmishers of the Third Division, under command of Colonel Edwin R. Byles, became severely engaged with the enemy. The four twenty-pounder Parrotts were unanimously accepted as a full compensation for McKnight's four Napoleons, lost on the 22d of June.

Inasmuch as the further developments of the morning showed that the enemy were in well-constructed works along Bailey's Creek, in full force, Hancock was instructed not to attack in front, but to seek to turn the enemy's left flank. This was at last found to rest near Fussell's Mill, and Mott's and Barlow's divisions were moved over to this point. About three o'clock in the afternoon General Grant visited the field in person. The lieutenant general satisfied himself that, while the heavy concentration of the enemy would prevent our troops from giving battle, the second object of the expedition was being even more completely accomplished than he had dared to hope. In fact, Lee had become thoroughly alarmed by the appearance of our troops in this quarter and nothing doubted that Grant was making a desperate effort to force his way directly into Richmond. An unceasing stream was pouring across the James from Petersburg to resist Hancock's advance. By the 29th of July five out of Lee's eight \*

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\* This is the way General Meade stated it at the time. There were nine divisions in the Army of Northern Virginia. I suppose the division in front of Butler was excluded.

divisions of infantry, with the bulk of his cavalry, were holding the roads to Richmond.

Such a rapid concentration of the Confederates on the north side of the James had, as stated, early caused an abandonment of the first object of the expedition; but it manifestly increased, in a very high degree, the chances of the capture of Petersburg. Although but one infantry corps confronted this large Confederate force, Grant had the nerve to withdraw Mott's division, on the night of the 28th, and send it back to support Ord's Eighteenth Corps in the great assault which was preparing twenty miles away to the south. Mott's division was by this time nearly as large as Gibbon's and Barlow's combined, and its withdrawal left Hancock with only about eight thousand infantry and Sheridan's cavalry. His position on the 29th was therefore to be one of great peril. His line possessed no natural advantages whatever, and the troops he had left with him were but a fraction of what would have been required to hold it against a serious attack. To draw in that line would have been to invite a movement of the enemy, which could hardly have failed to disclose Hancock's weakness. Were the enemy even to suspect that weakness, they would pour down in overwhelming force and drive our troops into the river.

In the situation existing it was decided that the cavalry could best support the infantry by returning to the south bank during the night, and, leaving their

horses there in charge of every fourth man, recross the river and act during the day as infantry. Everything was to depend upon the enemy's not obtaining even a suggestion of the weakness of the remaining column. The most precise instructions were issued regarding the crossing of the cavalry to the south bank: not a man was to enter upon the bridge after the first break of day. Every subordinate commander was required to acknowledge the receipt of these instructions, and then headquarters, worn out by the exertions of the three preceding days, sank to rest. From the sound sleep into which I had fallen I was awakened by hearing my name called from the general's tent. Running in, I found Hancock tossing on his camp bed. "Colonel," he said, "I am anxious about the cavalry. Go to Sheridan and say to him that he must see to it that not a man goes upon the bridge after it is light." I jumped upon an orderly's horse and galloped to Sheridan's headquarters. As I approached, the first voice that challenged me was, not the sentinel's, not a staff officer's, but the voice of the great cavalryman himself. "Who's that?" I gave my message. "I was thinking of the same thing," was the reply. "Forsythe, go down to the bridge, and if General Kautz has not crossed, tell him to mass his division behind the woods." Forsythe and myself rode together toward the bridge. A division of cavalry was just entering upon it. Fifteen minutes more and the Confeder-

ates, who had all night listened to the low, rumbling sounds and the dull jarring of the bridge, and from their lookouts had been straining their eyes to catch the direction of the movement, would have seen our troops passing to the rear, and in all probability would have swooped down upon our little force and driven it into the river. As it turned out, when it became light enough for them to see, what they beheld was our dismounted cavalrymen returning from the south side, with their carbines over their shoulders, looking for all the world like honest infantry—seemingly the end of a column which had been crossing all night. The effect was complete. The Confederate leaders did not doubt that every brigade which could be taken from the Petersburg lines had been sent in haste across the James to force a passage into Richmond. This illusion, aided by the activity and audacity of our skirmish line under Miles, not only sufficed to save us from an attack which could hardly have failed to result in our destruction, but held the Confederate forces closely in place, twenty miles from Petersburg where the assault of the 30th of July was impending.

My story carries its moral. Here were the two men of the Potomac Army regarding whom it was popularly supposed that they won their successes by daring and brilliant strokes. Yet we see them lying awake at night, after great fatigues, to ponder the chances of a possible miscarriage. In how many

critical moments of the war did the disappointment of well-laid plans, if not disastrous defeat, result because able and skillful officers deemed their duty discharged when they had given the appropriate orders? This was not General Hancock's or General Sheridan's idea of a commander's work. They gave the right orders and then saw them executed; and it was to this, fully as much as to their more brilliant qualities, that the successes of these two chieftains were due.

It is no part of our task to tell the hideous story of the 30th of July. Hancock's expedition to the north bank of the James River had greatly depleted the garrison of Petersburg. Here, at daybreak, Elliott's salient and the regiment holding it were thrown a hundred feet into the air and a broad avenue was laid open for the advance of the three Union corps then in position before the city, while on both sides the Confederate lines shrank back in terror from the hideous fate of their comrades. Had adequate arrangements been made, and had the troops at hand been put in with even the lowest degree of vigor, noon of that day must have seen Petersburg in our power and a third of Lee's army lopped off at a blow. But the same fatal hesitation which had been shown by Burnside at Antietam and in the Wilderness here wasted the one hour needed to enable the Confederates to recover from their shock and surprise, to bring up artillery to command

the breach, and to wall it around with resolute and tenacious infantry. When at last the troops of the Ninth Corps went forward, it was uncertainly and timidly, for want of proper leadership and staff service, while large numbers huddled together in the "crater," or deep chasm formed by the explosion, where they were ultimately captured. During this affair Mott's division held Ord's intrenchments to enable the Eighteenth Corps to be massed for assault. The remaining divisions of the Second, which had come in at daybreak after an all-night march from Deep Bottom, were held in reserve.

Between the 31st of July and the 11th of August the Second Corps remained in its old camps, in the neighborhood of the Deserted House, General Hancock being employed in the important duty of presiding over the court of inquiry appointed by the President to investigate the causes of the failure at the Mine. On the 10th of August General Grant telegraphed to Secretary Stanton: "I think it but just reward for services already rendered that General Sherman should be appointed a major general, and W. S. Hancock and Sheridan brigadiers in the regular army. All these officers have proved their worthiness for this advancement." So fully did these recommendations fall in with the feeling entertained by the President and the Secretary of War that, with but an interval of two days, Sherman and Hancock were appointed respectively major general



and brigadier general in the regular army, Sheridan's promotion being delayed a few weeks.

On the 11th of August the corps received orders to undertake another movement across the James. On arriving at Deep Bottom it was to be joined by Birney's Tenth Corps and Gregg's cavalry, all under Hancock's orders. It was on the morning of the 14th of August that the Second Corps debarked from the steamers by which it had come from City Point, and formed upon the plains which had witnessed its operations in the last days of July. The temperature of the opening day was something dreadful. The columns, as they moved out from the landing, passed literally between men on both sides of the road lying dead from sunstroke. Before noon General Mott reported that in two regiments of his division one hundred and five men had been overcome by the heat. The rays of the August sun smote the heads of the weary soldiers with blows as palpable as if they had been dealt with a club.

Grant's orders for the expedition had been issued under the impression that the Confederate lines had been depleted by the dispatch of three divisions of infantry and one of cavalry to re-enforce Early, then operating in the Valley of Virginia, where he was opposed by Sheridan with the Eighth and Nineteenth Corps, together with the Sixth Corps which had been withdrawn from the Army of the Potomac. Grant's information on this point was, however, er-

roneous. When our troops advanced to the familiar line of Bailey's Creek the works were found fully manned; and when Barlow, at about four o'clock, with his own division and that of Gibbon (this day commanded by Colonel Thomas A. Smyth), delivered an attack near Fussell's Mill, he was easily beaten off. It should frankly be confessed that the troops on our side engaged behaved with little spirit. Only one brigade—that commanded by Colonel George N. Macy, of Massachusetts—did anything like its full duty. When it is added that the two brigades most in fault were the Irish brigade and that which had been so long and gloriously commanded by Brooke, it will appear to what a condition the army had been reduced by three months of desperate fighting.

For six days longer Hancock's command remained on the north bank of the James, trying the enemy's lines here and there, or seeking to turn their flank. Several severe actions resulted, in one of which the Tenth Corps displayed great gallantry, while sustaining heavy losses. Gregg's cavalry, supported by Miles's infantry brigade, fought the enemy upon the line of Deep Creek in an action which redounded greatly to the honor of both those commanders. But Grant had by this time satisfied himself that the information on which the expedition had been undertaken was erroneous, and that nothing was to be gained by further fighting; and he accordingly directed Hancock, on the evening of the

18th, to send Mott's division back to Petersburg to support Warren in his contemplated movement to the Weldon Railroad. On the 19th, however, the lieutenant general telegraphed that it was believed the enemy were sending troops to Petersburg, and instructed Hancock not to hesitate to attack if an opportunity offered. No opening or weak spot had yet been discovered; but Hancock, ever ready to obey both the letter and the spirit of his orders, made a close personal reconnoissance and selected a point a short distance to the left of where Barlow had been repulsed. It was thought that the line might be broken there; but Hancock was unable to perceive that any decided results would follow, and, as the enemy were present in great force, he even doubted whether the position could be held if carried. The situation was fully described by telegraph to General Grant, who stated in reply that he did not wish an attack made unless with a chance of surprise or with the prospect of some marked advantage. The assault was therefore not delivered.

During the afternoon of the 19th one of Gregg's brigades was sent back to Petersburg. Nothing of interest occurred on the 20th. During the day Hancock was instructed to withdraw his command from Deep Bottom; and immediately after dark the troops commenced the movement, by way of Point of Rocks, to their old camps. Rain fell continuously during the night, and the roads were heavy, but the

two divisions accomplished their long march by daylight of the 21st. The losses of the corps during the first expedition to Deep Bottom had been only one hundred and ninety-two; during the second they reached nine hundred and fifteen, among the killed being two valuable officers, Colonel Craig, of Pennsylvania, and Colonel Chaplin, of Maine.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### REAMS'S STATION.

WE now approach the blackest of all days in the calendar of the gallant commander of the Second Corps. Partly by good fortune, but more by reason of the pains with which his forces were brought into action, and of his own gallantry and address, he had been successful far beyond the usual privilege of commanding officers. Never as yet\* had he seen his lines broken, his men driven from their ground, guns and colors taken under his eye. But the day of misfortune was to come to him as to others.

Scarcely had the two small divisions of the Second Corps dragged themselves back to Petersburg from the fatiguing expedition to Deep Bottom, when they were ordered to move beyond the left of the army to destroy the Weldon Railroad, by which Lee had been receiving the bulk of his supplies. General Warren, with the Fifth Corps and a part of the Ninth, had, between the 18th and the

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\* It will be remembered that Hancock was not in command on the 22d of June.

21st of August, carried our arms several miles farther southward, and, after two severe actions, was now strongly intrenched upon the railroad near the Gurley House. Hancock, leaving Mott's division—by far the largest of the corps—in the Petersburg lines, was to move, with Gibbon's and Barlow's divisions, across the rear of Warren and come up on his left. So distressing was this movement, following close upon the all-night march from Deep Bottom, with scarcely time to make coffee, that hundreds fell in utter exhaustion out of the small column. The troops reached their bivouacs, near Warren's command, late in the afternoon, and spent the night in the mud under a pouring rain. On the 22d the First Division was set to destroying the railroad, and by the 24th had torn up the track some distance beyond Reams's Station. To the latter point, which had been intrenched during some previous occupation of it by our army, the troops were drawn back at night. Here the First Division—to the command of which Miles had succeeded in consequence of the deathlike exhaustion of the heroic Barlow, the result of old wounds and of unsparing exertions throughout the campaign—was joined by the Second Division under Gibbon. Here, too, Hancock found Gregg with a small division of cavalry which had been driven in from the Dinwiddie stage road.

Indications were not wanting that the work of destroying the railroad was not to proceed without

opposition. At half-past ten that night Hancock received a dispatch stating that a column of the enemy, estimated at between eight and ten thousand, had been seen moving southward along the rear of their intrenchments. The suggestion was made that this column might be directed toward the construction of works which should extend Lee's lines to meet the southward movement of the Fifth and Second Corps. With the large re-enforcements which it was in Meade's power to send forward, it seemed scarcely probable that the enemy would assume the offensive with his depleted forces. Of this, however, Hancock had no means of judging. It was for headquarters to re-enforce or to withdraw him. Headquarters alone knew the numbers and the positions of the Confederate troops; headquarters alone could ascertain how far Lee's lines were being depleted for a hostile expedition.

And here appears the first and most important criticism upon subsequent events. Hancock had, at the most, six to seven thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry. Meade could send to Reams's Station twenty thousand men more easily than Lee could send twelve thousand. A battle on open ground, outside intrenchments, was what the whole army had longed for. That opportunity was possibly now offered. With so small a force as Hancock had at command, not much further progress in tearing up the railroad was to be expected in the pres-

ence of the powerful Confederate cavalry which might at any time be joined by brigades of infantry. There was no use, therefore, in keeping Hancock any longer at Reams's unless it were to fight a battle. But if he were to fight he should be promptly and handsomely re-enforced. If he were not to fight he should be peremptorily withdrawn. To keep so small a body of troops at such a distance from the rest of the army was to court disaster without any advantage to compensate the risk.

At daylight of the 25th Hancock directed Gregg to make a reconnoissance to ascertain if the Confederate cavalry had been re-enforced during the night. Word was soon brought back that the enemy's pickets had been driven in without developing any increase of strength. Thereupon Hancock determined to proceed with the destruction of the railroad, and ordered Gibbon's division forward for that purpose. Scarcely had the troops got well out of the works when our cavalry was rapidly pushed back, and signs of trouble came thick and fast. General Gibbon was at once ordered into the intrenchments by the side of the First Division, and the Second Corps made ready for whatever might be coming.

A word concerning these intrenchments: They had, as has been said, been constructed upon some previous occasion of the occupation of Reams's Station by troops of the Army of the Potomac, prob-



ably by the Sixth Corps. They were for the purposes of the approaching contest singularly ill-arranged. Their face, north and south along the railroad, was so short—only seven hundred yards—and the “returns” were so sharp, that every part of them was subject to enfilade by any enemy that should be able to occupy a mile of ground; and, indeed, in the action that followed, the spectacle was exhibited of a brigade climbing over to the outside of the intrenchments, to escape the artillery fire which was being poured into them from the rear across the inclosed space. Through the position at Reams’s, from north to south, ran the Weldon Railroad, parallel to the face of the intrenchments and but a short distance from it, constituting, whether by its embankment or by its cuts, a serious obstacle to the withdrawal of batteries placed along the face of the intrenchments. The Halifax road, also, ran into the position from the north, parallel and close to the railroad.

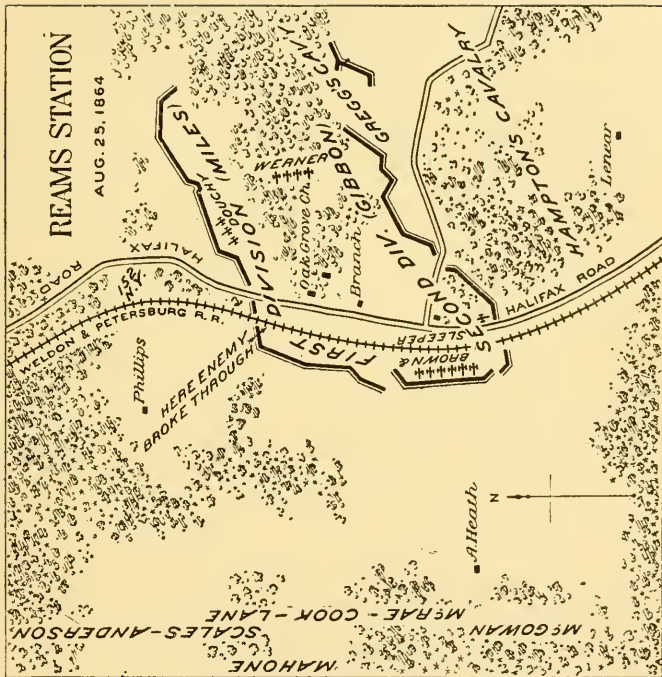
Such being the disadvantages of the position, it is not improbable that, even against the superior force which was approaching him, Hancock would have done better to take to the open and fight it out there. Yet it was a moral impossibility to do so. No commander but must have occupied the works thus standing there awaiting him, against an enemy of unknown force unexpectedly coming up. Moreover, Hancock felt that after his dis-

patches of the morning he had a right to anticipate that the troops massed on Warren's left, only four miles away by the Halifax road, would promptly be sent down to re-enforce him. The advance of such a force would have covered his right and prevented the enemy from working around upon that flank, which, as it proved, was the vulnerable point. The disposition of the troops in the intrenchments was as follows: Miles, with the First Division and a brigade of cavalry, occupied the front and right; Gibbon, the left; Gregg, with the bulk of the cavalry, prolonged the left against any attempt of the enemy to reach around and get upon the road leading to the Jerusalem plank road.

Meanwhile, what was being done at headquarters, either to provide for the safety of the small force at Reams's or to seize the opportunity to get a fight out of the Confederates under circumstances so favorable? It is in trying to answer this question that we encounter two singular features of the 25th of August. The first is that, although the field telegraph had before noon been open from the Station to Warren's headquarters, where Meade passed the day, and although Hancock, on his part, used the telegraph, sending a dispatch as early as 11.45 A. M., Meade, throughout the whole afternoon and until 7.30 in the evening, continued to send his messages by staff officers, involving in each case not only a delay which might be serious in its conse-

# REAMS STATION

AUG. 25, 1864





quences, but also a liability to misunderstanding, due to messages crossing each other. The other remarkable feature of the day was that the troops dispatched to Hancock's relief were sent down the Jerusalem plank road to its junction with the Reams's Station road, instead of directly down the Halifax road. This direction more than doubled the distance the re-enforcements had to march. At one o'clock Meade sent the following message in reply to Hancock's of 11.45 :

“HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH CORPS, 1 P. M., *August 25, 1864.*”

“MAJOR-GENERAL HANCOCK : Warren has informed me of your dispatch announcing the breaking through your left of the enemy's cavalry. I have directed Mott to send all his available force down the plank road to the Reams's Station road, and to take one of Parke's (Ninth Corps) batteries, now at the Williams House, with him. The officer in charge of this command is directed to report to you his arrival. I think, from all the information I can obtain, that the enemy is about assuming the offensive, and will either attack you or interpose between you and Warren. Under these circumstances, I fear we can not do much more damage to the railroad. That being the case, you can exercise your judgment about withdrawing your command and resuming your position on the left and rear of Warren, either where you were before, or in

any other position which in your judgment will be better calculated for the purpose, and based on the knowledge of the country your recent operations may have given you. Let me know by the bearer the condition of things on your front, and your views.

GEORGE G. MEADE."

This dispatch was brought by Captain Saunders, of the headquarters staff. Had it been sent by telegraph it might have arrived in time to enable Hancock to withdraw deliberately, of his own motion; but, coming as it did, Hancock did not receive it until after the enemy had both driven in his skirmishers and made, at two o'clock, a serious assault upon the portion of the intrenchments held by Miles, some of the Confederates falling within three yards of his line. To retire from the presence of an enemy actually formed for attack was a very serious matter, rendered more serious by the formation of the works and the nature of the inclosed ground, which made it impossible to move without observation.

What were the forces thus threatening Hancock at Reams's? Lieutenant-General A. P. Hill was in command, but that spirited officer was this day so far disabled by sickness that he was obliged to leave the practical direction of affairs to his principal lieutenants. Of these, the first upon the field was General Wade Hampton, with a powerful column of

cavalry, comprising his own and Butler's division, nearly or quite four thousand strong, the very flower of the Southern horse, yet almost equally expert and daring when dismounted and fighting on foot. The first of the infantry to arrive were four brigades under Major-General Cadmus Wilcox. As Wilcox came up, Hampton drew his cavalry across the railroad, over against our left, and thereafter continued with great activity and audacity to threaten and deliver attacks upon Gibbon's and Gregg's positions, keeping our people closely engaged and continually stirred up. Wilcox, having formed his line, proceeded first to feel and then to assault Miles's works from the north and the north-west. The Confederates advanced with courage, but were resolutely met, and were at last driven back under cover, while Hampton's advance on his side was repelled by the steady action of our infantry and cavalry, and by the vigorous fire of Brown's and Werner's batteries. Among our losses in this collision was one most deeply regretted. Colonel James A. Beaver,\* of Pennsylvania, had but a few minutes before rejoined the corps, from his severe Petersburg wound of June 16th, only to be struck down by a bullet, which broke his thigh and necessitated amputation. Three hours later this gallant and accomplished officer was sorely missed.

Thus far all had gone well, though the situation

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\* Subsequently Governor of his State.

was a threatening one. The collision that had taken place was clearly no casual encounter; nor was it likely that a small and unsupported force of Confederates would be found so far from their own lines. But only four miles away was Warren's left, where lay four Union divisions—Griffin's and Crawford's of the Fifth Corps, Willcox's and White's of the Ninth. This fact seemed to give assurance that no disaster would be likely to occur at Reams's from lack of supports. At 2.45 P. M. Hancock sent a telegram to Meade reciting the repulse of the Confederates. Meanwhile Meade addressed the following to Hancock, which was received by the hands of Captain Rosecrans a little after four o'clock:

“HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH CORPS, 2.40 P. M.

“MAJOR-GENERAL HANCOCK: In addition to Mott's troops, I have ordered Willcox's division, Ninth Corps, to the plank road, where the Reams's Station road branches off. Willcox is ordered to report to you. Call him up if necessary. He will have some artillery with him. I hope you will be able to give the enemy a good thrashing. All I apprehend is his being able to interpose between you and Warren. You must look out for this. I hold some more of Warren's forces ready for contingencies.

GEORGE G. MEADE.”

At about three o'clock the Confederate General Heth came upon the ground with the head of his



column, comprising two brigades of his own division, two more from Mahone's division following. With Heth came eight guns from Pegram's battalion, under the personal command of that remarkable young officer. At once the Confederate chiefs began to make preparations to turn a repulse into a victory. Their guns were drawn up by hand, under cover of brush, to within a few hundred yards of our front, while the infantry was formed for assault at the northwest angle. The troops of all arms now under Hill numbered between thirteen and sixteen thousand. But the chief danger of the situation to Hancock's command was not in inferiority of numbers. It lay in the unfortunate location of the intrenchments, in which our troops had already been much shaken by the enfilade and reverse fire of the enemy's artillery, and, still more, in the weakened spirit of our men. Worn out by excessive exertions, cut up in a score of charges against intrenched positions, their better officers and braver sergeants and men nearly all killed or in hospital, regiments reduced to a captain's command, companies often to a corporal's guard—this was the state to which four months of continuous campaigning upon the avowed policy of "hammering" had brought the old divisions of Richardson and Sedgwick. Already twenty-seven officers had fallen in command of brigades, one hundred and twenty-five in command of regiments.

Could the killed and wounded of but half an hour's fighting at Cold Harbor have been called back to the Second Corps on the 25th of August, Heth and Wilcox might have charged till the sun went down, and all to no purpose. Had Tyler, Brooke, McKeen, Haskell, McMahan, Byrnes, Morris, and Porter stood over the skeleton regiments at Reams's, the north-west angle would not have been carried, and Hill would have gone back to his intrenchments that night with none but his own colors and guns.

At twenty minutes past five, the arrangements for the grand attack having been completed, Pegram opened a terrific fire from the front at half-musket range; and all the batteries previously upon the field joined in the cannonade, which swept the whole space between our narrow lines and enfiladed or took in reverse our ill-constructed intrenchments. Twenty minutes later, the Confederate infantry advanced to the assault from the north and northwest, while Hampton threw his dismounted men forward from the south. For a while it seemed that, even at such disadvantages, our troops would beat the enemy off. The slashing Hancock had ordered done during the morning greatly retarded the advancing column, which consisted of the brigades of Cooke, McRae, Lane, and Scales, with Anderson's and three regiments of McGowan's in support, while a steady fire from the intrenchments swept away the leading companies. Five minutes more of

good conduct would have ended the conflict with a victory for our arms. But just at the critical moment a panic seized some of the regiments at the angle, which, by an unhappy fortune, consisted almost wholly of new recruits, poured into the corps to fill the woeful gaps caused by the Wilderness and Spottsylvania battles. The enemy, seeing these troops give way, leaped the intrenchments and poured their fire right and left down the line upon those who still stood firm. Sleeper's Massachusetts battery, across the railroad, was captured entire, in spite of a stout resistance on the part of officers and men; Brown's Rhode Island battery, which was also across the railroad, met the same fate. A little later, the flushed and victorious enemy advanced upon Dauchey's (late McKnight's) Twelfth New York battery, along the return to the right, and, after a hand-to-hand fight with the gunners, took possession of his pieces one by one.

Such were the first results of Heth's charge. The enemy had, owing to the misconduct of a portion of the First Division, carried twelve hundred yards or more of our intrenchments, with twelve guns. Nor was the failure of duty confined to the First Division. The brigade from the Second Division commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Rugg,\* though called upon by General Miles in person to

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\* Rugg was subsequently dismissed the service for misconduct at the Boydton road.

go forward and drive back the enemy, cowered in the railroad cut and were captured, nearly entire, without resistance. Never in the history of the Second Corps had such an exhibition of incapacity and cowardice been given.

But the battle of Reams's Station was not yet over. With the Confederates holding the entire face of our intrenchments and ready to sweep, in greatly superior numbers, adown both returns, it would seem that naught but further disaster and final complete rout could ensue. The enemy had, however, still to reckon with a few indomitable spirits. Generals Hancock and Miles, Colonels Lynch and Broady, with a score or two of staff officers and regimental commanders whose courage rose with the emergency, threw themselves across the path of the exultant Confederates. The flags of the corps and the division commander were advanced into their very faces; Dauchey's cannoneers with their rammers, portions of the Sixty-first and Tenth New York and perhaps half a dozen other organizations, with some of the braver individual soldiers from among those who had been driven out of the angle, joined Hancock and Miles in the effort to retake the captured guns and works. Not more than three hundred men made up the little party which rushed upon the enemy, standing disordered among Dauchey's captured pieces. Step by step they drove the Confederates back, till the last one of Dauchey's

guns, across the trail of which Lieutenant Brower lay dead, had been retaken and those who had held it sought refuge in the railroad cut. So daring and desperate had been the unexpected onset made by this small band of Union officers and soldiers that the Confederate advance was not only checked, but stopped; and never during the brief remaining hour of the day was there a serious effort made to follow up the advantage gained in the first charge. Three of Dauchey's guns were actually hauled off by our men; the fourth, which had been detached and sent farther down the intrenchments to fire up the Halifax road, being too much within the range of the enemy's musketry to be withdrawn.

The situation was this: The enemy occupied the whole face of the intrenchments and the railroad cut, which, as stated, was parallel thereto. Their rifles also commanded the inside of our intrenchments some distance down each return. Murphy's brigade, of Gibbon's division, along the left return, had fallen precipitately back when Brown's and Sleeper's batteries were taken. Our line was now drawn across the ground inclosed by the works, parallel to the face of the intrenchments and to the railroad, and distant from the latter two or three hundred yards. Gregg's cavalry still held its place firmly in our left rear, having thrown off all attacks, while upon the new front Werner's New Jersey battery, the only one which could be brought into action

—Dauchey's recaptured guns being without ammunition—replied with undaunted courage to the fire of all the Confederate batteries, now concentrated upon it from three sides. In front were eight brigades of infantry, flushed with victory, and on the left a greatly superior force of cavalry. Yet Hancock was most reluctant to relinquish to the enemy the final possession of any part of the field; and Miles, though his division was reduced to a skeleton, was hot to recommence fighting. He had already got some of his men over the breastworks on the right, where they were joined by the brigade of cavalry which we spoke of as covering our right rear. Gregg, too, promised to join from his side in a general advance to retake the captured works. But when the question was put to Gibbon, that officer was compelled to admit that he could not hope to bring his troops up. Rugg's brigade had largely gone into the enemy's hands; Murphy's regiments had been badly disorganized by the enfilading and reverse fires to which they had so long been subjected and by their own hasty retreat when the Confederates broke through along the railroad. Even the gallant Smyth\* had to say that his brigade could not be relied upon for an aggressive movement. There was nothing left for Hancock, there-

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\*Colonel, afterward General, Thomas A. Smyth, killed at Farmville, April 7, 1865, the last general officer on the Union side who fell in the war.

fore, but to submit to the hard fate which had befallen his command. The blow to him had been an awful one. "It is not surprising," writes Morgan, "that General Hancock was deeply stirred by the situation, for it was the first time he had felt the bitterness of defeat during the war. He had seen his troops fail in their attempts to carry the entrenched positions of the enemy, but he had never before had the mortification of seeing them driven and his lines and guns taken, as on this occasion; and never before had he seen his men fail to respond to the utmost when he called upon them personally for a supreme effort; nor had he ever before ridden toward the enemy followed by a beggarly array of a few hundred stragglers who had been gathered together and pushed toward the enemy. He could no longer conceal from himself that his once mighty corps retained but the shadow of its former strength and vigor. Riding up to one of his staff, in Werner's battery, covered with dust and begrimed with powder and smoke, he placed his hand upon the staff officer's shoulder and said: 'Colonel, I do not care to die, but I pray God I may never leave this field!'" The agony of that day never passed away from the proud soldier. "Were I dead," said Nelson, "'want of frigates' would be found written on my heart." So one who was gifted to discern the real forces which in us make for life or for death, looking down on the cold and pallid form of Han-

cock as he lay at rest beneath the drooping flag of his country on Governor's Island, in February, 1886, would have seen Reams's Station written on brow and brain and heart as palpable as, to the common eye, were the scars of Gettysburg.

Night was now coming on, and Hancock sent back to halt the re-enforcements approaching the field, which, had they been sent by the Halifax road, they would easily have reached before the main assault fell. He had no fear of further attack from the enemy, who seemed content to let him alone. It was more than two hours since the Confederates had gained their signal success, yet so stubborn up to the very moment of panic had been the resistance offered by our troops, so savage had been the onslaught of the small column which retook and carried off Dauchey's guns, that they showed no disposition to renew hostilities. After dark Hancock drew off his broken battalions. At the same moment the enemy began their march back to the Petersburg lines, carrying with them nine guns, seven colors, and seventeen hundred prisoners. Of Hancock's staff, Captain Edward B. Brownson, commissary of musters, a most gallant, devoted, and accomplished officer, had been killed; the assistant adjutant general, Colonel Walker, had been captured.

The Second Corps returned to the Union lines, which it had left for the ill-fated expedition to Reams's Station, reduced in numbers and sad at



heart. In the language of a few paltry souls that had heard its customary praises with something of envy, "its comb had been cut." But not from the commander of the Army of the Potomac or from the great silent chief who ordered all the armies of the United States came one word of reproof or of blame. General Meade did not even allow the night to pass without sending a message of consolation to the faithful lieutenant who had never failed him in act or thought, and whose perfect subordination had throughout the whole campaign been as conspicuous as his resolution, daring, and address in battle. Before midnight came, the gallant, knightly gentleman at the head of the Army of the Potomac sent this dispatch:

"HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
"11 P. M., August 25, 1864.

"DEAR GENERAL: No one sympathizes with you more than I do in the misfortunes of this evening. McEntee gave me such good accounts of affairs up to the time he left, and it was then so late, I deferred going to you as I intended. If I had had any doubt of your ability to hold your lines from a direct attack I would have sent Willcox with others down the railroad; but my anxiety was about your rear, and my apprehension was that they would either move around your left or intervene between you and Warren. To meet the first contingency I sent Willcox down the plank road, and for the second I

held Crawford and White ready to move and attack. At the same time I thought it likely, after trying you, they might attack Warren, and wished to leave him, until the last moment, some reserves. I am satisfied you and your command have done all in your power, and though you have met with a reverse, the honor and escutcheon of the old Second is as bright as ever, and will on some future occasion prove it is only when enormous odds are brought against them that they can be moved.

“Don't let this matter worry you, because you have given me every satisfaction. Truly yours,

“GEORGE G. MEADE, *Major General.*”

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE BOYDTON ROAD.

THE Boydton plank road expedition, toward the end of October, was the last effort made by General Grant to reach the Southside Railroad before winter should close in upon the armies confronting each other upon the Appomattox and the James. The general plan of the expedition was that Hancock, with two divisions of his corps, emerging from behind our lines, should move rapidly to the left, carry the Vaughan Road crossing of Hatcher's Run; thence, by cross roads and over the open country, make for the Claiborne road, which passes over Hatcher's Run farther up the stream, and, crossing here, should, if practicable, advance upon the Southside Railroad and seize a commanding position near it. Gregg's small division, which was about all there was left of the cavalry of the Potomac Army, the rest being in the valley with Sheridan, was to form a part of Hancock's column, moving upon his left and covering his rear. At the same time Parke, with the Ninth Corps, which held the end of our established line, was to move to the left in the early

morning and attack the enemy on the hither side of Hatcher's Run. "It is probable," the order read, "that the enemy's line of intrenchments is incomplete at this point, and the commanding general expects, by a secret and sudden movement, to surprise them and carry their half-formed works." Should, however, Parke not break the enemy's lines, he was to remain confronting them. Warren, with the Fifth Corps, was to support Parke in his attack; but if Parke failed to get through, Warren was then to cross Hatcher's Run and move up on the right rear of Hancock, ready to recross the Run and turn in on the enemy's flank should he find it exposed.

The palpable criticism upon this plan of movement is that practically it made everything turn upon the truth of the report that the enemy's works were not finished as far as Hatcher's Run. So that when Parke, moving in the early morning, found that the Confederate line had been completed through the entire distance to the stream, and was therefore, under his orders, brought to a stand, all that threatened any serious consequences to the enemy was over and past. It is true that Hancock's column was still to proceed on its way toward the Southside Railroad; but that force, comprising only two meager divisions of infantry with one of cavalry, was too small to accomplish much in the way of a turning movement. Had two corps been set on foot, as was to be done in the expedition of the fol-

lowing March, results of importance might have been achieved; but the troops under Hancock's command were far too few for such an enterprise.

Hancock got off, as usual, in good time, and, pushing rapidly forward, carried the crossing of Hatcher's Run by the Vaughan road, Egan's division in advance, with the loss of about fifty men; and then, with both his divisions, Gregg's cavalry on his left, made for the Boydton road, where he nearly succeeded in capturing a wagon train. At Burgess's Mill, where the Boydton road crosses Hatcher's Run above its great bend, the enemy were found in position with artillery. After a sharp contest, the Confederates were driven across the Run, whereupon the bulk of Mott's division was sent out the White Oak road to the left, to be in readiness for continuing a movement toward the railroad. At this juncture a message was received from headquarters directing a halt, and a few minutes later Generals Grant and Meade came upon the ground bringing news of the failure of Parke's movement, and also the intelligence that Crawford's division of the Fifth Corps was across the Run and working its way up the west side. Hancock was directed to extend his line to the right to connect with Crawford and to suspend his own movement.

It will readily be seen that by these orders the whole expedition was practically given up. Parke, finding the enemy's works complete to Hatcher's

Run, was resting in front of them, with instructions not to attack. Beyond the Run were only Crawford's division, hugging the west bank of the stream, and Hancock's two divisions—one at Burgess's Mill, one advanced out the White Oak road—with Gregg's cavalry partly on the left with Mott, partly in rear to ward off the enemy's cavalry, which had already got in upon the Boydton road farther down, and were sending their shells up the road to meet and cross shells now pouring in upon the plain at Burgess's from across the Run, and also from adown the White Oak road beyond Mott. The situation was in no way a pleasing one, nor was there anything about it which was promising. The Union force thus detached was confessedly too small to advance toward the railroad, while its presence there invited the audacious attempts of the enemy upon its flank and rear. It was certain, from what was known of Lee's army, that the day would not pass without a repetition of those attacks through woods and swamps, which had so often brought disaster to our outlying forces.

After surveying the ground for a while, during the course of which General Grant exposed himself in a remarkably daring manner to the fire of the enemy, which was now poured unremittingly into the narrow space occupied by our troops, Grant and Meade rode away, bidding Hancock hold on until morning and then withdraw. The reasons which

actuated the commander in chief in putting an end to the expedition are thus stated by Badeau:

“The rebels were evidently in force north of the Creek with strong defenses. Their intrenched line extended far beyond the point at which it had been supposed to turn to the north, and when the National army advanced, Lee had simply moved out and occupied the works already prepared. The contemplated movement was thus impracticable. The rebel position could perhaps be carried, but only with extreme difficulty and loss of life—a loss which the advantage to be gained would not compensate, while in the event of repulse disaster might be grave, stretched out as the army was, with its flanks six miles apart, and the creek dividing Warren’s corps. Any serious rebuff or loss was especially to be deprecated at this crisis. The presidential election was only ten days off, and the enemies of the nation at the North were certain to exaggerate every mishap. Success at the polls was just now even more important than a victory in the field, and it would have been most unwise to risk greatly on this occasion. Accordingly, when Grant returned from the bridge, he gave orders to suspend the movement. Hancock was directed to hold his position till the following morning, then withdraw by the same road along which he had advanced.”

Thus, so far as the plans of Grant or the orders to Hancock were concerned, the Boydton road ex-

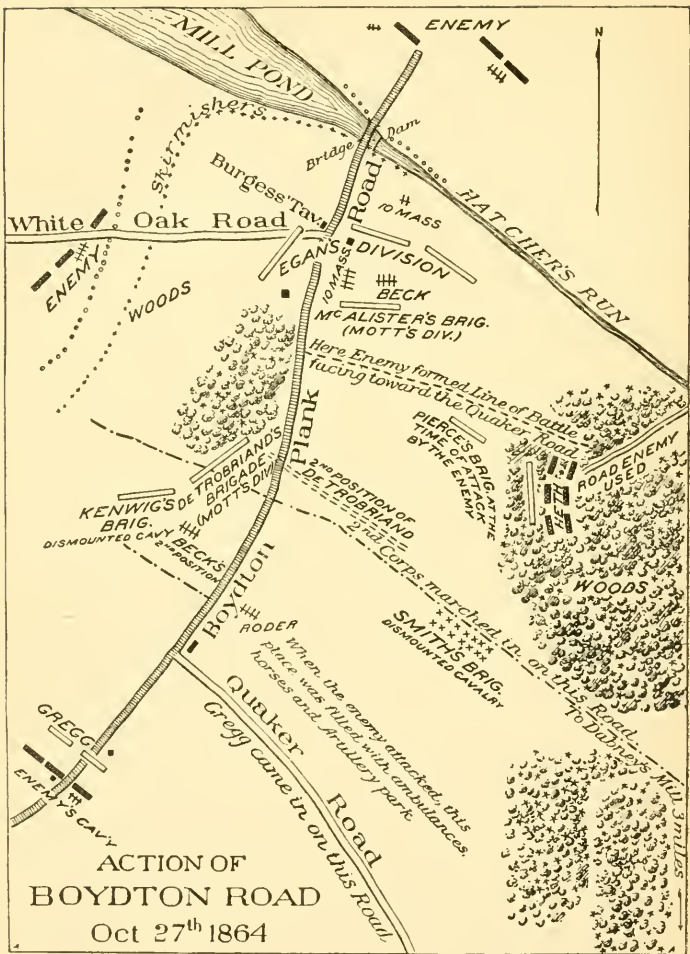
pedition was at an end. Nothing more was to be attempted. The expeditionary column was to rest until morning, and then withdraw. But the Confederates willed otherwise, and the Second Corps was yet to have a little fighting for its marching. Guided by the sound impulse which always actuated the leaders of the Army of Northern Virginia whenever the Army of the Potomac moved against their flanks, General Heth, who commanded this end of Lee's line, was already in motion to issue from his works and, taking advantage of the strange and bewildering country, to deliver a heavy blow upon our adventurous column. Every brigade that could be called in for the purpose was drawn down to the edge of Hatcher's Run with a view to cross and strike Hancock on his right flank. This movement, so often successful, was to fail here, and to fail with loss and disaster; but it would have been fourfold a failure had Crawford pushed his division up the Run with vigor. Hours had elapsed since he crossed the stream, and yet nothing had been seen or heard of him, although the distance was short. Every effort to communicate with Crawford himself by feeling out and backward from our right had come to nothing. In fact, that officer had lost direction in the wooded swamps, and, on encountering a few score of the enemy's skirmishers,\* had halted and

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\* "Fifty or seventy-five sharpshooters," says General Heth.







ACTION OF  
 BOYDTON ROAD  
 Oct 27<sup>th</sup> 1864

taken up a position so far to Hancock's rear as to be useless as a protection to that flank.

The afternoon had somewhat advanced when Hancock determined to throw Egan's division across the Run at Burgess's Mill and seize the heights on the other side, not with any view to prosecuting the movement toward the Southside Railroad, but for the better protection of his own position. Egan was already moving to carry out this purpose when a dire commotion on the right told that the Confederates had, under cover of the dense woods, assumed the initiative. Heth, with about five thousand men, taking advantage of a ford known to his troops through long occupation of the ground, and of an old wood road which led down into Hancock's right rear, had crossed the stream without artillery, fallen upon Pierce's small brigade, and driven it back pellmell upon two guns of Beck's battery which were near the edge of the clearing. These guns the exulting enemy at once seized upon, and, rapidly deploying, proceeded to form line of battle in the open. Throwing themselves across the Boydton road, they faced south against the small force which they saw in the clearing. For the moment the stroke was completely successful. Our flank had been turned; our right had been driven in; two of our guns were in the enemy's hands; the ammunition trains within the clearing were, of course, in a wild stampede. This was the sort of thing which—

taking advantage of their familiarity with the ground, of the opportunities afforded by fords and roads known only to themselves, of their better woodcraft and more rapid marching—the Confederates, giving scope and swing to their greater constitutional audacity and contempt of risks, had attempted scores of times and had almost invariably accomplished. Seldom had any such movement been better begun than this on the 27th of October, or achieved a more decided initial success.

But Heth had this time disturbed a hornet's nest. As soon as the volleys of Pierce's retreating regiments told that the enemy were upon him, Hancock put himself at the head of all the cavalry and infantry which were in reserve within the clearing, and advanced against the foe, sending word up to Egan, of whose position above them on the road Heth's people seem to have had no suspicion, to face about and charge them from behind. That enterprising officer had been halted in the very act of crossing the stream by the sound of the firing, and now even before the order reached him he was sweeping down upon the enemy from the mill above. Caught thus between two lines, the Confederates made slight resistance, but, taking to their heels, sought refuge in the woods from which they had a few minutes before emerged, leaving nine hundred prisoners in our hands, and returning Beck's two guns in as good order as when they borrowed them.

The news of Hancock's repulse of Heth, when it reached General Meade about nightfall, aroused a momentary hope that something might yet come of the expedition; and Hancock was informed that Ayres's division of the Fifth Corps had been advanced to Armstrong's Mill, some miles in his rear, and would be ordered up if he deemed it advisable to remain in his position and resume operations in the morning. But Hancock was especially advised that the bulk of the fighting of the next day must not be made to fall upon Ayres's and Crawford's divisions. The responsibility thus devolved upon Hancock was a painful one. It went much against his grain while in a subordinate position to withdraw from the presence of the enemy without a positive order. Yet what was to be gained by remaining at Burgess's Mill? The position as a defensive one had been proved by the day's experience to be about as bad as could be found, and no forward movement was contemplated. The inhibition to use the Fifth Corps for the main part of the fighting took away a great deal of the value of those possible re-enforcements. His own small command had been much worn by the marching and the fighting of the day, which had cost fourteen hundred men. The night was dark, the rain was falling heavily; only one narrow road was available for the movement. In this situation the scale was turned by the report of General Gregg, whose cavalry had

all day been pressed hard by the superior numbers of the enemy, that his regiments were out of cartridges, and that it would be impossible, drawn out as they were through miles of woods, to resupply them in the darkness and the rain. Consequently the order to retire was given. The wounded were as far as possible loaded upon the empty ammunition wagons and the few ambulances which had been allowed to accompany the column, the pickets were withdrawn, and the two divisions of the Second Corps took up the route for the other side of Hatcher's Run. The march was accomplished rapidly and safely, and the old camps were regained the next day.

#### THE MIDDLE MILITARY DEPARTMENT.

The expedition to the Boydton plank road afforded, as events shaped themselves, the last occasion on which Hancock was to encounter the enemy. During the month of November, his wounds still troubling him, that officer sought a leave of absence to enable him to visit the North, to obtain rest and medical care after the labors of the campaign. There was in this no thought that the opening spring would not see him again at the head of his own corps, taking part in the decisive operations of the Army of the Potomac against an enemy manifestly now too much worn greatly to protract the contest. But Grant had for some time entertained other views; and Hancock's intimation of a desire

for a leave of absence was met with the suggestion that he should return to the North for the winter, and, with the aid of his military prestige and personal popularity, should raise a new corps, to be composed entirely of veterans, with which he might take the field upon the renewal of hostilities in the spring. It was not a part of Grant's private purposes, however, that this body of troops should join the Army of the Potomac. His plan was that, as soon as Sheridan with his magnificent cavalry should leave the Valley of Virginia to go south and attach himself to Sherman's column pushing up along the coast, Hancock should assume command of all the troops in the Middle Military Division, to be in readiness to move up the valley against Lee or to cut off the Confederate retreat to Lynchburg, should that be attempted. The idea of having either Meade or Hancock, preferably the former, in command of the Middle Military Division, while the other of these officers remained in command of the Army of the Potomac, was one which Grant had long cherished. We have seen (page 242) that on the 25th of July Grant telegraphed to President Lincoln, suggesting that Meade be placed in command of the Middle Division, and that the Army of the Potomac be given to Hancock. Again, on the 11th of October, in connection with the recommendation that Sheridan be sent to Missouri, Grant telegraphed Secretary Stanton: "Place Meade where Sheridan is and put

Hancock in command of the Army of the Potomac." To the lieutenant general, in this frame of mind, Hancock's application for temporary relief from service in the field came as a favorable opportunity for so arranging affairs that Hancock should take the Middle Division, while Meade remained in command of the Army of the Potomac, from which, under the circumstances, he could scarcely be removed without hardship.

In carrying out the foregoing views Hancock was relieved from the command of the Second Corps, which, he turned over to Major-General Andrew A. Humphreys on the 26th of November. In his order taking leave of the corps Hancock said: "The gallant bearing of the intrepid officers and men of the Second Corps on the bloodiest fields of the war; the dauntless valor displayed by them in many brilliant assaults on the enemy's strongest positions; the great number of colors, guns, and prisoners, and other trophies of war captured by them in many desperate combats; their unswerving devotion to duty and heroic constancy under all the dangers and hardships which such campaigns entail—have won for them an imperishable renown and the grateful admiration of their countrymen. The story of the Second Corps will live in history, and to its officers and men will be ascribed the honor of having served their country with unsurpassed fidelity and courage. Conscious that whatever military honor



has fallen to me during my association with the Second Corps has been won by the gallantry of the officers and soldiers I have commanded, I feel that in parting from them I am severing the strongest ties of my military life."

The recruiting part of Secretary Stanton's plan did not prove a success. So far as the soldiers in the field were disposed to re-enlist at all, it was generally with their own regiments that they elected to serve, while among those who had left the front and returned to civil life the inducements presented by States and towns, in the mad competition of higher and still higher bounties, made the offers of the United States Government seem poor and mean indeed. Hence it came about that the recruiting for the new corps went on but slowly from December to February. In the latter month Hancock, foreseeing the speedy opening of another campaign, was already beginning to move for his own return to the Army of the Potomac, when he received an intimation of Grant's purposes regarding him. These were to the effect that, inasmuch as Sheridan was about ready to leave the valley on his great raid southward to join Sherman, Hancock should proceed to Winchester and take command of all the remaining troops available for field service in the four departments constituting the Middle Division. Grant's own statement of his objects is as follows: "It was my expectation at the time that in the final opera-

tions Hancock should move either up the valley or else east of the Blue Ridge to Lynchburg, the idea being to make the spring campaign the close of the war. I expected—with Sherman coming up from the south, Meade south of Petersburg and around Richmond, and Thomas's command in Tennessee, with depots of supplies established in the eastern part of that State—to move from the direction of Washington or the valley toward Lynchburg; we would then have Lee so surrounded that his supplies would be cut off entirely, making it impossible for him to support his army."—*Grant's Memoirs, vol. ii, 342, 343.*

It will be seen that of the projected operations of the opening spring, Hancock's advance on Lynchburg was to be the substantive part.

It is too well known to need recital here, how, almost on a momentary impulse, another plan was substituted for this, and the war came to an end with a tremendous rush which not even the most sanguine had anticipated. Hancock, proceeding to Winchester, relieved Sheridan there on the 26th of February. The next morning the great cavalryman started southward with the splendid corps which had won such renown in the valley, which up to the time of Sheridan's appearance there had been known to the country only as the Valley of Humiliation. Finding the bridges along his projected route generally destroyed and the rivers swollen high by weeks of rain, Sheridan availed himself of

the discretion invested in him to come up on Grant's left at Petersburg. His powerful cavalry corps having thus unexpectedly become available, Grant determined to utilize it in a movement around Lee's right directed upon the White Oak road, though still only as a step toward its passage south to join Sherman according to the original plan.

But the first stages of the expedition brought about a momentous change of purpose to which no one contributed so much as the great cavalryman himself, who was most reluctant to leave the Army of the Potomac when a blow was to be struck. Largely in consequence of his representations, Grant determined to use the cavalry for all it was worth in the movement against the Southside Railroad. Then came the desperate fighting of the 31st of March, which made it manifest that the beginning of the end had come, and that Lee's army, not Johnston's, was to be dealt with. On the 1st of April Sheridan and Warren, advancing upon Five Forks, won there a victory which to the sorely depleted Confederate forces was simply fatal. As the news of the day's triumph flashed along the Petersburg lines the Union army felt in its soul that the time had come when the frowning works which had so long held it at bay must fall before one tremendous assault. In the early morning of the 2d of April, the Sixth, Ninth, and Twenty-fourth Corps leaped their intrenchments and broke through the enemy's line at

several points; then, sweeping down to right and to left, moved onward, capturing thousands of prisoners, miles of breastworks, and countless artillery. Petersburg fell, and with it Richmond, the supreme object of four years of bloody fighting. A week of wonders followed. Lee's army, attempting to escape, was beset in flank and rear by troops that seemed for the time to have lost the sense alike of fear and of fatigue. The infantry led in the pursuit with all the speed of cavalry. Battles were fought upon the double-quick. Divisions and army corps marched or ran in deployed lines from daylight until dark. At Appomattox Court House, on April 9, 1865, the much-enduring Army of Northern Virginia, after performing prodigies of valor, surrounded and brought to bay by fourfold odds, was captured entire. Sherman came sweeping up like a whirlwind from the South, driving before him the wreck of Johnston's army, and the greatest rebellion of modern times was crushed. So it happened that Hancock—who, from Williamsburg to the Boydton road, had been the most conspicuous single figure in the Army of the Potomac—was left out of the final triumph. The column which he had gathered at Winchester to perform the part mapped out for him in Grant's plan of the spring campaign found itself without an enemy to encounter, where for four years had been furious, unrelenting war.

## CHAPTER XX.

### AFTER THE WAR.

ONLY five days after Appomattox the joy of the nation was changed to mourning and to horror by the savage assassination of the kindly and benign President, who had borne in his own heart so much of the sorrows, the anxieties, and the griefs of the people throughout the terrible struggle just brought to a fortunate conclusion. On the 25th of April General Hancock, in whose military division Washington lay, was ordered to establish his headquarters in that city, and was directed to consider himself "specially charged with the security of the capital, the public archives and the public property therein, and with the necessary protection to the President, the officers of the Government, and the loyal citizens." In that time of suspense and dread no officer's coming could have brought more relief to the overstrained feelings of the country or given stronger assurance of order. It was under his firm command that the accomplices of President Lincoln's assassin were brought to trial, convicted, and executed.

On July 30, 1865, the Middle Military Division was abolished and the Middle Military Department was constituted, with Hancock in command, headquarters being in Baltimore. On July 26, 1866, Hancock received his appointment as major general in the regular army. The month following he was sent to command the Department of the Missouri, with headquarters at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. In the fall of that year began the trouble with the turbulent and warlike Cheyennes, with whom were associated the Kiowas and the Arapahoes. The depredations and outrages of these tribes, irritated by the progress of the Pacific Railroad, increased during the winter of 1866-'67 until travel across the plains was nearly suspended. In March of the latter year Hancock moved from Fort Riley with a force of all arms about fourteen hundred strong, reaching Fort Larned, near the Arkansas River, in April. It was hoped by this demonstration to overawe the discontented and prevent the spread of insurrection. But by this time the Indians of the plains had become very generally involved in hostilities. No decisive action took place prior to September, when Hancock, by order of the President, proceeded to New Orleans to assume command of the Fifth Military District, comprising Louisiana and Texas.

It was while in command at New Orleans that Hancock came into collision with those who were directing the course of reconstruction in the lately

insurgent States. The following is the text of the celebrated General Order No. 40, with which he assumed his new command:

“HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH MILITARY DISTRICT,  
“NEW ORLEANS, LA., *November 29, 1867.*

“General Orders No. 40.

“I. In accordance with General Orders No. 81, Headquarters of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office, Washington, D. C., August 27, 1867, Major-General W. S. Hancock hereby assumes command of the Fifth Military District and of the department composed of the States of Louisiana and Texas.

“II. The general commanding is gratified to learn that peace and quiet reign in this department. It will be his purpose to preserve this condition of things. As a means to this great end he requires the maintenance of the civil authorities and the faithful execution of the laws as the most efficient under existing circumstances.

“In war it is indispensable to repel force by force, to overthrow and destroy opposition to lawful authority; but when insurrectionary force has been overthrown and peace established, and the civil authorities are ready and willing to perform their duties, the military power should cease to lead and the civil administration resume its natural and rightful dominion. Solemnly impressed with these views, the general announces that the great principles of American liberty are still the inheritance

of this people, and ever should be. The right of trial by jury, the *habeas corpus*, the liberty of the press, the freedom of speech, the natural rights of persons, and the rights of property must be preserved.

“Free institutions, while they are essential to the prosperity and happiness of the people, always furnish the strongest inducements to peace and order. Crimes and offenses committed in this district must be left to the consideration and judgment of the regular civil tribunals, and those tribunals will be supported in their lawful jurisdiction.

“Should there be violations of existing laws which are not inquired into by the civil magistrates, or should failures in the administration of justice be complained of, the cases will be reported to these headquarters, when such orders may be made as may be deemed necessary.

“While the general thus indicates his purpose to respect the liberties of the people, he wishes all to understand that armed insurrection or forcible resistance to the law will be instantly suppressed by arms.”

After telling the story of so many battles, as has been done in this volume, it will not be necessary to fight over again here the Battle of Reconstruction. In the situation existing in 1866 and 1867 it was inevitable that widely different views should be held



by equally intelligent and patriotic men as to the proper method of treating communities composed of those who had lately been in rebellion. The two policies of generosity and trustfulness on the one hand, of distrust and repression on the other, were certain to find adherents, each in great numbers, among those who had been perfectly united and agreed so long as a single soldier of the Confederacy remained in arms. Nor was the line of separation between the two parties to this question drawn solely according to temperament, character, and prevailing bent of mind. Personal ambitions, political affiliations, accidents as to the point of view or as to individual observation or experience, the influence of recognized leaders of public opinion—all these would surely enter to affect the adhesion of citizens to one or the other of the two policies of reconstruction, so that men of the meanest and most grudging nature should be found among the advocates of generosity and trustfulness in the treatment of the South; while, on the other hand, men whose whole lives had been but an expression of tolerance, charity, and benignity should be earnest in holding that rashly to restore the lately insurgent communities to their former political privileges and to intrust them at once with the self-control which is taken for granted by our form of government, would be alike to endanger the Union and betray the helpless freedmen.

Moreover, it was a matter of moral certainty that either policy, so far as it should be tried would in some degree be disappointing to its friends and would, on some occasion at least, give its opponents the opportunity to point the finger of scorn. The policy of generosity and trust surely would, sooner or later, there if not here, meet with ingratitude "more strong than traitors' arms"; while, on the other hand, those who held by the policy of repression would at times be startled to find how empty of all restorative and reparative virtue were the measures in which they had delighted; how completely it was true that the malignant elements they had kept under lock and key were still in undiminished vigor, never to yield the smallest fraction of their deadly potency save under the beneficent chemistry of free institutions, personal rights, and equal laws.

The difficult situation of 1866 and 1867 was profoundly complicated by the obtrusion of several strong, rank, highly offensive personalities. Some of these belonged to men who during the long struggle with the slave power had borne themselves heroically, but who, when the institution of slavery rushed to its downfall, were found painfully or even ludicrously unfit to deal with questions of readjustment or reconstruction. Their stubborn tempers, their aggressive dispositions, their fearless courage had made them leaders and champions in the

“martyr age,” while twenty years of conflict had developed those qualities to the absorption of every other possibility of their original natures. Their minds had even ceased to work on other questions than those of human rights. Yet it was these men who held in their hands the decision of the nicest question to which statesmanship can ever address itself—the treatment of enemies or conquered rebels. Moreover, Renegadism entered upon both sides to give its own peculiar bitterness to the controversy over the processes of reconstruction.

It was in such a situation that Hancock found himself placed in command of the Fifth Military District, holding in his hands almost the power of life and death over a large population. To a man of his nature and training there was but one course open. A Democrat by birth and breeding; a strict constructionist in his view of the Constitution; a thorough believer in the honor, good feeling, and essential patriotism of the Southern people, whom he knew well, among whom he had married, whose representatives had been his schoolmates, his comrades, and his most intimate friends through life—he could not be the willing agent, and he would not become the tool, of those who, having broken with President Johnson, were seeking to carry the nation into courses of severe repression toward the late insurrectionary States. If one were disposed to argue the question, it would be not unfair to point to the

course of subsequent events as showing that Hancock was right in his view of the way to restore the true union of the States, and that this way might have been even better taken in 1868 than in 1876. But I have no interest in advancing the proposition that the gallant general was a great statesman, or had peculiarly perspicacious views of large public policies. I only desire to vindicate his thorough sincerity and his patriotic feeling in taking the course he did in Louisiana and Texas.

In pursuance of principles announced in General Order No. 40, General Hancock consistently, during the few months of his rule in New Orleans, continued to discountenance trials by military commissions instead of the properly constituted courts, and to diminish those appeals to the power of the United States which, throughout large portions of the South, had become almost the normal method of government, whether for the prosecution of the largest public enterprises or for the pursuit of the pettiest private interests. Many pages might be filled with extracts from his orders, reports, and correspondence, written vigorously and clearly in the vein he had first taken upon assuming command; but I will not protract this story by introducing them here. Suffice it to say that his course met with the severest condemnation of the radical faction at Washington, a bill being actually brought into Congress to reduce the number of major gen-

erals in the army, with a view to throwing him out of the service. His actions were vehemently denounced in the public press as due to political ambition, and as in betrayal of the rights of the government and of the interest and the personal security of the freedmen and the loyal white citizens of Texas and Louisiana.

Finding that his administration was not approved by his superiors, and feeling his usefulness impaired by the constant opposition of the military Governors of the States in his district, and of agents of the government there and in Washington, Hancock, on the 27th of February, 1868, requested to be relieved from his command and assigned to duty elsewhere. This was accordingly done on the 16th of March; and on the 31st of that month he took command of the Division of the Atlantic, comprising three departments—namely, that of the Lakes, that of the East, and that of Washington.

In the Democratic National Convention of 1868 Hancock's name was presented as a candidate for the presidency. The Republicans had previously nominated General Grant for that office, and there were among the Democratic leaders some who thought that a soldier should be placed in opposition. The number of candidates before the convention was large, and Hancock at no time came near success, reaching his maximum on the eighteenth ballot. Governor Seymour, of New York, was final-

ly chosen on the twenty-first ballot, with General Frank P. Blair, of Missouri, for vice-president. At this distance of time we may all agree to rejoice that Hancock was not put up against his old chief. On March 20, 1869, a fortnight after Grant's inauguration, he was sent to St. Paul to command the Department of Dakota. In November, 1872, General Meade died. Sheridan having become lieutenant general, this left Hancock the senior major general of the army. As such, he was transferred to the command of the Division of the Atlantic.

On March 18, 1875, General Hancock sustained a fearful blow in the death of his only daughter, Ada, a beautiful girl just blossoming into womanhood. One of the most affectionate of men, this loss came upon him with crushing force. Never afterward was he the same man. Alike the honors won and the ambitions still cherished sank into nothingness before this catastrophe. In December of that year he was made a member, with Generals Sherman and Terry, of the court of inquiry to investigate the charges against General Orville E. Babcock, private secretary to President Grant.

During the winter of 1876-'77 the complications arising out of the disputed election to the presidency gave rise to mischievous newspaper rumors that General Hancock had been selected to lead the forces which should compel the inauguration of Mr. Samuel J. Tilden; and that, to get him out

of the way, he had been ordered to the Pacific coast but had refused to go. It is certain that in this exciting period, fraught with so much danger to our institutions, there were not wanting hot-headed partisans who would have staked everything upon the accomplishment of their political purposes; but it is not less certain that the name of the gallant soldier was used without the slightest authority in the bombastic talk which preceded the formation of the Electoral Commission. General Hancock, with probably a majority of the American people, believed that Mr. Tilden had been elected, but no man would have more strongly opposed a resort to unlawful violence. During the great labor riots of 1877 Hancock moved his headquarters to Philadelphia to be near the scene of the troubles, and exhibited energy as well as prudence and foresight in dealing with the new emergencies which had developed in the life of the nation.

As the presidential campaign of 1880 approached it became more and more probable that the nomination of the Democratic party would fall to General Hancock. His splendid military career, his lifelong devotion to the constitutional views of that party, the record of his administration in Louisiana and Texas, his purity of character and dignity of bearing—all combined to make him a strong candidate, as seen before the fact. The Republican party had in May nominated General Garfield, better known

through his civil than through his military career; and the painful contest which would have resulted from the rivalry of Hancock and Grant, had the latter been set up for a third term, was thus avoided. The Democratic Convention assembled at Cincinnati in June. The two foremost candidates were Hancock and Bayard. Hancock led on the first ballot, but by no large interval. On the second ballot he carried all before him, and was declared unanimously nominated.

The platform of the Democratic party was, like the platforms of those days, Democratic and Republican alike, made up of declarations intended for immediate effect, but not esteemed of the slightest binding force upon the declarants should they be placed in power. The one vital thing about it was the denunciation of the measures by which Mr. Tilden had been thrown out. This was hearty and sincere enough. The nominee's letter of acceptance was a good letter, not strong or great, but expressive of loyal and patriotic purposes. That Hancock would have made a dignified, a gracious, a high-minded President no political opponent, probably, would now deny. Perhaps it required the administration of Mr. Chester A. Arthur to teach the country how far the mere instincts and bearing of a gentleman will, by themselves, go in making the presidency respected and even successful. Although I did not vote for General Hancock, I am strongly



disposed to believe that one of the best things the nation has lost in recent years has been the example and the influence of that chivalric, stately, and splendid gentleman in the White House. Perhaps much which both parties now recognize as having been unfortunate and mischievous during the past thirteen years would have been avoided had General Hancock been elected.

But, as a matter of fact, Hancock did not prove a particularly strong candidate before the country. His party had, at the time, no real issue to make with their opponents. The vital question with them, as with the other side, was really one of the spoils of office; and neither the qualities nor the career of the heroic soldier whom they had for effect nominated, were such as to create much political force in the campaign. The "workers" everywhere exhibited apathy—Hancock was not of their kind. Some blunderhead, distorting a remark which the good general had made in a friendly talk about the tariff, brought a little ridicule upon his candidature; but this, in fact, counted for nothing in the result. Garfield, with the prestige of five successive Republican victories and with the vast patronage of the general government behind him, carried the election by a small popular majority—a few thousands only—and by a majority of fifty-nine votes in the electoral college.

His defeat Hancock bore with perfect dignity

and unimpaired good nature. On the night of the election he went to bed without waiting for a single return, and first learned the news in the morning. His profession at least remained, and that profession was one that absolutely suited him. His taste of politics had been bitter rather than sweet, and he was probably never less inclined to presidential aspirations than on November 3, 1880. He had borne himself throughout the campaign without loss of reputation. Not a word had anywhere, by any man, been spoken against his character. From being a candidate he turned himself easily to the duties of his high office, to the ever-fresh delights of army comradeship, and to the comforts of a home which was dearer to him by reason of the great and irreparable loss which had there been sustained. His staff were to him like brothers or like sons—Fry, Arnold, Perry, Mitchell. Every day brought its welcome duties and cares, for Hancock was always full of business even if he had to make it. And there was such pleasure to a truly generous soul like his in dispensing the hospitality of headquarters on Governor's Island, and in welcoming the hundreds of old comrades who came from far and near to see once more the commander and friend of the war times.

And so Hancock—his blond locks grown gray, his youthful beauty faded under labors, griefs, and wounds, but more majestic than even in his palmy

days—was not an unhappy or a disappointed man. His only son had married, and grandchildren came to bring balm to the heart that had been so sorely bruised in the fair daughter's early death. With his superb physique and powerful constitution it seemed that he might long live to be one of the most conspicuous figures of the regenerated nation, and to lift the hearts of his surviving comrades at the recurring celebrations of peace, as he had so powerfully done on the march and in battle. But the wounds of the war \* and those which had been dealt by domestic affliction had come nearer to the springs of life than any one imagined. And other blows were soon to fall upon that kind heart.

On May 30, 1883, General William G. Mitchell, who had been his aid as early as the battle of Williamsburg, and had served on his staff with more than the devotion of a son, with a love and a spirit of hero-worship rare to witness, died suddenly at his headquarters. Only those who knew the tenderness of the relation between the younger man and his chief could understand the depths of that sorrow, the bereavement wrought by that loss. For twenty-one years, was any paper wanted, "Mitchell!" had been the first call; was a secret to be reposed anywhere, that faithful bosom received

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\* Even so late as the Dyer Court of Inquiry, in 1869, Hancock's Gettysburg wound for a time disabled him, and required him to seek temporary relief from his duties.

and kept it as faithfully as the grave; was any one to be sent upon service, any letter to be written, any stranger to be received and taken care of, any detail of duty attended to, any omission repaired, any blunder rectified, any one to be praised or thanked or scolded, "Mitchell" had been the thought and "Mitchell!" had been the cry. Let no one imagine that the officer who had been thus near to Hancock was merely one of those staff officers—not unknown to the army—whose claim to retention lies in their personal serviceableness, and who are little better than flunkies and valets around headquarters. When I look back and recall the many scores of staff officers whom I knew well between 1861 and 1865, I can not think of one who was so perfectly the *beau-idéal* of the "riding staff" as William G. Mitchell. Fearless and gallant in bearing, an admirable horseman, keen, quick, and discriminating in his observation of the field and of the fortunes of the fight, penetrating in his study of men, yet always courteous, judicious, and conciliatory in his conduct, Mitchell was throughout the war an invaluable aid, and at its close was as well equipped and as competent for the command of a brigade or a division as almost any officer in the service. But his one thought was to be of use to "the General," who had picked him out—a young lieutenant of the Forty-ninth Pennsylvania—in his first winter of service, and who had been more than a father to

him. The confidence between the two was complete, the affection inexpressible.

Yet still another "insupportable and touching loss" befell Hancock when, in December, 1884, his only son, Russell, an amiable and courteous young gentleman, died in Mississippi after a brief illness, leaving three little children. These successive losses told powerfully on the constitution of the gallant general. He still kept his interest in his military duties; still busied himself in arranging his war papers; still wrote countless long letters to those who from every part of the country consulted him on points relating to the campaigns of the Army of the Potomac; still entertained all comers at Governor's Island with his usual hospitality. But the reserved strength of his once powerful nature was completely exhausted; the tide of life was running swiftly out; a mortal disease—that one which is the most usual result of care and sorrow—had begun to work within him.

In March of 1885, as commander of the Military Division of the Atlantic, he attended the inauguration of President Cleveland, as, in 1881, he had attended that of his competitor, Garfield. In the summer of that year he made his last conspicuous public appearance, as the commander of the mighty column which for hours poured through the streets of New York to testify the nation's gratitude to the great chieftain who had brought the rebellion to an end.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans then for the first time saw, and looked with admiration and delight upon, the splendid soldier whose name had so long been a synonym of dauntless valor, martial enthusiasm, and prowess in battle. To the eye of the spectator he was still the superb Hancock.

Among the last expeditions of his active life was that which he made, with several officers of his former staff and with other personal friends, to the field of Gettysburg in November of 1885, at the request of Colonel Batchelder, for the purpose of identifying certain positions which had long been in dispute, and of explaining upon the ground certain tactical manœuvres of the second and third days. Hancock had not visited Gettysburg since the battle except once when, just after the war, he went up from Baltimore with a party which comprised his young daughter. For some time he had manifested great interest in the approaching expedition, and had written many letters to obtain the material to make this visit to the battlefield as conclusive as possible. The expedition was successfully accomplished. The scene, the presence of those who had been with him in the action, the flood of reminiscences called forth as he passed from point to point, from Culp's Hill to the place where he had fallen from his horse among the soldiers of the Vermont brigade—all combined to raise his mind, to evoke the very spirit of those memorable days, and to fill

him with something like the stern joy with which he stood in his place on the afternoon of July third, and watched Longstreet's column move down Seminary Ridge on its great enterprise.

Returning to Governor's Island after this brief absence, he busied himself with his daily duties, having probably no premonition that the end was near. But the tide was now well out. In the early days of February, immediately after a trip with General Franklin to Washington, he was struck down, never to rise again. On the 9th of that month the knightly gentleman fell away. He had been true in every relation of life; loyal to the nation and its laws; brave among the bravest; honorable beyond reproach; faithful to his lights and his privileges. He had served his country well, and he had received nearly its highest honors.

It must, I think, be a source of regret to all thoughtful and fair-minded Americans that when Sherman, in February, 1884, retired by reason of age from the high office of general of all the armies of the United States, Sheridan was not advanced to that position and Hancock made lieutenant general. The wrong was righted, so far as Sheridan was concerned, while that heroic soldier lay in the very grasp of death. A repentant Congress, then first appreciating its error, hurried through both branches a bill providing for his promotion to the grade of general; and the parchment, with the President's

signature still wet, was placed in his dying hand, which had just strength enough to close upon it. But it was then too late to correct the omission in the case of the illustrious commander of the Second Corps. Hancock's fame does not need this testimony. The story of Williamsburg and Fredericksburg, of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, of the Wilderness and the Salient at Spottsylvania, can never be told to the youth of America through all the coming ages and his name be left out. Yet, for the honor of the republic, it would have been better had not political and personal prejudices stood in the way of this act of simple justice.

General Hancock's interment took place at Norristown, his childhood home, on February 13, 1886, where he was laid beside his father in the family tomb. The remains were escorted from Governor's Island to Norristown by a distinguished group of his former comrades and associates in arms, comprising Generals Sherman, Sheridan, Schofield, Franklin, Fry, Miles, and many others. The gathering around the grave of thousands of Hancock's fellow-citizens and old soldiers was impressive in the extreme. The salute was fired by a detachment of Light Battery F, Fifth United States Artillery; and when the famous bugler of the Fifth, from a little prominence in the cemetery, sounded "taps"—the soldier's good night! lights out! to sleep!—tears filled many an eye long unused to weep.



Upon General Hancock's death a popular subscription was made, which resulted in the investment of a fund of about fifty-five thousand dollars for the benefit of Mrs. Hancock. In addition to this, friends presented to her a handsome house in Washington, at a cost of twenty-two thousand dollars. There Mrs. Hancock resided, when not visiting relatives in New York city or Yonkers, until she went, in 1891, to Dresden, where she spent nearly a year. After her return from Europe, in the fall of 1892, she made her home with Captain and Mrs. Eugene Griffin, the former long an officer on the general's staff, the latter his niece and adopted daughter. There, in Gramercy Park, New York, she died, after a protracted illness, on April 20, 1893. Mrs. Hancock prepared and published, in 1887, a loving tribute to her husband's memory, entitled *Reminiscences of Winfield Scott Hancock, by his Wife*, containing many of the addresses delivered at the memorial meeting held at Governor's Island by the Military Service Institution, soon after the gallant soldier's death. It has been stated that General and Mrs. Hancock's daughter, Ada, died at seventeen, and that their son followed her in 1884. Russell Hancock left a widow and three children—Ada, Gwyn, and Almira—who all survive at this writing. The son was, in June, 1894, admitted to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Visible memorials of General Hancock will not

be wanting to continually refresh the remembrance of his deeds and to exhibit to coming generations of Americans his goodly presence and gallant bearing. His bust, presented by the comrades of Hancock Post, Department of New York, G. A. R., was, in 1893, placed in Hancock Square, New York city, General Horace Porter making the dedicatory address. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has testified her admiration for her own heroic son, and her gratitude for the great part he performed in delivering her from the grasp of the invader by providing for the erection on East Cemetery Hill, Gettysburg, of an equestrian statue. The work, by the sculptor Elwell, now being cast in bronze, is a noble presentation of the figure, face, and spirit of the impetuous and resolute commander. It will fitly crown the eminence upon which he appeared in the mid-afternoon of July 1, 1863, to stay the flight of our broken army and bring the inspiration of coming victory.

While city and State have thus raised monuments to the departed chieftain, the nation has not been unmindful of his services. By acts of March 3, 1889, and March 31, 1891, Congress made an appropriation for an equestrian statue in Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington city, whither he came in September, 1861, to take his part in the great struggle; in front of which he organized the brigade he was to lead so gloriously to victory at Williamsburg; over the safety of which he watched during the dark

days of Lincoln's assassination; in which he attended the inauguration of his competitor for the presidency; and where through many years his splendid presence became familiar to men of all sections of the country he had so loyally aided to save.



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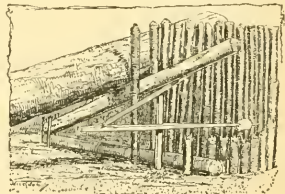
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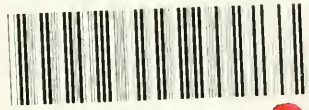








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