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# HISTORY OF THE 121<sup>st</sup> NEW YORK INFANTRY



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HISTORY  
*of the*  
121ST NEW YORK  
STATE INFANTRY

*By*  
ISAAC O. BEST



1921  
PUBLISHED BY  
LIEUT. JAS. H. SMITH  
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## FOREWORD

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IN compiling a History of the 121st Regiment of New York Volunteers, the writer feels handicapped by two facts: He is not an original member of the regiment, but was transferred from the 16th N. Y. in the spring of 1863; and after his transfer, he did not serve in the regiment, having previously been detailed for clerical duty in the office of the Adjutant General of the Brigade. Consequently he never had that close personal relation with the members of the regiment that would give to his writing the intimate character of a fellow soldier.

On the other hand, however, his position gave him the advantage of a close observer; for all the orders from the higher authorities and all the reports of the brigade and regimental commanders passed under his hand, and he was able to estimate more fully the character of the services rendered, and the estimation in which those services were held by the superior officers.

The several sources from which this history is compiled are: the records of the regiment, the reports of regimental and brigade commanders, the diaries of several members of the regiment, and several books already published covering the same events. Of these the diary of Colonel Clinton Beckwith, notes by Lieut. J. H. Smith, the chapters in the History of Otsego County, prepared by Colonel J. W. Cronkite, the letters of Chaplain John R. Adams and the diary of Lieutenant Woodcock have been especially useful. Col. Beckwith's diary is as it professes to be, the "story of his own

army experiences, and of his comrades and of the regiment from the enlisted man's viewpoint." That he has given permission to quote *ad libitum* from it is very gratifying to the compiler, as it will certainly be also to the readers of the history. Col. Cronkite's history of the regiment in the History of Otsego County is a condensed sketch of the most important facts connected with the services and exploits of the regiment; but as it may be protected by copyright the facts and not the words, are freely used.

The compiler bespeaks for his work the same kindly regard that has been shown him by the Regimental Association, in welcoming him to its membership, and honoring him with this privilege of writing its history.

The task assigned to Lieut. Jas. H. Smith of collecting photographs of the officers of the regiment, and of having half-tone reproductions made of such as could be secured, for use in this volume, he has found a very difficult undertaking. It will be remembered by our surviving comrades that photography during our service was just emerging from the daguerreotype, and the tintype, into photographic prints on paper, and that practically all photos made in those days were of the "Carte De Visete" size ( $2\frac{1}{8} \times 3\frac{5}{8}$  inches). Hence the necessity for the diminished size of most of our illustrations.

It was found to be impossible to secure any considerable number of photos of the line officers (captains and lieutenants) hence we concluded to omit all such, and confine our efforts to securing for illustrations only those who served as commanders of our Corps, Division, Brigade and Regiment, and the regimental field officers, and some of the latter we are also obliged to omit, as we were unsuccessful in every effort to secure the



necessary photos. We wish, however, to thank all those who by loaning to us such photographs as they have, have thereby made our illustrations as complete as we could have hoped for at the present day.

The red cross which appears on the cover of this book was adopted in 1863 as the emblem of the 1st Division of the 6th Army Corps. It therefore antedates by many years the Red Cross Society, as well as its use as a hospital emblem.



## INTRODUCTION

AS each individual of a family is distinguished from the rest by peculiar characteristics, and each family in a community differs from every other family, so nations and races are distinguishable in like manner, the regiments, brigades and corps of an army acquire peculiarities by which they can be distinguished from all others. These peculiarities depend upon and are developed by several conditions. The character of the men composing the organization, the circumstances under which it was organized, the ability and efficiency of the leaders, all combine to produce an *esprit de corps* which is capable of indefinite variety. In this respect the 121st was especially fortunate. Its original members were young men of fine personal character, the companies were recruited from neighboring townships, it was officered by the men who had conducted the recruiting, and was assigned to a brigade, division, and corps that had no superiors in the army.

The Sixth Corps was commanded by Major General John Sedgwick, the First Division by Brigadier General H. W. Slocum, and the Second Brigade by Brigadier General J. J. Bartlett. Under these officers the brigade had acquired an efficiency and reputation that immediately affected favorably the newly assigned regiment. They were all officers of marked military ability, who thought little of mere display, and much of soldierly efficiency, whose effort was not to make themselves conspicuous, but to make the troops under them

capable of the best service under every exigency of war.

But the officer, to whom the regiment was most indebted for the development of its brilliant individuality, was undoubtedly Colonel Emory Upton. He came to it soon after its entry into active service, a recent graduate of West Point, with a fine reputation, attained by efficient service during the previous campaign as an artillery officer. Eagerly efficient, strict, yet just in discipline, wise in administration, cool and fearless in danger, he was able to win and hold the respect and admiration of the men under him, and to mold them into the model fighting regiment that they became. To the present day, every survivor of the regiment is proud to have served under the command of General Emory Upton.



MAJOR GENERAL EMORY UPTON,  
Who served as Colonel of the 121st N. Y. Volunteers  
from October 23, 1862, to July 4, 1864.



COLONEL  
 EGBERT OLCOTT,  
 Commander  
 of the 121st N. Y.  
 Infantry from  
 July 4, 1864, to the  
 end of the war.



JAMES W. CRONKITE,  
 Major and Brevet  
 Lieutenant Colonel,  
 121st N. Y. Infantry.



## CHAPTER I

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE 121ST NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS

WHEN on July 2, 1862, President Lincoln issued the call for 300,000 men, the war for the Union had reached such proportions, and the military situation was so critical, that the patriotic enthusiasm that had characterized the organization of the volunteer army in 1861 no longer availed to procure the troops necessary to fill the quota required from the State, and a systematic and earnest effort was necessary. This effort developed in two directions: first, to fill up the older regiments with recruits; and second, to organize new regiments, one in each Senatorial District. Under the latter plan the 121st was recruited in the 20th Senatorial District comprising the two counties of Herkimer and Otsego. To supervise the organization of the regiment, Governor Morgan<sup>e</sup> appointed the Hon. Richard Franchot, and also a committee from the two counties which should appoint County Committees to prosecute the work in the several townships. The Senatorial Committee consisted of the following named persons: R. Ethridge, Wm. Gates, Ezra Graves, Amos H. Prescott, L. L. Lowell, H. H. Pomeroy, Thomas Richardson and Volney Owen, County Judge.

It has not been possible to find the names of the County Committees, but under their direction patriotic meetings were held in the several townships, and recruiting officers appointed for the separate companies.

Headquarters were established at Herkimer, and the enlistment was pushed so energetically that by the middle of August a full regiment was assured, and the recruiting officers were ordered to report at headquarters with their men.

The townships from which the several companies were recruited were as follows:

Company A. Manheim, Little Falls, Salisbury and Dunbar.

Company B. Winfield, Plainfield, Litchfield, German Flats, Columbia and Stark.

Company C. Fairfield, Russia, Herkimer and Newport.

Company D. Frankfort, Warren, Manheim, Schuyler, Columbia and Salisbury.

Company E. Middlefield, Milford, Cherry Valley, Hartwick, Springfield, Otego and Roseboom.

Company F. Edminton, Exeter, Unadilla, Otego and Maryland.

Company G. Cherry Valley, Roseboom, Decatur, Middlefield, Westford, Worcester and Herkimer.

Company H. Little Falls, Richfield, Salisbury and Otego.

Company I. Milford, Laurens, Morris, Worcester, Pittsfield, Hartwick and German Flats.

Company K. Laurens, New Lisbon, Oneonta, Burlington, Otego, Butternuts, Pittsfield and Plainfield.

A camp for the regiment was selected across the Mohawk River from Herkimer on German Flats, and named Camp Schuyler.

The contract for this camp-site reads as follows:

#### HEADQUARTERS CAMP SCHUYLER

August 29, 1862.

This agreement, made this 25th day of July, A. D. 1862, between Albert Story, on behalf of the State of New York, as Quartermaster, and Henry J.

Schuyler, witnesseth that the said Schuyler has leased for the season certain grounds, being a portion of his farm in the township of German Flats, for the purpose of allowing the same to be used as a military camp.

The State has the authority and power to have as much land as is necessary and as they desire to occupy, and to put such fixtures on the ground as may be necessary; and they are to pay for the said land at the rate of \$10.00 per acre. The State is to fix the fences that may be necessarily removed, and put them back as they were, or pay for the same being done. The State has the right to remove the fixtures after this lease has expired.

H. J. SCHUYLER.

ALBERT STORY,

Quartermaster 121st N. Y.

In presence of  
AMOS H. PRESCOTT.

There is nothing on record about the physical characteristics or structural features of this camp to suggest beauty or interest, and the stay of the 121st in it was so short after their muster in, that nothing worth remembering by the men seems to have occurred there.

By a partial agreement among themselves the company offices were to be apportioned according to the number each had enlisted; and this agreement was so closely adhered to, that there was little dissatisfaction when the order of the Governor was received, completing the organization of the Regiment.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, STATE OF NEW YORK  
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

Albany, August 21, 1862.

Special Order  
No. 463

The several companies of volunteers enlisted in the 20th Senatorial District of this State, in conformity with General Order No. 52 from this department, having been duly organized, said companies are hereby formed into a regiment, to be known and designated as the 121st Regiment of New York State Volunteers.

The following persons are hereby appointed field staff and company officers, and will be commissioned when the complete muster rolls of the regiment thus organized shall have been filed in the office of the Adjutant General of the State.

Colonel: Richard Franchot; Lieut. Colonel: C. H. Clark; Major: Egbert Olcott; Surgeon: Wm. Bassett; 1st Assistant Surgeon: N. S. B. Valentine; 2d Assistant Surgeon: David M. Holt; Chaplain: J. R. Sage; Adjutant: Alonzo Ferguson; Quartermaster: Albert Story.

Company A. Captain, H. M. Galpin; 1st Lieut., Jonathan Burrill; 2d Lieut., George W. Davis.

Company B. Captain, Irvin Holcomb; 1st Lieut., H. C. Keith; 2d Lieut., George A. May.

Company C. Captain, C. A. Moon; 1st Lieut., Thomas S. Arnold; 2d Lieut., Angus Cameron.

Company D. Captain, John D. Fish; 1st Lieut., D. M. Kenyon; 2d Lieut., Charles E. Staring.

Company E. Captain, Douglas Campbell; 1st Lieut., Theodore Sternburg; 2d Lieut., Harrison Van Horn.

Company F. Captain, Nelson O. Wendell; 1st Lieut., Byron T. Peck; 2d Lieut., Frank G. Bolles.

Company G. Captain, Edwin Park; 1st Lieut.,  
Charles T. Ferguson; 2d Lieut., J. D. Clyde.  
Company H. Captain, John Ramsey; 1st Lieut.,  
W. F. Doubleday; 2d Lieut., Marcus R. Casler.  
Company I. Captain, John S. Kidder; 1st Lieut.,  
John D. P. Douw; 2d Lieut., Delavan Bates.  
Company K. Captain, Sacket M. Olin; 1st Lieut.,  
Andrew E. Mather.

By order of the Commander in Chief

(Signed) JNO. HILLHOUSE,

Adjutant General.

The regiment was mustered into service under the above named officers, and for a week occupied Camp Schuyler, numbering 30 officers and 946 enlisted men. Besides these there had been enlisted 117 men who on August 20th were discharged by the Surgeon's certificate for disability.



## CHAPTER II

THE defeat of McClellan before Richmond, and his retreat to Harrison's Landing so uncovered Washington to an advance of the Confederate army, that it became necessary to rush additional forces to the defense of the capital of the nation, and only a week was allowed for equipment and drill of the 121st at Camp Schuyler. On August 30th the regiment left camp under orders to proceed to Washington. The journey was made by railroad to Albany, by boat to New York, and by railroad through Philadelphia and Baltimore to Washington. The events of this journey are graphically told by members of the regiment. Colonel Beckwith's is the most explicit, and before quoting from his diary of this and future events, a sketch of his previous army experiences is almost a necessity. At the age of fifteen he went to Albany and enlisted in the 91st N. Y. Infantry, and with them went to Florida where he was unable to endure the climate, and was discharged for disability. Returning to his home in Utica, he so recovered his health that he determined to re-enlist, and after visiting several recruiting stations decided to enter the 121st. He was made a corporal in Company B. He has entitled the story of his war experiences, "*Three Years with the Colors of a Fighting Regiment in the Army of the Potomac, by a Private Soldier.*" Passing over the very interesting account of his previous experiences I quote from his journal, beginning at the departure from Camp Schuyler. "My life in camp at Camp Schuyler was thoroughly enjoyed by me and I never pass it now



without recollections of a pleasant nature surging to my memory. After we had been uniformed and equipped, we were sent to New York and Washington, without special incident—feeding at the old cooper shop in Philadelphia, and getting a tough meal at Washington. We were marched with full ranks, one thousand strong, in review past the great martyred Lincoln, and received his kindly commendation and warm approbation; and on, out to the fort in the chain of defenses of Washington, called after him, Fort Lincoln, in the vicinity of Hyattsville, Md., and near the famous duelling ground of slavery days.” (The Colonel was evidently not a participant in the melon-patch episode just outside of Philadelphia, while the train was waiting on a siding for other trains to pass. Colonel Cronkite says that the tedium of the wait was relieved by a raid on a neighboring melon patch in which more than half of the regiment participated; and that, led by an officer, they returned to the train laden with a melon each.) The regiment in box cars arrived in Washington on Sept. 3d, in the morning and arrived at Hyattsville in the afternoon. Major Olcott, having been sent ahead to get instructions, was asked by the commanding officer whether the regiment was from the country and had good choppers in it. The major answered that it was from an agricultural and dairy section, and did not contain many axemen. There the matter ended. This journey from Camp Schuyler to Washington, made so quietly and orderly, so soon after the muster of the regiment, demonstrates the remarkable character of the officers and the men composing it. They were not adventurers, not mere enthusiasts, but sober, earnest American citizens, who realized the need of their services, and were patriotic enough to give their best to the country they loved. Their

good conduct was not the result of discipline and drill, but of the essential virtues of their character. It was prophetic of the admirable service it was destined to render, when perfected by months of well directed instruction in the tactics and practice of war.

To resume Col. Beckwith's narrative, "Here for a little time we busied ourselves with the duties of soldiers in camp, and becoming familiar with company and battalion movements, when all of a sudden we were astonished by news that McClellan had fallen back from Harrison's Landing, Pope was falling back from Culpeper Court House, Jackson was on Pope's flank, and Lee was partially between Pope and McClellan, and Washington. Everything was magnified in the most outrageous manner."

What really had happened was serious enough. McClellan's army was concentrated at Harrison's Landing, discouraged by defeat, the defeat of its commander, not of its constituency, destitute of equipment and supplies on account of the capture and destruction of artillery and trains. Pope, with the forces able to be gathered for the purpose, was not able to resist the attack of the victorious Confederate army, in the series of engagements that constituted the second battle of Bull Run; and flushed with this further triumph, Lee was leading his forces forward in an attempt to capture Washington. They were already in Maryland, concentrating in the vicinity of Frederick City. It was necessary to interpose a sufficient force between the advancing enemy and Washington to prevent its capture, and defeat the enemy. In this effort, little time was given to the newly enlisted regiments for instruction and drill. They were hurriedly assigned to organizations already in the field. The 121st was ordered to report to the Fifth

Corps, then located in Virginia, south of Washington. When on the march to cross the Potomac, it was met by General Slocum, who was a friend of Col. Franchot, and by his influence the regiment was reassigned to the Sixth Corps. It was by this unexpected meeting of two old friends that in going to the front the 121st was "put into one of the choicest brigades of the army; and we were marched out by way of the Tenallyville road, to, and through Rockville, and by Darnstown and Sugar Loaf Mountain, and joined the brigade commanded by Gen. Joseph J. Bartlett, with which we remained till the war ended." (B.)

By all accounts this march to the front was unnecessarily severe. On the first day it was continued until late in the evening, and the men were too weary even to eat, and as they had left their knapsacks behind and had not yet been supplied with shelter tents, the night was spent most miserably, and in many cases the health of the men was so shattered that they never recovered from the effects of their excessive fatigue and exposure. Many subsequent marches were longer and more difficult, but they were made under experienced commanders, with the men more inured to exercise, and with facilities to better take care of themselves.

The ambition of Col. Franchot to report at the front as soon as possible, led him to resume the march at 2 A. M. the next morning, thus giving the men only three hours for rest and sleep. Many who had not been able to keep up on the previous day, were deprived of even that scant period of rest.

Col. Beckwith continues, "We, in our inexperience, clung to our knapsacks, blankets, overcoats, rubber blankets, and all the trinkets and 'what-nots' we had brought from home, and these made

such heavy loads that they wore many a poor chap out; and by nightfall he was many miles in the rear, hurrying to catch up as best he could, generally with poor success. The weather was very warm, and the dirt roads, cut deep with the artillery, ammunition, supply and baggage trains, were shoe deep with powdered clay, and dust of a dark red color, and it would completely envelop a column of troops marching on each side of the roads, which were occupied by the cavalry and artillery portion of the army, because the infantry could go anywhere. So, loaded too heavily, and unused to the work, the men would pluckily keep up until overcome by heat, or choked with thirst, smothered by dust, discouraged and exhausted, they would throw themselves down, and many a fine fellow perished in this way.

“In those days our ranks were full, our uniforms bright, our faces clean and untanned. We had, and wore, the sweetness of home. War, its suffering, misery, wounds, sickness and horrors were uncared for, because untouched.”

These were the days when the endurance of our men was tested to the limit. We had no tents and had to secure shelter nights such as the country afforded, a night camp in the woods being the best; a rail shed with brush or straw roof when procurable, next; then again rolled up in our overcoats and rubber blankets, with our knapsacks for a pillow, we could get a good night's rest. Two days out from Camp Lincoln, the regiment overtook the corps and took its place in the Second Brigade. According to Col. Beckwith the reception it received was not altogether pleasant. He says, “Another source of annoyance and hardship was the constant shouting and ridicule we received from the old regiments. We were called ‘Paid Hirelings,’ ‘Two Hundred Dollar Men,’ ‘Sons of



Mars'; told we would get soft bread farther on if we did not like hardtack; asked if we liked army life, and a lot of stuff too foolish to speak of; but to us it was excessively annoying. Our men were an extraordinary body of troops and felt keenly this ridicule, but they bore it patiently, except now and then some hot blood would hit out and resent the insult. Such outbreaks were quickly quieted."

Soon, however, a sincere friendship sprang up between the 121st and the 5th Maine, which deepened and ripened as the months went by and was continued for years after the war closed by the visits of delegates from each regiment to the annual reunions of the other.

This attachment cannot better be described than it was by Lieut. Philip R. Woodcock at one of these reunions. He said, "Comrades, it is with sincere pleasure I arise to respond to this toast, 'The 5th Maine.' However poorly I may do it I shall always feel that I have been honored by my comrades in selecting me for this pleasant duty.

"There has been a close fraternal feeling, amounting to a strong tie, existing between the 5th Maine and the 121st New York since we were brigaded together in September, 1862. It was cemented in the mingled blood of the two regiments as we went side by side, usually on the front line, as we passed through the successive campaigns of the war. The history of one is the history of the other, except that the 5th Maine commenced several months earlier, making a grand beginning, while the 121st continued on helping make history for the brigade, with an equally grand ending; both returning to private life with the highest achievements of honor, which was most pathetically shown by the thinned ranks of both returned regiments.

“This strong affection—and I may go farther and as Major Strout expressed it to-day—love, has continued increasing as the years go on, and is even stronger to-day than ever, made so by the presence of the representatives with us to-day. It seems to me a great privilege to exchange greetings with them after over forty years since our separation. Our ranks are still more depleted and we can not muster in numbers by fifty per cent what we could on our return.

“We are growing old. Time is showing its mark, and our bodies are getting more or less infirm, and year by year, with increasing rapidity, our comrades are dropping out and can not answer the roll call at our annual meetings. Sad as this fact is, there is an amazing amount of vigor and vitality left in us yet, and our patriotism runs as high as ever.

“We are glad to learn and hear something of our comrades of the 5th Maine to-day. Their representative assures us that we are not forgotten. Conditions with them are about the same as with us. At their annual reunions they speak of us, as we do of them to-night. How well we remember the old days, and how pleasant to recall the many thrilling incidents which connected us so closely! With our two regiments on the front line facing the enemy, led by the gallant Colonels Upton and Edwards, we had that feeling that the Japs must have had when facing the Russians in the present Eastern war, ‘that we can whip everything before us,’ and we generally did it, too.

We do not forget the life and services of the faithful Chaplain, John R. Adams, who remained with us after the return home of the 5th Maine. The death of this honored officer only increases our affection for them all. We love to let our memories run back to those days and call up in our minds those strong, sturdy Maine boys. By



reason of their few months' previous service they were in a position to be very useful to us, as we, fresh from our homes, tried to get accustomed to a campaign life. We learned rapidly from them. They taught us just what a new regiment needed to know. We discarded our company cook, and they showed us how to do individual cooking, and how to adapt ourselves to the strange circumstances. The marches were hard, we had some superfluous clothing, which they, in the most kindly and friendly manner advised us to throw away; but I always noticed a 5th Maine man wearing it the next day.

Time is much too short to speak further of the close relations of our two regiments, but there is one thing more I ought to mention, yet I blush when I speak of it. Our regiment came from home a cleanly lot of men, but a few days' association with the 5th Maine, and we found that we had caught from them that pest of camp life, "the army Greyback." This was a great trial, and we wondered what to do; but here the noble, generous spirit of the 5th Maine showed itself. They showed us how to get rid of them, or at least to prevent their accumulation and increase.

The 5th Maine men were true and loyal, in every way, a credit to themselves and an honor to the brigade. All honor to such a brave regiment, and we feel proud and glad of our association with them."

A similar attachment developed in the Shenandoah Valley between the Sixth Corps and the Cavalry Corps which led Sheridan to ask for the Sixth Corps in beginning his operations in the final campaign against the defenses of Petersburg.

In the advance of the army, to oppose Lee's invasion of Maryland, Col. Beckwith gives a vivid and somewhat amusing description of a physical prostration that he suffered.

It may remind others of a similar experience, perhaps not with the same outcome. "The day we marched around Sugar Loaf Mountain we were the last division of our corps. The day was hot. Wherever the road was in the open, a cloud of dust obscured the moving columns from view. We had passed through scrubby pine patches that were on fire, which added to our discomfort. Along in the afternoon the road ran along and around the base of the mountain, a massive sugar loaf shaped prominence. I had felt more than ordinarily well during the day, the perspiration flowed from my pores profusely. We were talking and joking as we moved along. Suddenly I felt a sort of faintness come over me, the perspiration stopped and I said to Benny West, who was marching beside me, 'I feel very strange.' He asked me what was the matter, and before I could answer him I felt the sky grow dark, the world whirl round, and conscious that I was going to fall I made a last effort to reach the road side, and lost track of surrounding events. When I regained my senses I found Rounds and Tarbell, of my company, beside me and myself wet from the liberal supply of water to my surface. After a short time I began to feel better, and soon got all right again, and we started to catch the regiment, which I reached before the other two that night, and I was subject to considerable criticism on the part of Rounds and Tarball, who kicked because, being left behind to take care of a dying man, he came to, got well, and beat them to the camp the same night."

In his quick recovery and immediate return to the regiment Comrade Beckwith was especially fortunate, for according to Col. Cronkite, by the first two days' march, "Many strong constitutions were wrecked, and many brave soldiers, stricken with fever and other diseases, lost their lives from exposure during the first week of service."

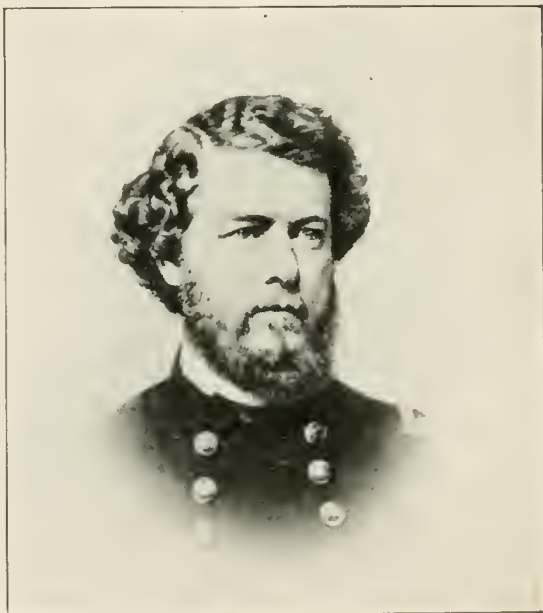


LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN S. KIDDER



MAJOR GENERAL  
JOHN SEDGWICK,  
Commander of the 6th  
Corps; killed in  
battle at Spottsylvania  
in 1864.

HORATIO G. WRIGHT,  
Major General,  
Commanding 6th Corps  
from May 12, 1864,  
to end of war.



### CHAPTER III

AS the army advanced in Maryland, the military situation became more clearly defined. The Confederate army occupied the passes of the South Mountain range, that is the continuation north of the Potomac of the Blue Ridge and it became evident that to get at the main force of the enemy it would be necessary to wrest from him the passes of this range of mountains. To the Sixth Corps was assigned the attack upon Crampton's Pass, the one farthest south and nearest Harper's Ferry. The head of the column was veered to the south, and passing through the village of Jefferson on the 14th of September, halted a short distance from the town. "Here the sound of cannon from the direction of South Mountain was heard by the men of the 121st. There was a feeling over us all, that a great battle was impending. We knew from common report that Lee, with as great a force as he could muster, was not far away, and this conflict and the part we should take in it was thoroughly discussed as we hurried along. Of one thing we were determined, and that was, that no matter what occurred or in what position we might be placed, we would show the men of the other regiments of the brigade of what stuff we were made, and shame them for the gratuitous ridicule and abuse they had heaped upon us. At last the sound of cannon far off fell upon our ears and a rumor came down the line that the enemy held all the passes of the mountains we were approaching. The sound of cannon grew nearer and we seemed to quicken our steps;



and reports kept coming back to us that the enemy was in force a few miles off. In our front, extending as far as one could see, from right to left was a range of mountains, and between us and it, a considerable valley, and nestling at its farther side, near the base of the mountain, was a small village, its tall church spire standing out clear and white against the foliage of the mountain side. Far away to the right, where the sound of the cannon grew upon the ear, the smoke of the guns became distinct and visible, and the faint rattle of musketry was heard. Our road seemed descending the side of a considerable declivity. Very soon a cannon opened in our front, and it was said to be a 'Johnnie' battery and some of the men pointed out the position of the enemy on the mountain side. As we hurried down the side of the valley we could see a line of our troops filing off in the fields towards the village of Burkettsville; and farther up the side of the hill, a thin line of men, skirmishers, were moving towards the wooded slope of the mountain side. These were soon fired upon from the timber and returned the fire, and we could see for a short time the puffs of smoke from their rifles. A turn in the road hid them from our sight, but we were interested in another feature of the entertainment. The battery which we had seen on the mountain crest farther up, evidently had us in view, for in addition to its report we heard a strange sound, a whistling, singing noise in the distance, and a solid shot flew over us and buried itself in the soft earth across the creek along side which we were now marching. Instantly many inquiries were made as to what it was, and all about it, and we were told that it was a shot from a Confederate battery fired at us, and that we were now under fire and within range of the enemy's guns, and might be struck



at any moment or instant, with one of those projectiles. One of our company said, 'Be gad, there couldn't be much harm in ut. It sung just like a little burrd.' A little farther along the road, one of General Slocum's staff officers came galloping along and rode up to the Colonel of the 96th Penn. and gave him some orders, and as we crossed the creek and halted, this regiment moved on quickly and passed us. We were front faced in line of battle, and moved forward a short distance and told to lie down, that we were in an enemy's country, and also told to keep out of sight and not expose ourselves to view, as the enemy were only a short distance in advance of us; and a battle would soon take place. We were also told that because of our being new troops, and undisciplined General Slocum had decided not to put us into battle unless it became necessary; although Colonel Franchot had appealed to him, to let his regiment take the lead, make the charge and do anything that brave men could be asked to do. Where we were, we could see nothing. Troops were passing along in rear of us in a steady, unbroken column; and although there were guards posted in front of us to prevent our moving forward, a lot of us moved along with the column past the regiment, attracted by curiosity and the increasing magnitude of the infantry fire. I went along with the troops in the road as far as the village. A few cannon shots were fired at the column but did no damage." (B.)

Of the part taken in this battle of Crampton's Pass by the brigade, General Bartlett's report is as follows: "My command after a march of nearly ten miles arrived opposite the village of Burkettsville, and Crampton's Pass, about 12 m. with the 96th Penn. Volunteers as skirmishers. The enemy's pickets retired from the town, and he opened an

artillery fire from two batteries upon my line of skirmishers. I was ordered by Major General Slocum to halt until he could move his troops and arrange the plan of an assault, that artillery was of no avail against it, and that nothing but a combined and vigorous assault of infantry would carry the mountain. It being decided that the attack should be made on the right flank of the road, leading over the mountain, I was ordered to lead the column under cover of the artillery fire, and as secretly as possible, to a large field near the base of the mountain, where the column of attack was to be formed, i. e., each brigade in two lines, at two hundred paces in the rear. About 4 o'clock P. M. I ordered forward the 27th N. Y. Volunteers to deploy as skirmishers, and upon their placing the interval ordered between the columns of attack and their line, I advanced at quick time the 5th Maine and the 16th N. Y. Volunteers. My line of skirmishers found the enemy at the foot of the mountain, safely lodged behind a strong stone wall. Their entire line, being now developed, exhibited a large force. The front line advanced rapidly and steadily to the front under a severe fire of artillery from the heights and musketry from behind the stone wall and the trees on the slope above it. Halting behind a rail fence about 300 yards from the enemy, the skirmishers were withdrawn and the battle commenced. By some mistake, more than a thousand yards intervened between the head of the column of General Newton's Brigade and my own, and nothing but the most undaunted courage and steadiness on the part of the two regiments forming my line maintained the fight until the arrival of the rest of the attacking column. On their arrival the 32d N. Y. Volunteers and the 18th N. Y. Volunteers were sent to report to me. The 5th Maine and the 16th N. Y.

having expended their ammunition, I relieved them and formed them twenty paces in the rear. The N. J. Brigade now arrived on the left and commenced firing by the first line and the 96th Penn. having joined my command, and been placed by me on the extreme right, it became evident to all that nothing but a united charge would dislodge the enemy and win the battle.

"A moment's consultation with General Torbert, commanding the New Jersey troops decided us to make the charge immediately at a double quick, and the order was passed along the line to cease firing, the command given to charge; and the whole line advanced with cheers, rushing over the intervening space to the stone wall and routing the enemy. The charge was maintained to the top of the mountain, up an almost perpendicular steep, over rocks and ledges, through the underbrush and timber until the crest overlooking the valley beyond was gained. The victory was decisive and complete, the routed enemy leaving arms, ammunition, knapsacks, haversacks and blankets in heaps by the roadside. I have the honor to report the capture of one flag by the 16th N. Y. Volunteers.

"The action of my own regiments and of the 32d and 18th N. Y. Regiments, who were under my command, recommends them to the highest consideration of their general officers.

Very respectfully,  
(Signed) Jos. J. BARTLETT,  
Colonel Commanding Brigade."

The losses of the 16th N. Y. in this engagement, was twenty enlisted men killed and one officer, and forty enlisted men wounded. The unusual percentage of the killed to the wounded no doubt resulted from the fact that the enemy fired from above and their bullets took effect in the head and

upper part of the body of any one who was hit. It is worthy of note that in this battle, General Upton (then Captain) was in command of the artillery of the division. At the close of the battle the 121st was brought to the front and the task assigned them of hunting up straggling Rebels and guard duty. What the task of gathering up the wounded means, is vividly described in General N. M. Curtis' History of the 16th N. Y. in connection with this battle. Lieut. Wilson Hopkins was in command of the ambulance corps of the Division and this was his first service in that capacity. He wrote of it thus. "Most of our wounded were brought to the hospital by dark. We began to collect the wounded Confederates then, who were found from the base of the mountain, increasing in number as we ascended, to the very top. We carried them to the field hospital till midnight.

"The surgeons, overcome by exhaustion, were unable to care for more. We then collected all we could find and placed them in a group near the top of the mountain, gave them food and water, built fires to warm them, and I directed two Confederates, found hiding behind the rocks and uninjured, to remain with their wounded comrades, attend to their wants and keep the fires burning. At sunrise the next morning I went with my stretcher bearers to the camp I had made for the wounded Confederates and found the fires burned out, six of the forty dead; and learned that the two men I had placed in charge of them with direction to keep the fires burning, had, soon after I left them the night before, abandoned their charge and returned to the Confederate army encamped in the valley beyond. We carried the survivors to the hospital, leaving a detail to bury the dead. This was my first experience in gathering the wounded from a battlefield after it had been won. Many



have visited such places and reported the sickening sights, but I can not describe their ghastly realities. Later I became more familiar with such scenes, yet I can never forget that dreadful night. Its horrors overshadow all spectacles I witnessed on other battlefields, and the memory of what I saw there will remain with me to the end." The Union dead were usually sought out by their surviving comrades by regiments, and buried together in orderly manner, and their graves marked by headboards, upon which were inscribed the name, regiment and company of the person buried. The burial of the Confederate dead at Crampton Pass is thus described by Comrade Beckwith: "I went over the line and position occupied by the Rebels for a considerable distance and saw many of them lying on the field dead. Those I saw had not changed much from life, but they lay in all shapes and positions. Many were shot through the head. I came along to a burial detail. They had dug a long trench on the mountain side. The dead Rebels were carried to it and laid side by side until one tier was made, when another was piled on top until all the dead in the vicinity were gathered up, when the earth was put back over the mound."

During the first months of the war the care of the wounded was left entirely to regimental medical officers. Each regiment was expected to gather up its severely wounded and take full care of them, until they were sent to general hospital. This plan did not work well, because in every battle some regiments suffered many casualties and others scarcely any. Consequently some medical officers would be overworked and others have nothing to do. On this account a reorganization had been made by which the medical force was consolidated in brigade, division and army corps, and thus the labor was more evenly distributed.

The hospitals were likewise established so as to give first aid at the front, transport the sick and wounded forward by stages, until they arrived at the permanent General Hospitals for final treatment. After a battle over ground so rough and broken by woods and thickets as this, some of the dead would not be found, and some would be so far from the trenches dug, that they would be covered where they fell, ever so lightly. Passing over this field a few days after the battle, the writer to avoid a bend in the road, took a short cut up the side of the mountain, and in passing by a thicket disturbed a young hog, which had rooted through the dirt on such a grave and was devouring the flesh of the man buried there. It was the first experience he had of the horror of war and prepared him somewhat for the terrible sights that the battle of Antietam had left to chill the blood of the one who passed over it, soon after it had been fought.

The battle of Crampton's Pass was evidently that part of the Maryland campaign intended to relieve the siege of Harper's Ferry, but only two or three days before the victory there, made it necessary for the besieging troops to retire from their position on Bolivar Heights, as General Miles had cravenly surrendered. After the battle and victory of Crampton's Pass the 121st was left to guard the Pass and prisoners, and collect the arms and other munitions that had been left on the field. The rest of the Corps was ordered to follow the retreating enemy who were concentrating at Antietam, or Sharpsburgh.

On the morning of the 18th of September, Captain R. P. Wilson, Asst. Adjt. Gen. of the brigade appeared with orders for the regiment to report as quickly as possible at Antietam. On that date the battle of Antietam was fought, and



when the regiment arrived, it was detailed to collect and stack the arms on the field, on the day after the battle. Again quoting from the narrative of Comrade Beckwith, "We reached Antietam battlefield on the 19th (of Sept.), and except some fighting at the river where Lee's army crossed, and an attempt by the Fifth Corps to capture the batteries covering the rear, resulting in the capture of four guns, the great conflict was over. The country around Sharpsburgh is admirably adapted to military operations and affords fine opportunity to maneuver troops under cover and near the front excepting cavalry, the ground being too broken for that arm of the service to operate successfully, and for that reason, I think, large masses of our infantry and the enemy's infantry came within easy range of musketry before opening fire, being concealed by the contour of the ground between them. The consequence was that those who used their arms most effectively and were the steadiest were the victors; and as a rule, our men in the open field were the victors. That the enemy suffered terribly from our fire may be gathered from the fact that for more than a mile I could have walked on their dead bodies, while in some places they lay in groups, and in others as many as fifteen lying in line close together. Mounted officers lay under their horses both dead. A great many dead horses were on the field. Near the church in the edge of the woods, by the sunken road and the edge of the cornfield, the conflict by its results seemed to have been the fiercest. All the dead presented a horrible spectacle, and it would have been impossible to recognize a brother, they were so changed from life. The weather being extremely hot, the men, heated with passion, immediately after death, decomposed rapidly, gases formed, and the bodies swelled up to enormous propor-

tions. For instance, the eyes would bulge out from their sockets and look more like small bladders. Many had burst, so great was the pressure upon their tissues. The remains of the horses looked even worse than those of the men, and for such carrion decent burial was impossible; and so rude cremation was resorted to, and in many cases the ashes of heroic men, dumb brutes and fence rails mingled in one heap; and in the far-off home of the dead hero no thought exists today, but that their loved one sleeps in some National Cemetery, to which his remains were removed from the field where he fell.

I must confess that I had very serious communion with myself in those days. I had before these battles and their real story, no conception of the vast number of soldiers engaged, or of the magnitude of the battles, and how small an atom one little chap like myself was in the great whole, and what a very small loss my taking off would be, in the general result. Everything seemed quite different to me from what it did when hearing the war speeches, and the deeds of valor enacted, at home; and as I thought of the vast number of dead I had seen lying unburied on the field, and the myriads of wounded men, I felt the awful horror of war upon me, and I again felt thankful that we had been permitted to see and know what we were coming to. The abandoning of the dead seemed horrible to me, and I hoped if it should be my fate to perish in battle, my comrades would give me decent burial.

"We saw on the battlefield the 13th N. Y. Vol. from our county, and a solemn and sad looking lot of men they were. They had been in the thickest and most fiercely contested part of the battle, and had suffered a terrible loss, and many of the men who had fallen were well known to most

of our fellows. Joe Rounds' brother, Armenius, had been reported mortally wounded. He afterward recovered, although pierced through the body and leg with Rebel lead. Joe belonged to our company and was a sergeant, and our visiting with the 34th and our surroundings cast a gloom over the regiment that was only removed by departure to other scenes and new experiences. One incident I will relate in passing, connected with the battle, because of its pathetic side, and the thought that its like was experienced in many more homes, both sides of Mason and Dixie's line. In going over the battlefield picking up arms, we examined the bodies and baggage of many of the dead. A great many had plunder which they had gathered from the rich and loyal country through which they had passed. Some had Confederate money on them—in demand there as souvenirs. One dead Confederate officer, a general, lying near the corner of the fence by the cornfield had the gold braid cut from his uniform. Away over on the right in the woods, I came across a body lying near a tree and partially supported by it. In the right hand was a daguerreotype of a woman and a child, and this Rebel soldier, his duty done, shot to death, had made his way to this spot, taken out the picture of his wife and child, and with his thoughts upon them in their far Southern home, alone, the pangs of death clouding his sight, giving them in his terrible anguish, the unfathomable love of a dying soldier. I did not take the daguerreotype, but some one did; for passing back that way I saw it was gone. Afterward I was sorry that I did not take it, because some day it might have gotten to the wife and child. Perhaps it did. I hope so."

## CHAPTER IV

**I** WAS very glad when we left the vicinity of the battle of Antietam, for its horrors sickened me. We moved away and in the distance of a few miles in the direction we took, no appearances of battle were present. The country took on a peaceable look. We reached our destination in the neighborhood of Bakersville, also near Dam No. 4 on the Potomac River, along the bluff bank of which we picketed in our turn with the other regiments of our Brigade."

The encampment at Bakersville was protracted until the last day of October. During this period several important events occurred. First, the seeds of disease which had been sown in the bodies of officers and men by the overwork and exposure of the previous campaign began to bear fruit. No shelter tents had yet been provided for the men, and no hospital tents for the sick. Shacks and pens made of rails, and covered with straw and brush was all the shelter they had been able to obtain, and though such protection availed to ward off the heat of the sun, it utterly failed when rain came. Sickness increased, and death began to take its toll. The death of the first man in camp is thus described by the Adjutant's Clerk of the regiment, Charles W. Dean, in a letter to the *Oneonta Herald*, dated October 2d: "A man by the name of Helon Pearsons died last night of typhoid fever. He now lies back of the hospital tent covered with a blanket under the protection of a guard. The pioneers have made a board box and he is to be buried after battalion drill." Later he wrote, "The



funeral of young Pearsons just over. He was taken to the grave about forty rods from camp, under a large oak tree, escorted by three drummers and one fifer with about three hundred of the boys. In going to the grave the drums were muffled and the music was solemn indeed. After a prayer by the Chaplain the body was lowered into its last resting place and covered with a shovel full of dirt, then a volley of musketry was fired over the grave and we returned to camp, the band playing a lively tune. His death was caused by exposure. In consequence of our sudden march into Maryland, the regiment left their tents behind and are destitute of shelter from rain and weather. The hospital is made of rails covered with corn stalks, likewise the tents in camp. Our medical supplies have been short, and our First Surgeon resigned." Before any attempt was made to remedy this condition of the regiment, on October 1st, eighty men were sick in camp, over forty of whom were too sick to help themselves, and Captain Clark and sixty-one privates were absent on account of sickness. In thirty-eight days the regiment had been reduced from 946 enlisted men and thirty officers to a membership of 744. On October 30th the Adjutant's Clerk, Dean, reported the condition of the regiment as follows: Enlisted men present for duty, 722. Enlisted men present sick, 123. Commissioned officers present for duty, 28. Commissioned officers present sick, 4. Absent, 4. Enlisted men serving in hospitals as nurses, 30. Enlisted men absent without leave, 9. Absent sick, 28. One officer, Surgeon Basset, had resigned, and another, Lieut. Davis, had died. Of the sick, both officers and enlisted men, some died, some were discharged for disability, and others returned to duty with the regiment.

The other important event during the stay in

camp at Bakersville was the resignation of Colonel Franchot, and the appointment in his place of Emory Upton. Colonel Franchot had shown ability in the enlistment and organization of the regiment, and is to be honored for his patriotism and zeal in his service for the country. But his education had been wholly civilian; and military service was entirely new to him. He wisely decided to resign his command and return to civil life, and resume his place in Congress, of which he was a Representative. But before doing so, he used his influence to have Captain Upton appointed Colonel of the 121st, and for this he deserves the approval and gratitude of every member of the regiment. Colonel Upton was commissioned on September 25th, and being duly presented to the regiment was received with hearty cheers. The regiment was intelligent enough to soon learn that civilian officers were not generally fitted by education or experience for command in active warfare. After taking formal command Colonel Upton obtained a leave of absence for a few days, which left the command of the regiment to Major Olcott, Lieut. Colonel Clark being absent sick. Near the camp of the 121st was a large brick barn, the application for the use of which for hospital purposes had been refused. Major Olcott on his own authority took possession of this barn, and moved the sick from the cornstalk hospital into it. If over assumption of authority is ever justified, it certainly was in this case, and probably on that account Major Olcott escaped censure for his act.

Immediately upon his return to duty, Colonel Upton began the system of discipline, and drill, that soon brought the regiment to the high efficiency for which it became noted and which placed it among the most reliable of the organizations of the Army. Colonel Upton was a young



man, twenty-two years of age, a graduate of West Point, who had won recognition for efficiency as an artillery officer in the Peninsular campaign. In discipline he was strict but just. In administration he was efficient. In action he was prompt. In danger he was cool. And under no circumstances did he show fear or lack of decision. To these admirable qualities of an officer, he was strictly temperate, and decidedly religious in his conduct. He was not ashamed to keep a well worn Bible on his desk, and his conversation was always clean and without profanity. It is therefore not to be wondered at that he won and held the regard and affection of the officers and men under him, and that time has only served to enlarge the esteem in which he is held by the survivors of the regiment.

The advantages of a capable and competent leadership were immediately manifest. The health of the regiment was conserved by the regular daily drills, they were well fed, and tents and overcoats were secured for them.

On October 3d the Corps was reviewed by President Lincoln.

Of the experiences in this camp Comrade Beckwith writes thus: "I think the regiment was stronger and better for the experience it had gone through—the weeding out of the unfit men, the retiring of incompetent officers, and the acquiring of a young, intrepid, and skilled officer for its commander, who, with heroic purpose, unlimited patience and matchless skill, made it one of the best regiments in the army of the Potomac, and one which in its long and bloody career, could always be depended upon to strike a deadly blow against the enemy, and whose every soldier, once told what to do, pursued that course to its conclusion.

"At this time all sorts of stories were afloat, and

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>  
rumors circulated among the troops to the effect that McClellan was to be removed or superseded by Burnside, and a campaign inaugurated that would not stop until our colors floated over Richmond. Most of the talk I heard among the old troops was greatly in favor of McClellan, and opposed to the War Department and the President, because of the treatment McClellan had received at the hands of the Administration. In our regiment, while we had great admiration for McClellan, we yet maintained the opinion, that the President had acted with great skill, and we did not share in the opinion so commonly expressed among the battalions from the Peninsula, that their Commanding General had been badly treated, and so we did not enthuse for McClellan as did the other regiments of the Brigade. Our Brigade Commander, Joseph J. Bartlett, was an intense admirer of General McClellan, and I think his influence was strong with the men of his command who idolized him. It was a strange sight to us to see these battle-tried veterans swarm to the roadside and yell and cheer and run after McClellan. General Bartlett was a splendid specimen of a soldier. He was nearly six feet tall, straight as an arrow, of powerful build, with black eyes and hair, and sat in his saddle as though horse and man were one. He dressed in a tight fitting uniform, low cap with straight visor. As he rode by on his fine black horse, he gained the admiration of his command and he deserved it, for he was a splendid officer, skillful and brave, and there was not a man of our regiment who would not have followed him anywhere at this time.

Our new Colonel came to us at this time and he made an instantaneously favorable impression. He was quite a young looking man, with a light mustache, rather high cheek bones and his cheeks

were thin and gave prominence to a strong square jaw. His mouth was small and his lips being rather thin, and tightly closed, made it look smaller. His brow, full and broad, but rather low, surmounted deep blue, deep set eyes, which seemed to be searching all the time. His hair was a dark brown, worn rather long, and his complexion dark but pale, gave him on the whole, the appearance of a man who was deeply impressed with the seriousness of warfare and had mastered its science. To this man was entrusted the fortunes of the 121st Regiment of New York Volunteers, and its command, until he was called to other and higher duties. He took command without show or ostentation. From the day that Emory Upton took command there was a change for the better. The camp was newly ordered and cleaned up, inspections were more rigid, and the officers were promptly taken to task for any slackness on their part."

When orders came on the 30th of October to march on the next day at 6 o'clock a. m., Company C was in command of 2d Lieut. Bradt, Captain Campbell was the only commissioned officer in Company E. Company I was in command of Orderly Sergeant J. W. Cronkite. The following named Company Officers were unfit for duty and in hospital: Captain Moon, Fish and Kidder; Lieutenants Bates, Van Horn, Cameron and Quartermaster Story. Lieut. J. P. Douw had previously been detailed to duty as Ordnance Officer of the Division.

The movement ordered for the 31st of October was the beginning of a campaign under General McClellan to force General Lee back from the line of the Potomac. It was conceived and begun under the principle that had controlled all of General McClellan's strategy up to this time, viz., that mili-

tary success consisted in strategic movements to force the enemy to abandon the positions he had occupied. If this could be done with little or no fighting all the better.

This policy in so large a territory as intervened between Washington and Richmond amounted to little more than a game of hide and seek, so far as final victory is involved, and gave the defensive side all the advantage. When it was to be carried on by a commander whose imagination exaggerated the forces opposed, and whose caution magnified the danger to his rear, who never was willing to risk the use of all his army in an offensive battle, but thought it necessary to hold a large percentage in reserve against a possible reverse, the ineffectiveness of such operations is to be expected. Avoiding a direct advance upon the Confederate Army, the march began back through Maryland, over the South Mountains to the Potomac River at Berlin, Md. There the Army crossed the Potomac into the same section of Virginia in which the two battles of Bull Run had been fought and lost. Between the hostile forces the Blue Ridge interposed, and the passes were held by the Confederates. The advance was leisurely with frequent stops, the first at White Plains where we rested for three days. Here for the first time Colonel Upton's strict discipline began to be felt. He ordered a Court Martial to convene for the trial of certain offenders against military order, and several men were convicted and punished according to the decision of the court. In this proceeding he showed that he intended to enforce order, not by arbitrary personal authority, but in accordance with strict judicial procedure. It was this equitable dealing with them that made his men respect and honor him as a man, and readily obey him as an officer. He could not have won



the loyal admiration of the regiment, as he quickly did, if he had acted arbitrarily in his method of discipline. The records of the regiment show his manly self control, by the practice of which he was able to control the unruly element in the regiment, and win the approval of all, and their obedience.

During the march into Virginia almost daily firing was heard on the right where frequent efforts were made to seize the gaps opening from the Shenandoah valley into the Mannasas plains, but no general engagement occurred. On November 9th an advance of four miles was made, and the Corps was reviewed by Generals McClellan and Burnside. The command of the army had been transferred to Burnside and this review was a sort of farewell to the departing General. This transfer of command had been made in spite of Burnside's earnest protests but it was persisted in because the authorities at Washington had become convinced that under its former commander nothing definite would be done as long as it could be put off. The change was resented by many of the old soldiers, and many officers, admirers of McClellan, resigned and left the service. The regiment remained in camp at White Plains ten days, during which a severe snow storm occurred, rendering the movement of troops fatiguing and difficult, but on the 15th camp was struck and the march resumed, first to Cattlet's Station and then to Stafford Court House. Here a stay of about two weeks was made during which Colonel Upton drilled the regiment diligently. The day's program was, Company drill in the morning; Battalion drill at 1 p. m.; Dress Parade at 4 p. m., and School of Instruction for officers at 6 p. m. Under this régime the improvement of the regiment was rapid and the officers and men caught the enthusiasm of their leader

and became ambitious to become a model regiment. It was no wonder that the regiment soon became known as "Upton's Regulars," and that General Meade on a subsequent occasion seriously inquired if they were regulars. During one of the daily parades the first promotion in the regiment was announced, that of Orderly Sergeant J. W. Cronkite to be Second Lieutenant of Company I. Other changes occurred during November. Dr. E. S. Walker was appointed Surgeon in place of Dr. Basset, resigned. Lieutenants Clyde and Ferguson resigned and were honorably discharged. Lieutenant Cameron had died in camp at Bakersville. Lieutenant A. E. Mather of Company K was transferred to Company G, which by the resignation of its two lieutenants had been left without a commissioned officer. Twenty-five men had been lost on account of sickness, and the regiment now numbered only 657 present for duty—not because of any loss in battle, but from exposure, much of it unnecessary, and the exhaustion of a strenuous campaign, for which the men were not inured by previous experience. But now the 657 men in the ranks were physically fit for anything that might be required of them. One day Colonel Upton set the men to felling trees to build winter quarters, but orders came to move the next day, at 6 o'clock, with three days' rations. The first day's march carried the regiment past White Oak Church, and the next day to Belle Plain Landing. This last day it began to rain as we left camp, became gradually colder and colder, so that the rain soon changed to snow, the snow to sleet, and when we reached the Landing a keen, strong wind was blowing from the bay, and the halt was made and arms stacked on an open plain, so level that water stood in the hollows of the corn rows, with not a particle of shelter or fuel, and with clothing covered with



ice, and bodies almost exhausted by the difficult march, and quickly chilled to the bone by the strong, cold wind sweeping unchecked from the broad expanse of water. Colonel Cake was in command of the Brigade, and when Colonel Upton asked permission to take his regiment back to the shelter of a strip of woods through which it had recently passed, it was refused, and the men were compelled to shift as best they could on that dreary, desolate plain. The result was inevitable, another list of sick and broken down men and several additions to the death list. On this occasion the 16th N. Y. fared better than the 121st, for immediately after arms were stacked the Adjutant of the regiment rode up and said: "Men, go anywhere you please, take anything you can get except Government property, but report back here promptly in the morning." It did not take long for part of the men to get back to that strip of woods and to the low side of it, where a rail fence was found, and soon a roaring fire, a comfortable shack, a warm meal and a comfortable bed were prepared, and a most comfortable night spent. On reporting in the morning we were told that at least one man had died during the night of the cold. The next day the men of the 16th set to work to build winter quarters, and considerable progress was made during the two days we were there. Colonel Cronkite, however, says of the 121st, that they were compelled to lie in this exposed position two days and one night without fires. On the 9th of December orders came to return to the Corps, and the Brigade marched back to the vicinity of Fredericksburg and bivouacked for the night with the rest of the Corps, not far from the Rappahannock River. General Burnside had reorganized the army of the Potomac into three Grand Divisions, and placed General Franklin in com-

mand of the Left Division to which the Sixth Corps belonged. The first corps also belonged to the Left Grand Division. General Hooker commanded the Central Grand Division, and General Sumner the Right.

Of this Belle Plain experience Comrade Beckwith has this to say, and in the discrepancies between his account and that of Colonel Cronkite, the members of the regiment may decide which is correct. "After a short stay at Stafford Court House, we marched to Belle Plain; reaching there at dusk of a day that will always linger in the memory of every one of us who participated in that march. First it rained hard, then it turned to snow of the large, soft, fleecy flake kind. This made the road deep with mud and slippery; and by the time we had slipped and slid through the miles we came over, we were wet with the rain and snow outside, and steaming from the perspiration of our bodies. As soon as darkness fell, the wind rose and it grew cold rapidly, and we were marched onto the low flat near the river, and ordered to go into camp and make ourselves comfortable for the night. I was almost exhausted but I started with some others to hunt for shelter. There was no shelter except a few poplars and sycamores, standing along the river bank. The coarse, reedy grass of the low land came up through the snow. Finally we found the trunk of a large poplar, and cleaning away the snow from the sheltered side of it, we soon had a fire going, which soon augmented by the branches of wood gathered by others, made a fine blaze and gave out genial warmth which kept us from perishing. Working for several hours a good many of us succeeded in getting dry and cooking some supper. One squad who had cleaned away the snow and put up a tent on the other side of the log, was

burned out by the fire's burning through under the trunk and setting fire to their tent. They lost some baggage and a cartridge box blew up without hurting anyone. In the morning we were moved some distance to the hillside in the timber and there made ourselves comfortable with little effort. To this day, I believe the march from Stafford Court House and the camping on the flats by the river at Belle Plain Landing was the cause of the breaking down of a great many men. The misery of it is beyond description. I caught such a cold that it made me sore all over and my joints ached and creaked when I walked. The next morning with some others I went down to the landing where there was a great assemblage of transports and supply boats, and on shore a mountain of food supplies. Mule trains were being rapidly loaded and moving off to their respective commands. With a little well directed diplomacy and strategy, and some of Uncle Sam's currency, I secured a supply of substantial food, and what was then of more consequence, some whiskey. All this came from the Post or Depot Commissary, and the official who served me has a Captain's receipt for the articles furnished, which I regret very much to say the Captain has never seen. With a good load of provisions on my back I started back to camp. I took some of the whiskey that I had for my aches, some for my pains, some for the good I thought it would do me, and some to assist me with my load; and when I reached camp I could give a very good illustration of a man who had drank too much. Some of the men of my company also partook of the Commissary whiskey, and started to clean up the forest. One well known member insisted on thumping the whole crowd, and the next morning declared to the doctor that he was crazy, but never knew one

of his father's family to be crazy before. This explanation of the previous day's eccentricities was accepted, and the culprit was discharged with a dose of whiskey and quinine to prevent a recurrence of the attack." Of the return to the Corps he writes: "We broke camp in the woods near Belle Plain Landing, on the 10th day of December, and took up the line of march toward Fredericksburg on the main traveled road. It had been so cut up by wagon trains that our progress was slow, and wherever it was possible to do so we marched by the roadside.

"Long stretches of the road were covered with round pine poles laid crosswise of the road and covered with brush on which was thrown dirt taken from the roadside. The poles were held in place by longer poles laid lengthwise and pinned down by long crotched pins driven deeply into the ground. Most of the country through which we passed was heavily wooded with all the varieties of oak, and some of it very fine timber. Where the country was open there was here and there a patch of cornfield; but for the most part the old fields were worn out, unused tobacco ground, covered with a growth of broom sage and old field pine—neither of which have any value except to make the corduroy roads described above, and furnish a little softer bed than the ground for a night's camp."



## CHAPTER V

### THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

“THE weather was cool and the air crisp, rendering marching more agreeable, and we jogged along in eager anticipation of something better than that which we had left. We could see nothing ahead of us, but about noon the report of cannon was heard. During the afternoon we were passed by a lot of men having in charge a balloon which was up just above the treetops. They were moving rapidly toward where the sound of cannon came from. It was the first balloon we had seen, and created a good deal of comment. It was said that the balloon had been of great service to McClellan on the Peninsula, enabling him to discover the movements of the enemy's troops, and locate their position, and that of their batteries. The next day when we reached the flat near the Rappahannock, we saw the balloon again up a considerable distance and occupied by an officer who was busily engaged in scanning the hills beyond the river with a glass. The Rebels fired several shells at the balloon but they burst a good way from it, and did not disturb its occupant at all.

“Off to our right there was heavy artillery firing and considerable musketry, and some also in our immediate front. The Rebel batteries answered ours occasionally but the range was evidently too great for effective work. We could see the spires of Fredericksburg and back of it a range of hills which reached from right to left as far as we could

see. The flats on each side of the river are much alike, and about the same width as those at Ilion and Frankfort. A road runs along the base of the hills toward Richmond, called the 'Bowling Green Turnpike.' Along this road and on the high ground above, could be seen masses of the enemy moving along. Their guns in battery on the heights could be seen to be protected by earthworks and on the fort, or redoubt, back of the city a signal station was located, and the wigwagging of the white flag with a square black center was continuous."

In reorganizing the army Burnside had assigned Major General Sumner to the command of the Right Grand Division, Major General Hooker to command the Central Grand Division, and Major General Franklin to command the Left Grand Division. These Grand Divisions consisted each of two Corps. The Right of the Second and Ninth Corps commanded respectively by Major General Couch and Major General Wilcox. The Center of the Fifth and Third Corps commanded by Major Generals Butterfield and Stoneman. The Left of the First and Sixth Corps commanded by Major Generals Reynolds and W. F. Smith. In the Battle of Fredericksburg the position of these Grand divisions was, after crossing the river, in the order of their names. The Right and Central Divisions crossed the river directly opposite the city on pontoon bridges, which they had difficulty in building because of the sharpshooters concealed in the houses along the bank of the river. They were finally dislodged by troops ferried across in pontoons, and the two bridges were completed on which the Right and Central Grand Divisions crossed. The Left Grand Division crossed a mile and a half below the city at the mouth of a stream called Deep Run, with little difficulty, and the



place was afterwards known as "Franklin's Crossing," and is so designated in all future references to it. The First Corps crossed before the Sixth, and the most vivid recollection the writer has of that crossing, is the fact that the surface of the bridge was carpeted with playing cards, and the surface of the river was almost covered with cards that had been thrown away by those who had crossed on the bridges above. It was evident to all that a bloody battle was to be fought and few men wanted to go to certain death with gambling devices in their pockets. Since that time the writer has never doubted the essential wickedness of gambling. With death as the chief arbitrator there were no valid arguments in its favor. In the years since that day he has seen nothing to change his views on the subject.

After crossing the river the First Corps bore off to the left and the Sixth advanced over the level plain next the river and entered the deep broad cut made by Deep Run, and followed it to within gunshot of the foot of the hills. Here it remained—or our part of it did—while the battle raged on the right and left, with disastrous results to the Union forces. The dreadful slaughter on the right in the effort to carry the Stone Wall, the repulse of Franklin's feeble effort on the left, and the repulse of Hooker's half-hearted attack on the heights behind the city, have been often described and much controversy as to the responsibility for the failure has resulted. The fact that General Mead's division of the First Corps broke through the line of the enemy's defenses, and if properly supported could have held the ground taken, throws no little responsibility upon General Franklin who tried to excuse himself behind the plea, that his orders were not to press the attack to an issue, but to feel of, and test the forces of the

enemy opposed to him. This General Burnside positively denied, and declared that Franklin's failure to press his advantage and General Hooker's reluctant advance when ordered to do so, were the real causes of the failure of the attack. The part which the Second Brigade took in this battle was comparatively unimportant.

The hills in front were too steep to justify an assault, and the banks of Deep Run furnished shelter from the artillery of the enemy, so that the chief duty of the regiments of the Brigade was to do skirmish or picket duty. Of this duty the 121st had its full share, as vividly described by Comrade Beckwith.

"Our Brigade, as I remember, was commanded by Col. H. L. Cake of the 96th Penn., General Bartlett having another command temporarily, and the Division was commanded by General Brooks. We moved early on the morning of the 12th, which was Friday, up towards the heights, crossing a deep gully along the bottom of which a little stream ran towards the river. The sun rose and dispelled the fog, which was heavy and thick and covered the flats of the river like a blanket, also concealing from view the hills in our front, at the same time screening us from the enemy's observation. Looking back towards the river, there was a mass of troops in motion, including infantry, artillery and cavalry, equal in number to an army corps. In our front the fog was slowly receding toward the heights and as soon as it revealed some of our moving troops, they were greeted with a shotted salute from the Confederate batteries in our front. Almost at once Hexamer drove by on a gallop with his battery of three-inch steel Rodmans, and their sharp, fierce bark soon joined the chorus of other sounds; and this splendid, energetic artillery officer with his

able command soon quieted his adversaries in his immediate front. We remained several hours lying in the ditch or hollow at the roadside, which screened us from observation and sheltered us from the artillery fire of the enemy. I should think about 11 o'clock a battery of brass Napoleons, twelve-pound caliber, with brass handles or trunnions, came rattling up the road. We were ordered to fall in and moved out of the road, and the battery swung into position in front of us, on the highest part of the rising ground immediately before us, and unlimbered and went into action, firing rapidly and continuously for some time. To this the enemy replied with equal vigor. I should judge from the number of shot and shell that flew over, around and about us through it all, that those battery men worked with precision and regularity. The officer, Captain McKnight I think, moved among the gunners giving orders and directions. Our Colonel, Upton, went up to the guns and had some talk with the officer in command. All the while we lay close to the ground, and we could see very distinctly the working of the battery in all its details and hear the commands. The fire of this battery was replied to by the enemy, but I do not think their fire did any harm to our battery. Their shells seemed to burst nearer to us than to the battery. Some of them flew away beyond us. Each shell seemed to have a different note or tone and none of them could be called musical.

"Some were fiendish and seemed to say 'I've got you, I've got you.' Several burst near us and the fragments knocked up the ground considerably. Finally a fragment from one struck Oscar Spicer of our company in the head and killed him instantly. I don't think he realized what struck him. We carried him back after the battery had ceased firing, to the edge of the road, and near a

small cedar, a row of which grew along the road, we dug a grave for him and gave him as good burial as we could. I think Joe Rounds, Chet Catlin, or Tarbell, read the Episcopal or Masonic burial service, I do not remember which. Spicer's death threw a gloom over us. He was a fine fellow and well liked by all of us. At dusk we moved back into the hollow by the roadside, got our supper and slept on our arms. In the morning before daylight we were roused up, told to get our breakfast and get ready to go on the picket or skirmish line. We had scarcely time to get a cup of coffee, toast a cracker, and broil a bit of pork on a stick, before we were ordered into ranks. Levi Doxtater had gone for water and had a number of canteens, among which was mine, to fill. He was late getting back and his brother Jerome called to him 'Hurry up, Levi, we are going right away.' Levi said, 'I don't care, I ain't going to hurry. I am only going out there to be killed anyway.' Sure enough, his prediction or presentiment proved true, for he had scarcely reached the advance line when he received a mortal wound.

"We moved up the creek that runs through the gully before mentioned, followed it a considerable distance toward the enemy until we came to a point where it turned toward the right. Here, under the bank it made, and the shelter it afforded, our picket reserve was posted. When we reached this point it was daylight and objects could be seen distinctly for some distance in the direction of the enemy, but a considerable fog still hung over the low ground. We moved rapidly past the reserve and out into the unsheltered field, deployed as skirmishers from our left squad, which was my squad, and ran forward on a double quick to our line, which I could not see when I started, but which we reached in going seventy yards. The



instant we got near them, the men on picket sprang up and began firing, and as we advanced beyond them they, the 15th N. J., which I remember as being the regiment we relieved, ran back under shelter, and we were left to face the enemy and hold the line that they had held. Nothing had been said to us, no orders had been given, and I doubt very much if our officers knew what was expected of them, or us. I stood where the Jersey men had left me for a little time. I looked in front of me. Along a sort of meadow ran a rail fence separating it from a piece of woods. From this fence sprang out puffs of smoke, and the instant hiss of a missile in our vicinity told us that we were the object of the rifleman's attention. Almost instantly I saw two on my right, Doxtater and Davis, tumble down shot, and on my left heard Delos Doxtater cry 'I am shot.' I felt a fierce tug and numbness run along my left arm and side and felt I had been struck myself. Benny West sang out 'Lie down,' and seeing I had been hit, I dropped down on my face and hands. In the brief time I had been standing there I saw that we were in a bare, unsheltered place, and several men of the regiment that we had relieved were lying in our front. I examined my arm and side, but found to my great relief that excepting a numbness, they were all right, and I immediately turned my attention to the fellows in our front who were seeking to assist us in shuffling off this mortal coil. We fired at them several times, but they returned our compliments with accuracy and earnestness. I got my tin plate out of my haversack for a starter and soon scooped out a hole which afforded some shelter from the sharpshooters in our front. In the meantime Delos Doxtater had crawled back to the reserve to have his wounds cared for. Word was passed down the line from my right that Levi Doxtater was mor-



tally wounded and Anabel Davis was killed, and one of Company G named Wilson, was killed.

“Shortly after Colonel Upton rode along the line and ordered some of the men and one officer up to the line. The Colonel was fired at a great many times, but rode along leisurely and showed no concern or fear, and finally went out of my sight. The fact is, my attention for many long, weary, perilous hours was taken up by the attentions of the devils down there in the edge of that timber. Benny West and I fired at the puffs of smoke many times in turn, but only succeeded in getting the dust spattered about us where the balls struck from the return fire, and the ping pang spoch sounds made by the bullets were not pleasant to the ear. A little way off one of our men, breathing through the blood that was choking him to death, made an awful sound. There were besides myself in my squad, Charley Carmody, Joey Wormoth and Benny West, all boys in our 'teens. I think I was the youngest of the group, having just then completed my sixteenth year, and here we were doing men's work and doing it well. I can recall now, as the continual flight of musket balls around, about and over us, and shells from the batteries on both sides passed over us for a time, what we did and said. First we wondered how long this thing would last, whether we would have to get up and charge those cusses in front, whether the rest of the fellows were in as bad a place as we were, and whether the battle would be fought about us. Then our attention was attracted by the terrific firing of all arms, both on our right and left—the terrific crash of musketry, the yelling and cheering of thousands of men, and the heavy thunder of artillery. The hours dragged terribly slow. After noon the firing in our front slackened and finally stopped, and after a time we hung up

a handkerchief in answer to one from their side; and we gathered and carried back our dead. Poor Doxtater and Davis were taken back and laid beside Spicer near the Bowling Green Road. Of course as soon as the firing ceased the strain under which we had been so many hours was off, and the future and its concerns occupied our minds. I looked about me and got something to eat from my haversack and talked with the other fellows. Of course we lay low, for the reputation of the gentlemen in our front was of such a character as to prevent us from giving them too much of an opportunity to kill us, and we all agreed that we did not want any more picket or skirmish line work, especially where the enemy was under shelter and we were lying exposed upon a bare field. We were too much in the position of the chicken at the chicken shoot. Further along to the right the line diverged and our fellows got along comfortably and had a chance for their lives.

"Now I have often been asked how it feels to go into battle, and I think I can say without qualification that it requires more, a heap more, nerve and sand to occupy the position we young fellows did on that bright December day, exposed to a deadly fire from marksmen for many hours, than to plunge headlong into the shock and din of any, after, battle in which we participated. I am speaking for myself and at a distance. Only two of those five are now living, and the other can speak for himself. (This was written over twenty years ago.)

"After the firing in our front ceased we got along quite comfortably, to what we had experienced, and took turns in looking after things in front of us. Around us growing among the grass were many little spears which looked like onions, but were called leeks. This vegetable was pungent

enough so that when eaten by cows it tainted their milk, and their flesh would taste of it when served to us as beef.

"I had experienced the benefit of getting an overcoat and haversack at Warrenton. I could have gotten along much better during the day without the overcoat which I had on, the sun pouring down so fiercely. The knapsack with the blanket rolled on top served as a protection for my head until I could scoop up earth to reinforce it. When night came, and the moon came up and the fog rose from the marshy ground in our front and along the creek bottom, I had none too many clothes on to protect me from the penetrating chill of the damp, cold air and fog. We took turns watching the front. I do not think a sound escaped our ears, and I was very much vexed at one of our fellows who was off duty snoring for a time. Major Olcott went the round of the line and asked me quite a number of questions when he visited my post. I was on duty at the time.

"It was moonlight when the relief came, the 77th N. Y., I think. They came up so quickly and silently that I did not notice their approach from the rear until they were quite near to us, and unlike our friends of the previous morning, I briefly explained our position and gave them such advice as I thought would afford them some benefit. As we moved back and assembled in the rear of the reserve I was very glad the day's work was done. By daylight we reached the ravine south of the road and made ourselves comfortable for the exchange of the experiences of the day before, listened to tales of the battle and the terrible slaughter of our troops on the right and left flanks, and the report that the battle would be renewed during the day, and we had a part to take in it. But this did not happen. On Monday morning

we were over the river and in a camp in the woods back of the flats. While lying in the woods here, a single shot from a Rebel battery fell in our camp, and one of our boys got it so we all had a look at it. I think that but for its weight it would have been kept as a souvenir. The next day or two we moved back towards Belle Plain Landing. We were grateful when we filed off the road by the church at the roadside among the massive oaks, after which it was called 'White Oak Church,' keeping on the right of it till we reached the heart of a dense oak forest and there formed our camp and were told to build log shanties. We were greatly pleased, and it was but a little time before we had a fine camp with comfortable quarters and the anticipation of staying there for the winter. One of our company, Lonnie Coon, died in the camp of the 149th Penn., and a number of us went over there and buried him. Poor Lonnie had died from hardship, exposure and homesickness. He never took kindly to army life, and at home had not lived or toiled to fit him for a soldier. During the winter his father came down and took up his remains and carried them home for burial. When disinterred he looked as fresh as when he was buried, except that where the blanket, which we had used to bury him in, had touched his flesh, it left the impress of its texture.

"Here our Sutler came to us. He was Sam Miller of our own company. He had been First Sergeant, then Color Sergeant, then Lieutenant, and then had been appointed Sutler after resigning his commission. He had Henry Underwood to assist him and we soon had a supply of good things. Among these was 'milk drink' which was a combination of milk in an air-tight sealed can holding about a pint, and somewhere in the composition some whiskey



concealed. Through the leniency of Lieut. Geo. A. May who knew of the great drought from which we were suffering, and the suspension of rigid orders by Sam Miller, and the currency with which I was supplied, I secured a liberal supply of the 'milk drink,' and it was so deceptive and exhilarating that I was soon suffering from a good resemblance to a 'milk drunk.' Its operation in this way, made it more difficult to get after that." (B.)

In the Battle of Fredericksburg the 121st suffered a loss of eleven enlisted men, four killed and seven wounded. From Comrade Beckwith's account the most of this loss was in his company and squad on the picket line of which they held the most exposed section. That it was able to return to camp with so little loss is an illustration of the fact that up to this time battles had been fought by only a small portion of the forces available. The strategy of the Battle of Fredericksburg was the same as that of all previous battles in which the Army of the Potomac had been engaged. It was a battle of divisions and not of the entire army. Attacks were not made simultaneously, nor supported by adequate reserves. The result was a repulse with great loss to parts of the forces engaged, and few casualties among the rest.

That the failure to drive the Confederate Army from the Heights of Fredericksburg was a bitter disappointment to General Burnside, there is no doubt, and it was no less bitter to the President. It also had a depressing effect upon the Federal army, which showed itself immediately after the return to camp at White Oak Church. This was felt even by the 121st although it had suffered comparatively little. Several officers resigned and some of the men deserted. The first site for the camp of the 121st at White Oak Church was not



satisfactory to Colonel Upton. Being in the middle of a dense wood it did not give opportunity for instruction and drill, so he had it moved to the edge of the woods, looking out into an open field upon which he resumed his careful system of drill of the men and instruction of the officers.

The occupation of these winter quarters was interrupted by the movement of the Army which has ever since been called "Burnside's Mud March." This began on the 19th day of January, 1863. The weather was pleasant, and had been for several days. The ground was frozen hard, and the roads in fine condition. The evident intention was to cross the river somewhere above Fredericksburg and flank the Confederate army out of the strong position on the hills behind the city. The movement began auspiciously, but an immediate change in the weather made a ridiculous failure of it. Heavy rain, with a warm southern wind took the frost out of the ground during the afternoon and night of the first day, and artillery and trains the next morning found themselves sunk hub deep in the soft earth. By doubling up their teams they could scarcely pull these guns and wagons out of the fields into the road, and the roads were soon so deep in mud that further progress was impossible. The third day the question became important how to get the army back into camp. Long ropes were used which, manned by men stationed along the road in difficult sections, were attached to the stranded gun or wagon to haul it upon firmer ground where the team could handle it.

In this movement the 121st was one of the regiments that reached the vicinity of Bank's Ford, where the crossing was to have been made, and when the return to camp was ordered it formed part of the rear guard left at the ford to cover the withdrawal and observe the enemy. Every

one who took part in that movement must remember the misery of the two nights spent in rain and smoke, for the air was so full of water that the smoke hung close to the ground and tortured the eyes, and with what relief the army straggled back into camps to shelter and rest. Of the condition of the army immediately following the "Mud March," or, as the Rebels humorously characterized it on a barn door near the river, "Burnside stuck in the mud," the enlisted man's view of it is given in Comrade Beckwith's reminiscences. He says: "I with my squad was left behind (as guard at Brigade Headquarters Q. M. Dept.), and the first news we had of the result of the movement was the coming into camp of Mike Hartford, of my company, who gave us a description of the movement and the roads. I saw the engineers hauling the pontoon train by hand and soon we knew that the whole army was mired; and in a little while the worn out and exhausted battalions of our brigade came straggling by and continued to come for several hours. We made those of our regiment who came to us as comfortable as possible. Only a few stopped, because it was only a short distance to our old camp and they pushed on for their homes, and in a short time the camp put on an animated appearance.

"There is nothing on earth looks so dreary and cheerless to a soldier as a deserted camp without the white roofs on the shanties and the smoke issuing out of the chimneys. These soon gave the old camp a cheerful and comfortable appearance.

"This was the last attempt to utilize the two-year men that winter, and we felt confident that no further attempt would be made to inaugurate a campaign until the roads got into good condition again. Up to this time we had received no pay, and some mischief breeding cuss circulated a re-

port that under the article, of war, troops could not be held to their contract unless paid once in four months. Five months had gone by and we had not been paid, and some were punished for refusing to do duty. When the officers became acquainted with the state of affairs existing in the ranks, the matter was soon subdued and we were made acquainted with what we must do, and do it without cavil. This made many disaffected, and they, being sick of war, argued that the private soldier could get no justice; the government did not keep its contracts, therefore the soldier ought not to fight; it was a blanked nigger war anyway, and they were not going to fight for the negro, or 'nigger' as they called him. Reports were circulated that there were men who made it a business to assist men north and would furnish them with citizens' clothes and money when once they got to the Potomac; and so, their minds heated with imaginary wrongs, filled with disgust for the war, homesick, discouraged and desperate, many deserted from the regiment, and made their way north and into Canada, and their names are today borne on the rolls of the company and regiment as deserters. I knew of one party that went and I was invited first, urged next, and damned last, because I would not go with them. It was said that one of them lost his life, being shot by a cavalry vidette, and one came back to the regiment, while the rest made their escape. While the camp at White Oak Church was well located for health, there was considerable sickness, many not being able to adapt themselves to the hardships of camp life, so that our regiment was greatly reduced in number, having less than six hundred men in the ranks. For example, my company, as I recollect, had lost by battle Spicer, Doxtater and Davis; by disease, John Murphy, John Bussey,

Whitmore and one other whose name I do not recall. Seven were on detail duty, four had deserted and twenty-seven were away sick—leaving only fifty-five men present for duty. To add to our discontent, our officers who had been uniformly kind and considerate, resigned. First Captain Holcomb resigned, being followed by Lieutenants Keith and May. We were exceedingly sorry to have them go, and would willingly have gone with them had we been permitted. But that was out of the question. Colonel Upton had instituted a rigid school of instruction, and subjected the officers to severe tests based upon West Point tactics and practices and the result was that very soon a great many of the line officers of the regiment resigned. Lieutenant-Colonel Clark also favored us with his resignation and we got a new lot of officers. Marcus R. Casler was made our Captain, so long before spring we were trimmed down fine enough to suit the critical eye of our Colonel. He worked constantly to improve the discipline, drill and military efficiency of the regiment, both officers and men. The results became so noticeable to the older regiments that they began to call us 'Upton's Regulars' and we soon became the best disciplined and best drilled regiment in the brigade. With the accession of 'Joe Hooker,' as he was called, to command in place of Burnside there came a better feeling among the men. Hooker's order assuming command was well received, and the almost immediate activity throughout the army betokened the business for which we were there, and that another effort to crush the enemy was soon to be undertaken."

It is needless to write that Colonel Upton exerted himself to the utmost to provide the regiment with every advantage possible, both for comfort and health. Food and clothing of good quality and in



sufficient quantity were insisted upon and the regiment rapidly recovered from the effects of the "Mud March" and during the rest of the winter improved in every way. By persistent effort the Colonel secured a promise from the state authorities, that no officer not approved by him should be appointed in, or assigned to the 121st. The changes that occurred in the regiment during the winter were as follows: Lieut. Col. Clark, Captains Holcomb, Moon and Olin, and Lieutenants Clyde, Ferguson, Staring, Park, Kenyon, Bradt, Boole and May resigned and were honorably discharged. Also later Captains Campbell and Ramsay and Lieutenants Story, Kieth and Van Horn. Asst. Surgeon Valentine was dismissed for incompetency after trial by court martial. Captain Angus Cameron died of typhoid fever, Major Olcott was promoted to Lieut. Colonel, and Lieut. Mather and Adjutant Arnold to Captains. Cleveland J. Campbell of Cherry Valley was commissioned as Captain in the regiment, and Henry Upton as 2d Lieutenant. Lieut. Sternberg was promoted to Quartermaster, and 2d Lieutenants Casler and Cronkite to 1st Lieutenants. Lieut. Casler was transferred to Company E, that company being without a commissioned officer present for duty. Sergeants A. C. Rice, Charles A. Butts, Thomas C. Adams, L. B. Paine, F. E. Ford, S. E. Pierce and G. R. Wheeler received Lieutenancies. These changes had been made at different dates, the last being the resignation of Captain Douglas Campbell on April 28th from the hospital where he, for some time, had been under treatment for sickness.

Changes had also been made in the organization of the army. General Burnside at his own request had been relieved from command and General Hooker appointed in his stead. The Grand Divi-



sion organization was abandoned and from that time the names of Generals Franklin and Sumner, no longer appear in connection with the Army of the Potomac. General Burnside quietly and patriotically resumed command of his old corps, and continued to do splendid service to the end of the war. The old corps formation was restored, and General Hooker did excellent work in restoring the efficiency and morale of the army. General Smith was transferred to the Ninth Corps, and General Sedgwick promoted to the command of the Sixth Corps.

The letter by which President Lincoln transferred the command from Burnside is one of his remarkable literary productions. It is easy to read between the lines his deep anxiety, his anxious solicitude, his fatherly sentiments toward the officers of the army, and his keen appreciation of the abilities and weaknesses of the different commanders to whom he had to entrust the military affairs of the nation. The following is a copy of that letter.

#### EXECUTIVE MANSION

Washington, D. C., January 26, 1863.

Major General Hooker,

My Dear General,

I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this, by what appears to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skillful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe that you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which within reason-

able limits, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army, you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying, that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course it was not for this but in spite of it that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain success can set up as dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I very much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing the commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you, nor Napoleon if he were still alive, could get good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now, beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go on and give us victory.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

On a subsequent occasion, just before the spring campaign began, in an interview with General Hooker, General Couch being present, Lincoln exclaimed twice in admonition to Hooker, "Put in all your men. Put in all your men." This admonition showed that the President had come to realize that the strategy which uses only part of an attacking force is not sound. It invites defeat of the whole force in the defeat of its parts successively.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN

THE Army of the Potomac as reorganized under General Hooker consisted of seven corps, the First commanded by General John F. Reynolds; the Second, commanded by General D. N. Couch; the Third, commanded by General D. N. Sickles; the Fifth, commanded by General George G. Meade; the Sixth, commanded by General John Sedgwick; the Eleventh, commanded by Franz Sigel; and the Twelfth, commanded by General H. W. Slocum. All these were Major Generals and had won distinction in previous campaigns. It is safe to say that no army ever started out on a campaign better equipped, better officered, or in higher spirits than did the Army of the Potomac when, on April 27, 1863, it broke camp and began the Chancellorsville campaign. General Hooker's order to move was couched in terms of absolute confidence. He was certain of sure and speedy victory, so certain that when President Lincoln read it, he turned to those who were present and asked, "Why is the hen the wisest of all animals?" and not receiving an answer, said "Because she does not cackle until after she has laid her egg."

In carrying out his plan, in order to deceive General Lee, Hooker ordered the First, Third and Sixth Corps to demonstrate on the left three miles below Fredericksburg, but not to bring on a general engagement. Meanwhile he, with the rest of the army, began the main operation on the right with the intention of fighting the enemy to the

south and rear of Fredericksburg. The three corps were under the command of General Sedgwick. Before daylight on the 29th of April the First division of the Sixth Corps under command of General Brooks crossed the river in pontoon boats and drove the enemy from the rifle pits near the river. A bridge was quickly thrown across and the First Corps was soon over and took position to the left of Brooks' division. The other two divisions of the Sixth Corps did not cross that day, but when the First and Third Corps were ordered to join the army on the right, they were ordered to cross and the corps was united, and left alone to hold the crossing and threaten the enemy holding the heights behind the city. The sound of the fighting in the vicinity of Chancellorsville was heard by us.

Up to this point in the campaign, everything had gone prosperously. The enemy had evidently been taken by surprise, and deceived as to the intention of the movement. In supreme confidence of ultimate success Hooker ordered a message to be sent to the Sixth Corps expressing the surety of victory. The officer who prepared this message referred in it to the Divine favor in the success of the movement, but when it was read to General Hooker he turned to those present and said, "God Almighty can not keep the victory from me now." This was told to the writer only a few days after, by one who evidently knew what he was talking about. But before treating further of the general affairs of the movement let us turn to the more intimate story of the part so far taken by the brigade and the regiments in it.

The duty assigned to General Brooks, to cross the river in pontoons, was one that required courage and secrecy, or great loss would be suffered. Fortunately the night was foggy, and nothing could



be seen from across the river. Every precaution was taken to avoid noise. Commands were given in a whisper, the muskets were left unloaded and without their bayonets. The teams drawing the pontoons were left out of hearing and the boats were brought down by hand and launched silently. As silently they were filled with soldiers, and rowed across the river rapidly. The first notice the pickets on the other side had of them, was when the boats grounded on the shore. Then a scattering fire was begun which caught those of us who were crossing in the second turn of the boats. It was not a pleasing sound to hear the bullets plumping into the water on all sides.

Those of the pickets captured said that a regiment had been in the trenches along the river bank all night and had just marched away when the crossing began. The writer was in the first boat of the second brigade that crossed, and on landing followed closely after Colonel Seaver, who pushed his way up the bank, and roughly commanded several men who were crouching under the brow of the slope, "Get out of the way of my men," and immediately upon reaching the top threw the advance companies into skirmish formation, and sent us out after the retiring enemy as far as the edge of the cut made by Deep Run—the same ground we had occupied during the previous campaign.

The part taken by the 121st is best told by Comrade Beckwith. "We crossed the Rappahannock at Deep Bottom, near the place of our former crossing, and the movement of troops on the opposite side of the river from right to left made our position a mystery. We occupied some earthworks, and to our right and front there was considerable picket firing and a number of our men were hit by sharpshooters. The story went around that a woman would come out of a house near the



Rebel picket line and expose her person to attract the attention of our men who as soon as they showed themselves above the rifle pits, would be fired on by the sharpshooters and often hit. This went on until an officer ordered the woman to be shot, which was done by our men, and the entertainment ended.

“On Saturday morning, May 3, 1863, long before daylight we moved forward a little to the left. As soon as it was light enough to see we moved forward across the Bowling Green Pike and under the shelter of a small stream flowing through it, grown up with large and small timber, in front of us a short distance, and we were put into position. Hexammer’s Battery came galloping up, unlimbered in our front and began firing with considerable rapidity. A little way in front, I should think about a hundred and fifty yards, there was a line of little pits in which the enemy’s skirmish line was posted and they at once began to annoy our batterymen who were busy firing at a Rebel battery some distance farther back. Colonel Upton, who was up by the guns, noticing this, came back to our company and called for some good shots, and soon had a squad firing at the puffs of smoke from the rifle pits. I remember Sam Button’s being complimented for a good shot he made, which it was said quieted one grey-coated chap who had been especially troublesome, and had wounded one of our batterymen. On our left there did not seem to be any business going on, but on our right the musketry firing was lively and the spherical case shot, crashing through the heavy branches and foliage of the ravine, wounded several men on the right of our regiment. On the right across the ravine in the fields a heavy skirmish line of ours came falling back rather rapidly, but in fair order, evidencing that there was plenty

of opposition farther up than they had been. Farther along to the right and back of the city the batteries kept up a constant fire, and about eleven o'clock the cheering of our charging men, the heavy volley of musketry, dying away into a continuous rattle, enlivened with a volley near the end followed by a sudden quiet, told us that our men had carried the lines and forts of the enemy upon the heights, and we could see our flags flying there and we cheered them heartily. In a little while we were ordered into ranks and marched toward the city along the Bowling Green Pike, where Spicer and Doxtater and Davis and Wilson were buried, and not a thought given that before the sun went down on that day many a living, breathing body of our number would be as inanimate as they were, without the privilege of sepulcher being given them by comrades and fellow soldiers."

The military exploit so briefly described was one of the most brilliant of the war. The sphere of operation was the same as that which saw the disastrous defeat of the assaulting force in the previous campaign. The same stone wall, the same steep ascent, the same redoubts and forts only strengthened, and the same determined resistance to be overcome. The movement was in compliance with an order from General Hooker received at 11 A. M., on May 2, ordering Sedgwick "to at once march on the Chancellorville road, and connect with the Major General commanding, to attack and destroy any force you may fall in with on the road; leave all trains behind except the pack mule train of small ammunition, and be in the vicinity of the General at daylight." The order was promptly obeyed so far as was possible. General Gibbons' division of the Second Corps, still under Sedgwick's command, was brought

across the river and placed on the right. And at 3 P. M. when all was ready General Newton's division of the Sixth Corps advanced at double quick without firing or halting, drove the enemy from his first line of works, the famous stone wall, pressed forward to the crest of the heights and carried the works in rear of the rifle pits, capturing guns and prisoners. At the same time General Howe on the left advanced and gained the crest in his front, also capturing guns and prisoners. Gibbons' division was sent in pursuit of the enemy retiring southward, with orders to hold the city.

Without delay the Sixth Corps advanced on the road to Chancellorsville, carrying a succession of heights without halting, until the vicinity of Salem church was reached. Here a larger force of the enemy was encountered, in strong position, on both flanks of the church, the church itself being occupied by sharpshooters for whom holes had been made in its walls from which they could fire as well as from the windows and doors. The enemy had been reinforced by troops from in front of Hooker, who at this time had abandoned all aggressive action, and had drawn back his advanced divisions to a defensive position. This virtually left Sedgwick with the Sixth Corps to fight the enemy alone. To reach the position now occupied by the rest of the army he would have had to break through the main Rebel army. Line of battle was formed of two divisions, General Brooks on the left and General Newton on the right. Two attacks failed to dislodge the opposing forces, and reinforcements rapidly coming up to the opposing forces the battle was quickly turned into the defensive. A division was sent by Lee to reoccupy the Fredericksburg Heights, which compelled General Sedgwick to throw his corps into the form

of a square, one side of which was filled by the Rappahannock River and the other three by the separate divisions of the corps. All day Monday was spent in resisting the fierce attacks of the enemy, and on Monday night the corps was safely withdrawn across the river at Banksford. The part which the Second Brigade took in this battle began after the first effort to carry the position had failed. The 16th and 121st N. Y. advanced in line until within musket range when it was found that a New Jersey regiment was in the immediate front of the 16th. It was ordered to move by the right flank across the road and advance against the enemy. This brought the New Jersey regiment between the 16th and the 121st, and when the New Jersey regiment gave way and the enemy advanced in pursuit, it resulted in the exposure of the left of the 16th and the right of the 121st to a raking flank fire. There were no troops to the right of the 16th, so that it was compelled to fall back to avoid being entirely cut off from the rest of the division. It suffered a grievous loss in killed, wounded and captured. It entered the fight with 30 officers and 380 men. It lost: 24 killed, 12 mortally wounded, 101 wounded, not mortally, and 17 captured.

It ought to be remembered to the credit of the 16th N. Y. that it entered this battle within a few days of the expiration of its term of service; that when it was proposed to send a commission to speak to the two-year regiments appealing to their patriotism, and urging them to enter their last fight with their former valor, Colonel Seaver refused to let anything be said to the 16th, on the ground that it was not necessary, that the 16th would do its whole duty to the last, without any special urging to do so. Their conduct in this battle showed that the Colonel had judged his men



correctly. This, however, was not the case with all the two-year regiments. A portion of the 20th N. Y., under the leadership of a sergeant, refused to cross the river, and were courtmartialed and severely punished for mutiny. At its farthest advance, the left of the 16th N. Y. was only the width of the road across from the church, and they suffered from the fire of the men in it, and the battery near it. On the following day the 16th supported a battery with two companies on the skirmish line, and when the withdrawal was made in the evening, we of the two companies found ourselves at the extreme left of the line with orders to fall back gradually and hold the enemy in check. The writer was the man on the very end of the skirmish line, and when we got back to the plank road we were utterly bewildered. All our line and staff officers were gone, as was the case with the 27th N. Y. that was on our left, with the same orders and in the same perplexity. We stood a few moments in doubt when out of the darkness came the voice of our Colonel, Seaver, "Where are my men?" "Here we are," was our eager response. "Well, get out of this as quick as you can," and he set us the example by wheeling his horse and galloping off at full speed. The left of the line happened to be just at the junction of the plank road and the road that led to Bank's Ford, so that the order "Right face, file right, double quick" started us on the way to safety. But it was a fagged out company of grateful men who late in the evening fell utterly exhausted among their waiting comrades, until their turn came to cross the river in the early morning.

For the part that the 121st took in this campaign, Colonel Beckwith's account is both vivid and full. It is very fortunate for the friends of deceased members and survivors of the regiment,



that he has written so fully of these important events in the history of the regiment.

He says, "When we reached the city evidences of the fierce nature of the struggle just ended were everywhere present. The street upon which we entered the city was the continuation of the Bowling Green Pike, and along it the assaulting column formed. Forming on nearly the same spot as did French's division at the battle of Fredericksburg, they charged over a portion of the same ground, defended by fully as good troops, in fact the flower of Lee's infantry and artillery. They carried everything before them and captured the heights and their defenders, and among the other batteries in the redoubt near Marye's mansion, captured the Washington Artillery of New Orleans, the pride of the Confederate army. After a little halt in the street we moved on, filing to the left directly up the street and over the ground that the center of the assaulting column had passed over. At every step evidences of the deadliness of the enemy's fire accumulated and behind a ruined brick building, just on the outskirts of the city, a ghastly row of desperately wounded men had been gathered. Scattered at very frequent intervals from it, and until within a very few yards of Marye's Heights, hundreds of human forms dotted the ground. The ambulances were up and the stretcher bearers were bringing in the wounded. The dead were in every position, just as they had fallen. Reaching the redoubt occupied by men of different regiments that had participated in the assault, mostly men of the 6th Wisconsin and the 6th and 7th Maine, we heard the terrible experiences through which they had passed, and the struggle in the redoubt, for the guns. Looking from Marye's Heights toward the city any soldier standing behind the breastworks, as I did, would

feel his ability to destroy any number of foes advancing against him and I wonder that any of that devoted column had escaped death; and I ceased thinking of the pride and exultation which the survivors manifested, to the exclusion of thought for their comrades lying silent in death on the bare slope over which they had safely passed. Many times since have I thought of that stirring scene and compared it in my mind with other conspicuous deeds of valor recorded in the annals of war, and always ended with the opinion that it was as stout-hearted and cool-headed a piece of work as ever was done.

All that I have described occurred in less time than I can tell about it. We moved over the ground without making any long halt. After moving up the road a little distance a battery in our front opened on us and a shot from it passed over us. A few minutes later the popping sound of musketry in the distance attracted our attention and we could see our skirmish line pushing forward and the enemy's line opposing it, but falling back slowly. From here on we moved forward quite slowly, and at the next halt filed off from the road. Here we passed a staff officer whose horse had been wounded through the thick of his hind leg and the poor beast stood there with the blood spurting out at each pulsation of his heart. This officer stated that the enemy were deployed in line of battle ahead of us, that he had no earth-works and would not stand our advance in line of battle. We moved across the fields a long distance in columns of fours and finally after getting up pretty close to our skirmish line, which did not seem to be pushing the Rebel skirmishers back very rapidly, we were put in line of battle and moved forward some distance by regimental front. The skirmishers in our front, a New Jersey regi-

ment, with white canvas knapsacks, which I remember distinctly, were strengthened by the picket reserve having deployed, and moved forward to them, and they immediately moved forward more boldly and pressed back the Rebels who were then sheltered by the woods. In our front the skirmish fire became steady and well sustained, and the tone of the Rebel bullets indicated that they were not a great way off. In a few moments the Jerseymen disappeared in the woods, and we moved up to the rail fence running along the woods. This we quickly, by orders, took down and laid flat. Glancing back I saw a regiment coming up in line of battle, the officer riding at its right being the Colonel of the 96th Penn. I judged it was that regiment. To the right I could see very little. Behind us there were no troops coming up, but General Bartlett and staff were a little way off. Captain Wilson, who was General Bartlett's A. A. General, and who for some reason had been nicknamed "The Spook," rode up to the right of our regiment on a gallop, which was his usual custom, and almost instantly we moved into the wood, which seemed to be mostly second growth and thickly grown up with underbrush of the oak variety. I can remember now a strange sort of quiet in the ranks. I had no idea, nor do I think any one near me had any premonition of any impending calamity. I was the extreme left man in the ranks of the regiment. Joe Rounds, I think, was the sergeant on the left of the company. We moved at an ordinary step forward into the woods perhaps seventy yards, with no sound except a growl from Eli Casler because some one had held a bush as he passed and let it fly back into his face.

The firing seemed to be coming to us, and reaching the distance I have named we came nearly

up to our skirmish line and they commanded and received our admiration, for the plucky and persistent way in which they did their work. The officer commanding just in front of us was a brave man and understood his business thoroughly. He shouted to his men to move up and push forward on the right, and fired his revolver at something in front that I could not see. At that instant there was a yell of pain and Arthur Proctor, a young man from Mohawk, a little way up the line cried out that he was shot, and Herringshaw took hold of him and began to help him. A little farther off another was hit and we were immediately ordered to "fix bayonets and forward, double quick, charge," and we went forward on the run. What became of those skirmishers I could not see. I suppose they pushed their opponents as far as they could, and then lay down and let us charge over them. We moved forward on a run a distance of not more than one hundred yards until we could see the clearing beyond the woods, when suddenly as if by magic, a line of men rose up and delivered their fire almost in our faces. The crash seemed terrific. I was paralyzed for an instant but continued to move on. Benny West who was next to me gave a terrible bound and pitched against me, shot dead. Hank King stuck his gun up against the side of my head, as I thought, and fired, and I pointed my gun at the men in front of me and fired, all the time moving forward and over a little ditch into the road. The men who were in the ditch and behind the brush fence through the gap in which I passed, jumped up and ran, some to their rear and some to ours. I loaded and fired up the road twice. Joe Rounds stood beside me doing the same. The fire from the enemy seemed to come from that direction, but it was so smoky that I could not see much. A



little way off I remember a fellow standing, who seemed to be holding something before him which seemed like a blanket. Joe said, "Let's get back into the edge of the woods," which we did. I then saw the 96th Penn. coming up to our rear and left. As I stepped back I saw Bill Wildrick and John Steinfort lying shot, and a couple of men who were wounded came there and asked to be carried back. Just then John Dain said he was hit. He mistook the water running from his canteen, which a bullet had pierced, for blood. I remember I laughed at the expression on his face at the time. I kept looking and firing in the direction from which the bullets seemed to come, and our fellows kept crowding down among our company to get away from the fire. After a time the smoke cleared a little and I could see some buildings, and from a brick building which we afterwards learned was Salem church, came the fire which was so destructive to us. There seemed to be men in the church who were firing from the windows, and our men were crowding away from it toward us to escape being hit. In front of us and to the left there were no Rebels that I could see. How long we would have stayed there I do not know, I suppose until we were attacked and driven away. I realized how useless it was for us to stay, but did not know enough to run, and it was well that Captain Wilson of General Bartlett's staff rode up and ordered us back, accompanying the order with the inquiry, "D—n you, don't you know enough to fall back?" I started to go back rather slowly. I think Yoeman and Pat McTague were near me then. A lot of our fellows were lying down. I remember Joe Rounds shouting, "Come on, we're ordered back," and then seeing Sile Goodrich and Benny West who had been shot dead, and having the thought come to me, "Why, these men

are all shot and dead." I went back through the woods helping along a Company F man who was wounded in the shoulder. Where I came out of the woods was farther to the left, and near where the 96th Penn. went in, and a little way out in the field was a pool of water where we stopped and filled our canteens. A great many men were scattered about in the fields all going back. I thought the 96th Penn. was still in the woods behind us, but found it was not so, when Captain Wilson came riding up and ordered us to go over to a house some distance away where our regiment was assembling. He said the enemy were now advancing through the woods and if we remained there five minutes we would all be captured. Well now, the way we got up and moved away from there must have convinced the Captain that we believed him. I went across the fields toward the house he had spoken of with a number of others, one of whom was an orderly sergeant. We kept to the left as the Rebels were firing some from the right, and got a canteen of good water from the spring near the house. A little while after I reached the regiment one of Company H's men was killed and he was the only man shot while we were there. The regiment looked but little larger than a company had looked in the morning. After dark we moved back about half a mile, and that night slept on our arms. The next morning those who had got lost, and those who had been back with the wounded and prisoners came up and increased our number considerably, but there was an awful gap in our company, more than half had been killed and wounded. I had very fortunately escaped, and with the exception of a bullet hole through the visor of my cap tearing the cloth and scratching my head, I had no mark of the conflict upon me. There was great

inquiry for absent ones, and during the early part of the day we became convinced that Benton West, Silas Goodrich, Jacob Christman, John Steinfeld, and William Weidrick had certainly been killed and Frank Carron, Wilbur H. Champany, William H. Chapman, Tom Marriott, William Coady, Arthur Proctor, Chester Catlin, Andrew Hubbard, Ed Yoeman, Levi Jones and Billy Applegate were wounded, and some were missing from whom we could get no report, but who, as afterwards was found out, were killed wounded or captured; because the wounded we left on the field who were able to be moved were sent to us by their captors, and then we got a complete record of the terrible loss we had suffered, which had seldom been equalled in the records of the Civil War. We went into the fight numbering 453 men and of these lost 104 killed and mortally wounded, a percentage of 21 to the hundred. Our total casualties were 278. That is to say 61 men out of each hundred were placed "*Hors du combat*." But we could scarcely realize the terrible ordeal through which we had passed. Our dead and wounded were lying over in the woods where we were forced to leave them, and their terrible plight could only be imagined by us. Our doctors, hospital steward, and assistants were with them and it was only after they were sent back to us in our old camp near White Oak Church, that the full realization of our loss came to us.

It should be noted also that only nine companies of the regiment participated in this disastrous conflict. Company D was on duty on the skirmish line, and a considerable distance to the left, where it suffered no losses, at the time the battle of Salem Church was fought by the rest of the regiment.

In the morning we formed behind a battery of

three inch rifled cannon near the road and lay there all day of the 4th of May. With the exception of some skirmish firing along our front and some ways off, no struggle occurred near us. Some distance away the sounds of battle, loud, continuous and approaching, which did not betoken success. The congratulatory order from General Hooker which had been read to us, stating that he had intervened his army between Lee and Richmond, and that Lee would have to fight him upon ground of his own choosing had raised our hopes: but the ominous sounds of approaching battle, and the somber faces of our own officers, always a barometer of success or defeat, filled us with anxious forebodings. But the day wore silently and listlessly away. Now and then the gallop of staff officers would awaken some comment and interest, until along about half past 4 o'clock, the opening of a battery and sharp musketry on our right, and the appearance of a strong skirmish line advancing in our front, immediately followed by heavier and continuous artillery and infantry firing upon our right, caused us to spring up and watch the scene before us. We soon became aware that the Rebels were making a general and vigorous charge along our whole line. Shortly a line of battle came out of the woods where we had gone in the day before, and the battery in our front opened with every gun and fired as rapidly as possible. We could see that the shots about, around and through their line of battle were making great gaps, but they closed up and came forward again. Our skirmish line made a fierce resistance and stubbornly contested their advance, but we expected it to give way and let the Rebel line come up and give us a chance to revenge our loss of the previous day. We were splendidly posted, although we had no shelter. A



deep ravine ran along our front, and no troops could have reached us without an exhausting climb down and up its steep sides. But we got no opportunity to fire at them, and had to be content to see our skirmishers and artillery shoot them down as long as they stood up and advanced. But farther down towards Fredericksburg they were making ground. They came out of the timber in great masses, and charged our infantry and artillery with fierce intrepidity.

Here was posted General Howe's division, White Cross men, among which were the Green Mountain boys, the Vermont Brigade. A portion of our line gave way down near Fredericksburg, and shortly there was the rush of hurrying battalions, with batteries on the dead run to strengthen the threatened point. The yelling and cheering of charging thousands. The continuous rattle of musketry, broken by heavy volleys, and the increasing roar of the artillery indicated deadly, desperate work. The fever of battle began to communicate itself to us. Our officers were eagerly scanning the point of danger. Colonel Upton among the guns of the battery giving directions and advice, seemed to be very much concerned as his practiced ear detected the movement of the battle, and as darkness began to make more distinct the flash of our guns, the quick daubs of light they belched forth at rapid intervals grew brighter, and the little streaks of light from the rifles grew more distinct, he said, "Thank God, they will have to light candles soon." And so it was. A great peril had been passed. The Rebels had massed a picked division of troops and hurled it at "Pop" Howe's division, intending to crush his left and interpose between us and the river and make us fight our way to and across it, or surrender. But our gallant troops had successfully

resisted the assault and driven them back, inflicting upon them a terrible penalty for their temerity. Our losses were appalling, but nothing like theirs.

Years afterward one of their officers who was there and in the battle, told me that the troops engaged in the attack upon our left suffered the most terrible losses of the war upon the part of the enemy. Be that as it may, as soon as the sounds of battle had died away, we were ordered in line, cautioned to keep silent, and moved back toward the river. There was some firing on the picket line, and quite a rattle of musketry up the road on our right. We reached the high ground near the river after several hours crawl through the woods, no sound breaking the stillness except the lonely screech of the owl and the doleful screech of the "katydid." There we found our batteries posted, the guns so close together that there was scarcely room to work them, and we moved up close to them and lay down. After some hours we moved across the river, a few cannon shots bidding us a parting farewell. Our whole Corps came across except those who had been stricken in battle; and the gallant Sixth Corps, with the noble Sedgwick at its head had by its courage and gallantry, extricated itself from the grasp of Lee's army, and had inflicted upon it so terrible a blow that he was content to relinquish his effort to capture it. As for us we began to feel the misery of our loss. Our dead comrades, our missing friends, were more missed. The absence of immediate peril gave time for reflection, but they were gone and we should never see them again. The Buck and Ball had torn through our ranks beyond repair, and for the first time we were complimented by the other regiments of the brigade and received their sym-

pathy. We camped in the woods near the river a day, and endured a heavy rainstorm. The storm over, we took up our march to our old camp and on May 6th or 7th filed down into our company streets with its row of log huts, where we immediately realized the losses we had sustained. More than half the huts were empty. We selected and used the best, tearing down and using some for firewood. In a few days we learned that our wounded had been sent over the river to us. From them, as we visited them in Potomac and Aquia Creek hospitals, our worst fears were confirmed as to the missing. Very few had escaped the bullets of the enemy, and those borne upon the roll as missing were either dead, or wounded unto death. But no time was given us for brooding. We were put to work at once upon drill, inspection and target practice. A round of steady work each day kept us pretty well occupied. Then the 16th and 27th N. Y. Vol. went home, their time having expired, as did that of the 18th, 31st and 32d of the Third Brigade (Newton's) of the 1st Division; and the recruits to these regiments being held as three-year men, were transferred to the 121st. They were a fine body of men, thoroughly inured to army life in all its phases. They made a sturdy fight against their detention. Colonel Upton called them up, explained to them their position and the position of the government, and his determination to enforce a rigid compliance to orders, and at the same time appealed to their pride and patriotism, and succeeded in winning them all to a cheerful return to duty. After that they all worked with us, and never kicked or flinched in any field. They numbered more than we did at the time of their joining us, and again made a strong regiment of us. They rivaled us in a friendly way in work and

duty, and soon many of them were wearing chevrons betokening sergeant and corporal rank and a few had on shoulder straps."

To give the facts in the case of the recruits to the two-year regiments and their claim, a full statement ought to be made. They were enlisted under a definite promise and understanding that they would be retained in the same regimental organization or discharged with the rest of the regiment. When the regiments were disbanded both of these pledges were ignored and they were ordered to report to the 121st at once. Their protest against this action was submitted to a Board of Investigation, and this Board reported in their favor, so they were organized into an independent battalion and assigned to duty as guard at Brigade Headquarters, until the report of the Board should be acted upon by the War Department at Washington. When it came before Secretary Stanton, with his usual brusqueness he dismissed the case, saying, "Might as well disband the Army." So the report came back disapproved on the ground that these men had enlisted for three years and that the government was not responsible for the illegal acts of its agents, or the false promises they had made. Of the other question, as to the detention in the old regimental organization, nothing was said. We had supposed that in joining the old regiments we were doing the best we could for the army and the country; that the plan to fill up and retain the old organizations was the wisest policy and would be adopted by the War Department. In this, according to high military authority, we were right, and it is now conceded that the disbanding of the old regiments, and the organization of so many new ones was a military blunder resulting in the unnecessary loss of thousands of men who had to enter upon hard cam-



paigns and desperate battles with little experience and slight training, and no encouragement of example and precept from old and experienced comrades. Of this mistake the 121st is certainly a good example. Raw men in companionship with veterans and under experienced officers become efficient soldiers much more quickly than can be the case with new officers and new men learning new things by hard won experience under unfavorable conditions.

To resume Comrade Beckwith's narrative. "Our Brigade now reorganized and reformed consisted of the 5th Maine, the 95th Penn. (Gosling Zouaves), the 96th Penn. and the 121st N. Y., commanded by Joseph J. Bartlett.

"More than thirty years have elapsed since the battle of Salem Church, yet some of its incidents are as fresh and vivid in my memory as they were on that bright Sunday afternoon when so many of our fellows were shot near that little brick church, which bears today the marks of our rifle balls. All our dead it has been claimed were gathered up after the war and laid in that beautiful national cemetery near the city of Fredericksburg, but when I went over the ground and through the cemetery a few years ago, I failed to find any of the 121st recorded on the headstones, and except near the city from where the Light Brigade charged, I did not see one familiar spot. At home here I often see reminders of that awful five minutes, in the persons of men who were there, and whose shot scarred and crippled limbs attest more plainly than words can the effect of the enemy's fire.

As before stated, the troops opposed to us were Herbert's and Firney's Alabamians, composed of four regiments, commanded that day by General Herbert, who afterwards was a member of Presi-

dent Cleveland's cabinet. They were armed with smooth bore muskets and used three buckshot and a bullet to a charge. This at close range is as effective as any ammunition in the world, and the only wonder to me is that any of us escaped.

"Many years after the war I had occasion to go to the room of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives at Washington. With me was a gentleman, who, having been a newspaper man and a soldier also, had come in contact and become acquainted with a great many public men. As we entered the room the single person present, a fine looking portly gentleman, looked up and my friend said 'Good morning, General.' He replied, 'Good morning, Buell.' 'I was just looking over my mail, and I found among it a card from a little boy in Michigan who wants my autograph. Now I always like to please the children, so I am going to write him at once.' Buell said, 'That is very kind of you, General. By the way, you know my friend?' The general looked at me intently a short time and said, 'Why I don't seem to remember your face.' Buell spoke up and said, 'Why, General, do you not remember one Sunday afternoon up on Fredericksburg Heights, near Salem Church, during the war?' The general rose up, and grasping me by the hand, said, 'Why, bless my soul, were you one of Upton's men?' I said, 'Yes, General!' He said, 'Why I didn't know that any of you got away but Upton, and he was as brave a man as I ever saw. Why, he rode through our line and back, and though we emptied a hundred rifles at him he escaped unhurt. We killed his horse and his men. Why we covered the ground with them after we drove you back——.' I interrupted him and said, 'I beg your pardon, General, but we were ordered back.' 'Have it so,' he said, 'perhaps that is the

reason any of you escaped. However, after you had left, we gathered up your wounded and did the best we could for them, with the aid of your surgeons who remained upon the field. By the way, Buell, I must recount that affair. We were very short of entrenching tools, and so we utilized an old icehouse to bury those dead Yanks in. You know we constructed our icehouses, by sinking a pit into the ground deep enough to store the ice we needed; around the top we built a low wall and over that a roof, and when we filled them we used straw and chaff to pack the ice in. The icehouse I speak of was convenient and empty; so we took those dead Yanks and put them in the pit as close together as we could. There was over a hundred of them' (some of them must have been from the 16th N. Y. who were on our right and lost heavily). 'I thought if they were all together they could keep each other company as they had in life. The matter had passed from my mind, when happening to pass by there on my way to Gettysburg with my command I chanced to see smoke coming out of that icehouse pit, and going to it I found it was on fire, and undoubtedly so from spontaneous combustion. The incident made an impression on my mind and I wrote home about it, describing it and saying that it was no use trying to whip the Yankees; that you could kill them and put them in an icehouse for a grave, and they would come to and set themselves on fire to keep warm. Our mail facilities not being good, some time afterward, lying wounded between the lines upon the Gettysburg field, I bethought me of that letter, and expecting to fall into the Yanks' hands, and believing they would search me and find the letter and reading it, not receive it well, I took it out and chewed it into paper wads and threw them away from me. A little while after

some of your troops came up and I was taken back and well cared for.' I said, 'General, did you regard the attack we made as well judged?' 'Well yes, it was timely but badly supported. I hardly think there was a single line of troops in the Federal army that could have driven my men off, finely posted and sheltered as they were. But if Upton had had another line coming up fifty or a hundred paces in the rear I think we must have yielded, and if we had done so it would have been a very serious blow, because our lines were greatly extended and there were no troops near by to succor us.' Continuing he said, 'I knew the troops attacking us were unused to battle by the way they hung on. They ran over our line and took fifty or sixty prisoners on the right of the 16th Alabama, and then stood and let us shoot them down like sheep.' 'Any difference in the fighting qualities of Northern and Southern men?' I asked. 'Well, yes, I think the Alabamians better than any other troops, but I must say that the way the New Yorkers fought entitles them to the respect of every soldier in either army. But after all the world will never again see such fighting as Lee's army did from Bull Run to Appomattox. My heart swells to bursting with pride and emotion as I think of and recall its heroic achievements. Think of the ragged, half starved, poorly armed battalions from the South successfully resisting for more than four years, all the efforts which the wealth, bravery and skill of the world hurled against them, and then at the last weeping and crying to be led by their old chief in a last charge to a glorious death. I think it the sublimity of bravery and heroism. But your men were brave. Yes, Grant was your best and most skillful general. He pursued but one plan in Virginia, and that was to keep his men in contact and wear us away



by friction, knowing that he had unlimited resources to draw from, and we had brought out our last available forces, and the loss of one man to us was equal to three of his, and that was the way he beat us, by constant grinding. Another war? Never, on any issue yet brought forward. The South wants and will have peace, even if it has to fight for it.'

"After I left the general I could not help thinking of what he said about the burial of our men in the pit of the icehouse, and I asked Buell if he did not detect a tone of exultation in the general's voice. Buell answered, 'No, I think not. He is a splendid old fellow, as kind and tender hearted as a woman. He has a fine record as a soldier, which was cut short by his being disabled by wounds.'"

The battle of Salem Heights, or Church, being its first real encounter with the enemy, must be vividly called to memory by this full and graphic account of Comrade Beckwith, both in its experiences and its results. And to all the friends of the men who took part in it both living and dead it will show that their ancestry who fought in the Civil War, were the peers of the brave and faithful of any generation.

As to the Chancellorsville Campaign in general—its brilliant beginning, its gradual degeneration and its final disgraceful collapse, several causes have been given. General Hooker himself ascribed its failure to the tardiness of General Sedgwick in obeying his order, and the Congressional Committee on the conduct of the war so reported (after Sedgwick's death). Hooker's friends ascribed it to the effect of a solid shot hitting the pillar against which Hooker was leaning, and that has been generally accepted, and appears in most of the histories of the war, especially the school his-

tories. As to the first excuse, the simple reading of the record of accomplishment of the Sixth Corps, during the first twenty-four hours after receiving the order to join the rest of the army, is a sufficient refutation. An advance of two miles in constant contact with the enemy, the fighting of two desperate battles, the last of them against great odds, and the successful withdrawal across the river, after an all day's conflict on the second day shows that the part which Sedgwick and the Sixth Corps took is the only really admirable feature of the entire campaign.

As to the second excuse, the writer after the war became well acquainted with the bugler at Army Headquarters, and he ridiculed the idea that the solid shot had anything to do with Hooker's condition at any time. He said that the brandy bottle was the real reason for the fiasco. And, certainly the simple fact that a brandy bottle was frequently resorted to, is a more reasonable explanation of successive developments of the conduct and decisions of the commander of the army than any other can be. From energetic activity, through the different grades of intoxication to final incapacity, is the age old and certain effect of too frequent resorts to the bottle. But those were the days of ignorance of the real character of alcoholic drinks. They were accounted good and necessary by the great majority of people, and were used freely as medicine, as a harmless stimulant under trying circumstances, as an innocent social indulgence and as a creator of "Dutch courage" in time of battle. It was not until the close of the war that a realization of the harmful effect of the use of intoxicants began to be felt.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN

THE reoccupation of its old position, in the vicinity of Fredericksburg by the Army of the Potomac was of short duration. General Lee made that impossible by beginning another advance toward Washington by way of the Shenandoah Valley and to defeat this movement, General Hooker, who had recovered his energy, and had spent the intervening time in refitting and restoring the shattered morale of his army, began a rapid movement northward, virtually over the same ground on which the advance had been made. The first feature of this movement was another crossing of the river at the old place, called Franklin's Crossing. This movement began on the 6th of June, and the crossing was made by Howe's Division on the 6th with little loss. The 1st Division crossed on the evening of the 6th, occupying about the same ground as on the previous crossing. Rifle pits were immediately dug and preparations made to resist attack. But none was made. Several days transpired and then the Corps recrossed the river and prepared for the march northward by sending everything and everybody that were not needed to Washington. In the race with Lee's army for Pennsylvania and Gettysburg, the Sixth Corps brought up the rear and the rear-most position was assigned to the 121st. It was sent down the river several miles with orders to establish a picket line from the river towards White Oak Church. By the 14th of June it became



BRIGADIER GENERAL  
DAVID  
A. RUSSEL,  
Commanding 1st  
Division, 6th Corps,  
when killed at  
Battle of Opequon,  
1864.



MAJOR GENERAL  
J. A. BARTLETT,  
Commanding  
2d Brigade, 1st Division,  
6th Corps,  
in 1862 and 1863.





MAJOR A. E. MATHER

evident that the Confederate army had crossed the river and was pushing rapidly northward, and the regiment was recalled and joined in the movement northward. The position of rear guard is always a wearisome one, because of the fact that the uncertainty of the movement of the troops ahead often leaves long distances between the different corps which must be closed by forced marching by those in the rear. But in this case the disadvantage was increased by midnight start, in pouring rain, and dense darkness, lit only by vivid flashes of lightning with accompanying peals of thunder. The roads were rendered difficult for both man and teams, and for two days the march was tedious and toilsome. To quote again from Comrade Beckwith, "Abandoned and burning camps along our line of march and the moving of the general field hospital, indicated a general movement, and our march was continued to Stafford Court House, to Dumfries, thence to Fairfax Station. Here a day's rest was very grateful to us, because we had been passing over ground which had been the continual scene of march, camp and battle, and had been stripped of everything that would sustain troops. The roads were deep with the red-clay dust which created a choking thirst, as it rose in a thick cloud from the tread of the moving thousands of all arms. Water that was fit to use was scarce, and difficult to obtain, and in consequence we suffered greatly. To relieve ourselves we threw away all our baggage not necessary to existence. The day's rest at Fairfax Station, and the rain of the night and early morning greatly refreshed us, so that on the 18th of June when we moved out again it was with lighter steps and more cheerful feelings." The march that day was only continued until noon and ended at Fairfax Court House, where a halt

of a week was made, and everything that could be spared was shipped to Washington, and the Corps was stripped to light marching order. On the 25th of June the regiment was sent in skirmish formation about three miles towards Leesburgh, through a rather difficult country and returned to camp very much fatigued. Colonel Cronkite calls this a skirmish drill, but it was probably a feeler to determine whether any large portion of the Confederate army was in the vicinity. If it was not near, evidently Lee had abandoned all hope of interposing between the Army of the Potomac and Washington, and had advanced into Maryland. "Here (at Fairfax Court House) we gathered some idea of what was going on from the Washington newspapers. A lot of Rebel prisoners under a cavalry escort coming along, gave us information of a cavalry fight and confirmed the newspaper reports of Lee's movements. We moved on to Germantown, to Bristoe Station and Centerville, to Dranesville and on the 27th crossed the Potomac at Edward's Ferry and camped for the night near Poolsville, Md., and the next day marched beyond Hyattstown to near the defenses of Washington and began making plans to visit the city. But the next day we moved rapidly from camp by way of New Market to New Windsor. On the next day we moved with quickening steps from New Windsor to Manchester, and the first indications of serious business began to show. The men were urged and commanded to keep well closed up and in ranks, and mile after mile was passed over faster than a walk. Several hours we covered a distance of five miles an hour, as indicated by the milestones we passed, but we were now seasoned and more comfortable than at the beginning of the march. Jests were passed along the ranks about the officers horses'

playing out, and frequently a song would be started and taken up by several companies, and swinging along by its rhythm would make the distance seem shorter and the time pass quicker. Few thought of the morrow, or realized that our hurried steps were taking us rapidly to the fated field where the hopes of the South were to be shattered.

“Going into camp near Manchester on the evening of June 30th we prepared for a good night’s rest in the thick cool woods. We had our supper and spread our blankets, and were lounging about and chatting till bedtime, when an order came to pack up, and in a little time we moved out into the road and started on the longest continuous march we made during the war. About an hour after we started, while resting in the road, there was a noise in the direction from which we had come, and someone said ‘Look out for Rebel cavalry.’ Instantly the whole column as far as I could see or hear, made a rush for the side of the road, and if there had been a squadron or two of Rebel cavalry coming along, they would have owned the road sure enough. On the evening of July 1st we rested a few hours and then marched all night long towards the field of Gettysburg. Passing Winchester, where we heard rumors of the day’s battle and its disastrous result, we stepped off the weary miles which separated us from our comrades at the front. The night was dark so that crossing a little stream I got my feet wet, and soon they began to hurt me like the mischief. The dust worked into the shoes and wet socks, and irritated the blisters, and to me the miles grew longer and longer and my misery more intense and I longed for the daylight. When it came I went to the first water I could find, washed my feet, put on my last pair of socks and for a while was more comfortable. As soon as daylight fairly



broke we began to see evidences of the battle in men along the roadside who had run away from the battlefield the day before; and reaching Little-town we saw a great many men wearing the crescent, the badge of the eleventh corps; and some wounded men had reached there from the field. From them we learned of the battle, of the fearful loss of the First Corps, and the skedaddle of a part of the Eleventh, and the saying of one member of the corps, 'I fights mit Siegel but runs mit Howard,' seems to have been verified in many instances on the first day at Gettysburg. We were rushed and crowded along, no time was given us to prepare anything to eat, and raw pork and hardtack was our bill of fare that day. Many men became exhausted and dropped down from fatigue in spite of the energetic efforts of the officers to urge them on. Orders were given the officers to shoot stragglers, and every man was impressed with the seriousness of the situation. As we approached Gettysburg the sound of artillery and musketry became more distinct, and from its weight and volume we knew a terrific combat was progressing. The roadside and fields along our route were occupied by various trains of wagons. Scattered along, there seemed to be a vast number of stragglers, and the wounded among them became thicker. Crossing a considerable stream called Pipe Creek we shortly after filed off the Baltimore pike to the left and in sight of Cemetery Hill where we could see our batteries at work. We moved over toward the left near Little Round Top and had a long rest." (B.) Not till its arrival at Manchester did the men of the Sixth Corps learn of the change of the commander of the army, that General Meade had superseded General Hooker. The change was a surprise to most of the men and created no little discussion,

but looking back upon the affair from the viewpoint of the present, it is not to be wondered at that the Government at Washington could not risk the destiny of the country, in so grave a danger as was involved in the battle of Gettysburg, to a commander who had so signally failed in the crisis of the previous battle, and the event proved that the change was wisely made. The battle of Gettysburg decided the issue of the war, and ought to have ended it. The repulse of Pickett's charge was virtually the downfall of the Confederacy and insured its failure.

At Gettysburg the 121st occupied an advanced position under cover of a narrow strip of woods, along which were scattered a number of large rocks. Behind these the men were comparatively safe from the fire of the enemy, and its only loss was two men wounded by stray bullets. "The next day little fighting was done on the left of the line but the culmination of the battle in the charge and repulse of General Pickett was watched eagerly by the regiment as by all the unengaged part of the army; and with infinite relief they saw the charging force, shattered and torn by shot and shell, fall back in confusion." (B.)

The next day, the 4th of July, was dark and cloudy and the smoke of the previous day's battle settled down upon the field so as to hide the movements of the enemy, and the retreat of Lee's army was not observed. But on the 5th the Sixth Corps began the pursuit, the First Division having the lead, marching by the Fairfield road. The rear guard of the enemy was soon encountered and brisk skirmishing ensued, but no general attack was made. General Sedgwick decided to attempt to cut off the crossing of the Potomac by the enemy, by a flank movement over South Mountain and led the Corps by a steep and rugged pass

farther to the south. The march up the pass was very difficult and was rendered more so by a heavy rain, so that late in the night a halt had to be made to give the men time to eat and rest. They were worn out by fatigue and hunger, and could not continue the ascent until rested and fed. The next morning the ascent was completed and the corps descended the western slope and in the vicinity of Middletown rested and received the much needed supplies. The advance continued until near Boonsborough the enemy was again encountered. Preparations for attack were made but the enemy retired without fighting. Following at daybreak the next morning the advance soon found the enemy in position, and the 121st, or a part of it, was thrown out as skirmishers, and in the engagement that followed the enemy were driven back with slight loss to our forces. On Sunday, the 12th of July, the enemy was again found in the vicinity of Williamsport, entrenched and ready for battle with both flanks resting on the Potomac River. The Corps advanced, passed to the left of Funkstown from which the enemy had precipitately retreated before our cavalry, and we soon found the main body of the enemy. The deploying of the various commands for attack took considerable time and the little distance between the lines made the firing of the Confederate skirmishers exceedingly annoying. They were located in a wheatfield behind the shocks, and along a rocky ledge. Three strong mortised fences and a field of standing wheat separated the opposing forces at one point. About 5 P. M. Companies I and E of the 121st and a detachment of the 5th Maine were ordered on skirmish duty and Captain Cronkite, being the senior officer of the detail, reported for instructions to General Wright then in command of the 1st Division. The General led to the nearest eleva-

tion and pointed to the position of the enemy's skirmish line, said, "Captain, the sun is now an hour high, and you must occupy that ledge before sunset." Some minor instructions followed, and immediately after the line was deployed and moved forward on the run with orders not to fire until the last fence was passed. The men were obliged to scale fences and run through the standing wheat and on reaching the last fence were nearly exhausted. Here a halt was ordered to correct the line and then a bold sally followed, and the position was ours. Seven or eight of the 121st were wounded, five in Company E. Three Rebels were found among the slain. The above facts are from Colonel Cronkite's account of the affair. The next day was spent in skirmishing, throwing up rifle pits and preparing for an assault in the morning. But when morning came no enemy was there. General Lee had succeeded in again escaping across the river with his shattered army in spite of what seemed an insurmountable difficulty on account of the swollen condition of the water. A small detachment at Dam No. 4 was attacked and captured.

Two changes were made in the staff of the regiment during June. Chaplain Sage resigned and was honorably discharged and Dr. John O. Slocum was commissioned and assigned to the 121st, vice Dr. E. C. Walker resigned. General Meade has been considerably criticized for not renewing the battle on the repulse of Pickett on the ground that the Sixth Corps had come up and had not been engaged in the battle, and so might have been used to Lee's utter defeat.

To any Sixth Corps man it is sufficient answer to their criticism that General Sedgwick advised against such an attack, on the ground of the absolute exhaustion of his men by the previous forced



marches to bring them onto the field at all. The delay in attacking the Confederates at Williamsport was necessary in order to bring up a sufficient force to make the attack successful. Lee had his army in the same formation which the Sixth Corps held at Salem Heights: both flanks on the bank of the river, the three sides protected by earthworks of a formidable character, and manned by veteran infantry supported by numerous batteries. It is a serious matter to assail such an enemy in such a position except with an overwhelming force. When the necessary force arrived the foe was gone as if by magic.

## CHAPTER VIII

### MEADE AND LEE'S GAME OF STRATEGY

THIS time however there was no long delay to refurnish and recruit. Lee crossed the river on the 15th of July. On the next day, the 16th of July, the Army of the Potomac began its advance into Virginia by the same route it had used after the battle of Antietam. The 121st, now reduced to fourteen line officers present for duty, with Major Mather in command, took up the line of march through Boonsborough, Middletown and Burkettsville to the old crossing of the Potomac, at Berlin. Lieut.-Col. Olcott, Captain Gordon and Lieut. Bates were left behind sick. Captain Galpin and Lieutenants Paine and VanScoy with an escort of men, were sent to Washington to bring a squad of conscripts to the regiment. Having crossed the river at Berlin on a pontoon bridge, the advance continued past Lovettsville, Uniontown, Snickersville, and on the 23d of July Ashby's Gap was reached. The movement was continued through New Baltimore to Warrenton where a rest of a couple of days was enjoyed. Then the Second Brigade was sent back to New Baltimore five miles distant from the rest of the corps where it remained for some time. Its location rendered picketing necessary on all sides of the camp, as Moseby with his guerrillas was known to be in the vicinity. An attack was made which Comrade Beckwith graphically describes.

"On Sept. 4, a squad of Rebel cavalry broke through our picket line and attempted to capture

General Bartlett, who had his headquarters near the picket line in the yard of a mansion about six hundred yards from our camp. A farm road ran from the New Baltimore Pike to this house and continued to another house a quarter of a mile farther on. We picketed this road between these two houses. About one hundred yards from the General's tent, near the house, and to the left, the brigade band was camped. In the orchard at the right the headquarters tents were pitched. The house and orchard were surrounded by a high and strongly built fence. The attack was made about two o'clock in the morning. The 96th Penn. was on picket duty. The squad rode boldly up to the picket on post. He halted them and asked who they were and their reply was, 'Cavalry men, friends, returning from a scout.' He ordered them to dismount, advance, and give the countersign. The leader rode up quickly presented his revolver at the picket's head and ordered him to surrender. Instead he leveled his gun and the leader fired into his face, jumped his horse on him, knocked him down, and with his company rode up to the house. Coming to the band tents and mistaking them for the General's, the attackers fired into them and one shot pierced the bass drum. Others of the party discovering the mistake rode round in front and made the General's tent their target. Roused by the firing he jumped up, seized his revolver, and running out into the orchard began to return the fire. By this time the camps were aroused and the long roll sounded. We all tumbled out and on a run made for headquarters, but the Rebs had made good their escape. General Bartlett, ready and intrepid soldier that he was, had seized his revolver instead of his pants, and fought his would-be captors in the uniform nature had furnished him. He got scratched up some with briars,

but next day laughed heartily over the adventure."

As a participant in this affair the writer feels justified in correcting somewhat the Colonel's version of it. The officers' tents were located just behind the first row of trees in the orchard, three or four yards from the fence. The guerrillas did not any of them get inside the fence but fired into the tents from the outside. The General and several of the other officers took position behind the nearest apple trees and returned the fire. Captain Richards, the odd genius of the staff, the night before, having declaimed his usual speech, "Han-nī-bul and Skīpī-ō were two great com-pe-tī-ters. They passed over into Af-rī-ca and wag-ged war against each other," took out his revolver and laid it on the stand at the head of his cot, exclaiming, "There, I am ready for the guerrillas when they come." His revolver spoke more than once in welcome to the raiders and in louder tones than did that of the General, who the next day lamented the smallness of his weapon, and declared that at every shot he felt more like throwing the weapon at them than firing it again. The writer was roused from sleep by the firing and driven out of his tent by a bullet passing through it, and with an orderly ran down to the yard where the horses were kept, and got there just as two of the raiders rode up to the gate. A couple of shots from the orderly's revolver convinced them that they did not want the horses, and they joined the band as they rode away. Whether any of the band was wounded we never knew; but the man on picket and one of the band were wounded. Two attempts were made to capture some of the guerrillas, but without success. In one of these expeditions Moseby's home was visited, located on the side of the mountain between Thoroughfare Gap and the New Baltimore Pike; and some of his turkeys were



captured, but severely settled for by Colonel Olcott's orders.

The seven weeks spent at New Baltimore were improved by daily drills and tactical exercises. It was here that Captain Wilson obtained the young puppy that afterwards became a feature of Brigade Headquarters, and attached himself to General Upton whenever he started out on any movement.

On the 15th of September the army advanced beyond Culpeper to Stony Mountain, and after several days, to Cedar Mountain. Lee had retired behind the Rapidan where he remained until the beginning of October. On the 5th of October he began a movement to interpose his army between the Army of the Potomac and Washington by crossing at Germania Ford and pushing on rapidly to Centerville, the key to the old Bull Run battleground.

To counteract this movement Meade maneuvered as if about to cross the river farther up. The Sixth Corps was ordered to build extensive fires as if a large force was concentrated at that point, but the corps was to be held in readiness to move at a moment's notice. The next night the fires were rebuilt, but the corps moved rapidly toward Culpeper, a force of cavalry being left to bring up the rear. All night long the march was continued, and with only a short halt for breakfast, was continued to Rappahannock Station where at noon it crossed the river, and joined the rest of the army, advantageously posted for any attack that might be made upon it. The rear guard of cavalry was closely followed by a large force of the enemy. But no attack was made and thus the first move in the strategic game was won by Meade. General Lee, however, turned the head of his army to the left and attempted to pass the right flank of the Union

army in an attempt to thus gain the vantage point at Centerville. Meade crossed the Sixth Corps over the bridge at Rappahannock Station and it advanced toward Brandy Station in line of battle. This was the most spectacular movement the writer saw during the war. The country was open, and nearly level, the morning was fine and the sun shone brightly. The line of battle, extending about three miles, advanced slowly and steadily, the flags floating in the gentle breeze, the sunlight flashing from their arms, and the batteries in regular formation following close behind the infantry. In front of the advancing line a force of cavalry were in almost constant conflict charging and repelling the charges of a like force of Rebel cavalry, but constantly advancing until Brandy Station was reached. The writer followed closely after the cavalry, and was equally interested in watching the frequent charge and recharge of the cavalry and the steady advance of the beautiful line of battle. In the morning however he was awakened by a squad of cavalry, to find the brigade gone, and he alone of the foot soldiery at Brandy Station. The return to Rappahannock Station that he made was much more rapid than the advance had been. Meanwhile Meade had divined the purpose of General Lee and began a rapid race back to Centerville along the line of the railroad. The infantry used the railroad track as a road, leaving the dirt road for the trains and batteries. The route lay through Bristoe Station, Manassas, and Bull Run, and the head of the army filed into the old fortifications of Centerville just before the advance of the old corps of Stonewall Jackson came in sight of them.

Colonel Beckwith tells of several experiences of this march that will interest other members of the regiment. We "passed Bristoe Station about 3

o'clock and crossed a stream, called Broad Run, on the high trestle that carries the Orange and Alexandria Railroad over the stream. I had an experience crossing that bridge that I shall never forget. We marched in double file, stepping from tie to tie. Now and then the ties would be close together, making a gap of several feet to the next tie. This would make the men hesitate until the two in front had gotten fairly across and out of the way before the necessary jump was made, and those behind would crowd up to the waiting men. I got on all right for a time, but suddenly felt myself getting dizzy, and knowing that I should certainly fall to the ground and be crushed if I advanced farther, I crouched down to the track and placed my musket across the gap in the ties and made up my mind that I would stay there until I could go on safely again. The fellows behind were not suited with my partial obstruction of the bridge, but I paid no attention to their orders to get up and go on. After remaining there a short time and accustoming myself to the distance, I got up and went on without trouble, thankful at my escape from sure death. It was reported that night that several persons had fallen and been killed. Ordinarily I could have gone over all right, but the lifting of the foot of the man ahead confused me and I lost power to judge the distance. Just after crossing the bridge a considerable battle broke out in our rear and the musketry firing indicated that a large infantry force was engaged. This battle was between the Second Corps and the pursuing Rebels, and resulted in their defeat. We encamped near a deep railroad cut, and one of the men ran headlong over it while escaping from a friend upon whom he had been playing some prank, and plunging down to the bottom was badly injured."

The arrival of the Army of the Potomac at Cen-

terville, before it was seized by the Confederates, was the second victory of Meade over Lee in the strategic game. Lee withdrew and on the 19th of October Meade began again to follow him, moving out toward Thoroughfare Gap, New Baltimore and Warrenton, which was reached on the 22d, and a halt of over two weeks was made. Camp was broken on the 7th of November, and an advance made to the Rappahannock River, where Lee was found occupying a strong position along the south side of the river and with a considerable force on the north bank, at Rappahannock Station. The Sixth Corps arrived opposite the position at the station, and found the enemy stationed as follows:

A strong redoubt on the bluff, at the point where the railroad had crossed the river on a high bridge, was occupied by a battery and a full complement of soldiers for a garrison, a line of rifle pits extending up the river until a bend in the river interrupted it. A pontoon bridge spanned the river just above the ruins of the former bridge. These entrenchments were occupied by the 5th, 7th and 54th North Carolina regiments and a Louisiana brigade formerly commanded by Stonewall Jackson, and a famous New Orleans battery. The railroad approached the river by an embankment of considerable height. The writer stood on that embankment and watched the battle as long as it was light enough to see. The charge upon the redoubt was made before it was really dark, and the approach of the attacking brigades under the partial protection of the railroad embankment, the rapid formation of the assaulting column, the desperate conflict on the ramparts and in the fort itself transpired under his full view. The assault on and capture of the breastworks to the left of the fort were revealed only by the flashes of the



guns. On the next day he had the pleasure of examining the records of the regiments and the battery that had been captured, and retained possession of several documents that seemed especially interesting.

The part taken by the 121st in this battle was this: General Sedgwick, determined to storm this position, had selected the First Division for the duty. The column of attack consisted of the Third and Second Brigades. General Russell commanded the Third and General Upton (then Colonel) the Second. General Bartlett had been assigned to temporary duty with the Fifth Corps. General Russell was to attack the redoubt and Colonel Upton the rifle pits. The men of the Third Brigade advanced late in the afternoon, protected somewhat by the railroad embankment, until within the immediate vicinity of the fort, when the conflict became hand to hand; and the fort was taken at great loss to the assailants, and to the utter surprise of the defenders, who had boasted that it could not be taken from them. The Second Brigade was delayed somewhat by the character of the ground to be passed over, a strip of woods, a depression containing water, and a marshy hollow. As soon as the ground permitted the front line was formed, consisting of the 5th Maine on the right and the 121st on the left, connecting with the line of the Third Brigade. Companies B and D were deployed as skirmishers under command of Captain Fish. Comrade Beckwith gives the best close-up account of the fight thus: "We moved forward briskly and soon discovered the Rebel skirmish line. They waited a good while, an age I thought, before they fired on us, and I knew somebody would get hit. Finally they let go and we started on a run after them, and they skedaddled. One fellow waited until

Jack Marden, one of our boys, got close to him, and then fired and hit Jack. But the ball, striking something in Jack's pocket, glanced off. The Rebel shouted, 'I surrender,' but Jack shot and wounded him badly. He said that he belonged to the 6th Louisiana, Hays' brigade, Early's Division, Ewell's Corps, and his name was Slidell. The artillery in the fort was now firing rapidly and the cannon shots flew over us and went after our fellows who were coming up behind. The Reb skirmishers kept falling back, but kept up a sharp fire. We connected on our left with the 6th Maine, and in half an hour after starting we drove in their skirmishers, they jumped over the breastworks and we busied ourselves firing at them. Just at sunset the reserves came up, the 95th and 96th Pennsylvania, and joined the line of battle behind us. As they started to advance Captain Fish ordered us skirmishers to charge, and going forward on a run, with a yell, we came to the rifle pits, and jumping on them the Rebels in them began to run. We did not fire until we got inside the rifle pits, and the fire of the enemy was not very severe. Captain Fish ordered everybody to surrender. Almost at the same time our regiment, and the 5th Maine, came up on our right and just ran over the troops in the pits. We were ordered to go to the bridge and prevent the Johnnies from crossing. We quickly ran down to the river and found the bridge and halted the Rebs as they came up. In the meantime our fellows got around them on the right, and the whole crowd surrendered. Our casualties were Captain Casler, shot through the arm, and Orderly Sergeant Joe Rounds, shot in the arm. Hawley Platt, one of the finest fellows in the regiment, a member of Company D, was killed. Our entire loss was four killed and twenty-two wounded. Major Mather was in command of the

regiment and gained the high opinion of the men for his coolness and ability. Colonel Olcott was away, nursing the injuries he had received from falling off his horse some time before."

It has always been a mystery to me why those Johnnies did not kill every one of us, and how any of us escaped. Colonel Upton not only encouraged his own men, but instilled fear into the hearts of the enemy by the little speech he made before ordering the final charge, after the short halt near the breastworks. He said: "Men of the 121st New York, your friends at home and your country expect every man to do his duty on this occasion. Some of us have got to die, but remember you are going to heaven. When I give the command to charge move forward. If they fire upon you, I will move six lines of battle over you and bayonet every one of them." The colonel of the 54th North Carolina regiment, who was captured, said that the Yankee officer who led the charge in his front was a smart fellow and fooled them. They thought there was a column in mass moving on them, as they had seen a great body of troops formed and moving on them before dusk. Some years ago the writer visited the flag room in the capitol in Albany and heard a like story from an officer of one of the Louisiana regiments. He was visiting the capitol on some official business and, having some time to wait, fell into conversation with the curator of the flag room, who was one of Upton's men in the battle. The officer told him that they were utterly discouraged by Upton's speech, and believing it was true, surrendered without much resistance.

One of the 16th men told the writer of his experience in this action. He was a skirmisher and as he leaped upon the embankment of the pit one of the Rebels fired at him, exclaiming, "I got you,"

but missed, and the next moment was impaled by the bayonet of the intended victim.

A second feature of the battle that deserves notice is the slight loss to the assaulting column. This seems to be due in large measure to the fact that the first volley of the defenders at the skirmishers who first leaped upon the earthworks was fired almost perpendicularly and did little execution, and before the rifles could be reloaded the main line was upon them. The confusion of it all was described to the writer by Colonel Edwards after the battle. He said that as he with a few men were gathering up the prisoners, and had more of them than of his own men, he came upon a Rebel colonel with his men drawn up in order. Upon his demand for the surrender of the regiment the colonel hesitated until Edwards turned to the motley crowd following him, and shouted, "Forward, 121st New York and 5th Maine!" Upon this the Rebel surrendered. Too much credit cannot be given to the regiments of the Third Brigade for this victory. It was their magnificent valor in assaulting and capturing the fort and battery on the left that made the rest of the fighting so comparatively easy and bloodless. The loss of the 5th Maine in the affair was ten killed. Eight regimental flags were captured, four by the 5th Maine and four by the 121st New York.

In this battle Capt. Robert P. Wilson was wounded, a bullet passing through one of his wrists, but he came out at its close carrying one of the captured flags and riding a little iron grey mare, so familiar a sight to our men on every battle field in which the brigade was engaged up to this time. This was his last battle, however. He returned to brigade headquarters after the wound had partially healed, but only to resign his office



and his commission and retire to private life. Comrade Beckwith says that the men nicknamed him "Snoop," but adds that he did not know why, and speaks of his profanity at Salem Church. But in both instances it is evident that the captain had risked his own life to rescue men who were not conscious of their own peril. The writer was intimately associated with Captain Wilson, as clerk in his office at brigade headquarters for over a year and a half, and had good opportunity to learn his nature and character. He was always kindly and considerate of others, was never profane or vulgar in his conversation. While not a strict abstainer, I never saw him intoxicated in the slightest degree. He was a quick and capable business man, and not a small part of the efficiency of the brigade as a fighting unit was due to his courage and cool-headedness. His weird signature was a revelation of the unusual character of the man. His equal did not succeed him as assistant adjutant-general of the brigade, though Capt. William P. Roome ran him a close second. Captain Wilson entered the service as second lieutenant of Company D, 16th New York, was made adjutant September 20, 1861; promoted to captain and assistant adjutant-general of United States volunteers March 11, 1863, and afterward commissioned as major of the 121st, which he declined. He resigned from the service February 18, 1864, and died October 18, 1886. His grandfather was with General Washington at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, and to him was assigned the duty of transferring twenty-eight flags from their British bearers to American sergeants, and when the Army of the Potomac was in that vicinity in 1862 Captain Wilson invited General Bartlett and the other brigade officers to accompany him to the field where this transaction had taken place.

The importance of the victory at Rappahannock Station is revealed by the fact that a special order was issued by General Meade expressing his own and the President's admiration and gratitude for the exploit, and especially mentioning the brilliant and successful charge made by the First Division. It is couched in these words: "To Major-General Sedgwick and the officers and men of the Sixth Corps participating in the attack, particularly to the storming party under Brigadier-General Russell, his thanks are due for the gallantry displayed in the assault on the enemy's entrenched position at Rappahannock Station, resulting in the capture of four guns, 2,000 small arms, eight battle flags, one bridge train and 1,600 prisoners. The commanding general takes great pleasure in announcing to the army that the President has expressed his satisfaction with the recent operations."

Gen. John B. Gordon of the Confederate Army says that he was sitting on his horse, not much more than a stone's throw from the river, when the charge upon the entrenchments began, and that neither General Early nor any other of the officers standing there expected the "brilliant success" of the charging force. Their confidence no doubt was based on the fact that the regiments in the fortifications were all veterans of many battles. The North Carolina regiments had been in Pickett's famous charge at Gettysburg, and the Louisiana troops had won the title of the "Louisiana Tigers" by their previous savage fighting.

On the same afternoon the Third Corps, a little farther down the river, had succeeded in forcing a crossing of the river and occupied the earthworks of the enemy with the capture of 400 prisoners.

The Fifth Corps, on the right of the Sixth, came

up to the river in time to prevent any escape in that direction, and it is worthy of note that the division of the Fifth Corps that connected with the Sixth was commanded by General Bartlett, whose transfer to that corps soon became permanent.

A few days after the Battle of Rappahannock Station, November 9, a detail of ten men from each of the four regiments that had taken part in the assault, was made to carry the captured flags to army headquarters. Colonel Beckwith was one of the ten from the 121st, and thus graphically describes the event: "We went to army headquarters and presented the captured colors to the general commanding, George G. Meade, who receiving them commended us very highly for the great service rendered the country and the gallant and brilliant achievement of the assaulting column. He ordered 'Rappahannock Station' inscribed on our colors, and assured us that another opportunity would be given us to distinguish ourselves. This last remark was the subject of some comment, and I heard a number of our men say that they were not particularly anxious to get into another such scrape, believing that the next time they would not escape so fortunately. From Colonel Upton's talk to us, from the newspapers, and from the inquiries of soldiers of other commands, we came to know that the affair at Rappahannock Station was thought to be a very brilliant one, had given us great renown, and many of our men were inclined to boast of it."

In this third event in the game of strategy General Meade certainly gained a decided success.

The next day when the corps crossed the river and advanced to Brandy Station the opposing army had withdrawn behind the Rapidan, leaving its partially built winter quarters in our hands. The haste with which they had left their position was

indicated by the finding of freshly killed beeves not yet cut up. The estate upon which the 1st Division encamped at Brandy Station belonged to John Minor Botts, one of the rare Union men of the south. One day he approached the headquarters of the 2d Brigade, but being clad in citizen's clothes, Captain Wilson's dog refused to let him approach, and had to be called off with stern reproof.

The encampment at Brandy Station was maintained only long enough to repair the railroad back to Centerville and bring up needed supplies, when another advance began. General Lee had distributed his army south of the Rapidan River, in positions favorable for winter quarters, and General Meade thought that by a rapid advance, he might attack and defeat the division that was encamped along Mine Run. In this movement the 3d Corps, commanded by General French, moved very slowly and made several blunders as to roads, and so obstructed the 6th Corps following, that the 121st bringing up the rear of the corps did not cross the Rapidan until after daylight on the 27th. This delay enabled General Lee to concentrate his forces behind the defenses of Mine Run, and greatly strengthen them. It was after sunset of the next day before the Sixth Corps occupied its allotted position in front of the Confederate entrenchments. A council of officers was called, at which General Sedgwick expressed his confidence that he could successfully assault the works in his front. But in the morning when the attack was ordered to be begun, General Warren who was to begin it, hesitated, and waited for further instructions from General Meade, who revoked the order for the assault and directed the return of the army to its former camp on Hazel River. The position occupied by the Second



Brigade was a very pleasant one and the winter was passed without further effort to attack or repel attack.

The Mine Run campaign though it did not result in the expected heavy fighting was not without incidents of great interest to the members of the 121st. When the Third Corps unexpectedly encountered a portion of General Ewell's corps and a lively little battle ensued, the First Division of the Sixth Corps was sent to the support of the troops engaged, and the Second Brigade, leading the Division and moving up to the position designated, was waiting for further orders. General Sedgwick with his staff rode up a little distance from the regiment and dismounted for a few moments' rest, reclining on the grass. The battle was raging in front and presently two men appeared, bearing on a stretcher an apparently wounded man. Just as they were passing the general, a shell burst killing one of the bearers and wounding the other. The one on the stretcher leaped to his feet and ran to the rear. This was an illustration of the craft displayed by some men to escape going into battle; but it also emphasized the fact that thinking men soon learned that the safest place for a man to be was where he ought to be; that the effort to escape danger by craft and cowardice was not often successful, and was likely to bring its penalty in some unexpected way.

In maneuvering for position the location of the Sixth Corps was on the extreme right and on the night of the 30th it was moved very quietly under cover into a woods and formed into four lines. The Second Brigade was the first line, the place of honor but also of extreme danger. No fires were allowed and the night was very cold, so that the men had to keep themselves from freezing by running round and round in the snow. Colonel

Beckwith gives his personal experience. "We stacked our traps and left a guard over them. As soon as it was light our batteries opened, and the Johnnies replied showing that they were on hand ready for business. They threw a shot just over us, and we got it and examined it. It was a fine piece of English workmanship, nicely varnished and evidently of recent manufacture. We heard that General French had advanced, and found Mine Run too deep to ford, and that he had given up the attempt, and we went back to our original position. When I got my knapsack from the pile it had been opened, and with other things my diary was gone. I mourned its loss greatly because it had a full account of the events in the regiment.

"That night I was wakened and detailed to go on picket. Barr and Baldwin were also on the same detail, and we went out and relieved some fellows who were nearly frozen, lying in the skirmish pits without fire, and with very little to eat. As soon as daylight came several shots in our front and bullets flying close to us, gave warning that our foes were alert and knew our exact position. So without fire, all through that cold winter day, watching for an advance, and dreading an order to drive their skirmishes, we lay there and suffered, and hailed with joy the friendly darkness of night, which permitted us to rise up and stretch and pound ourselves to restore our chilled circulation. Finally at midnight orders came to march silently, and assemble on our left. We were so benumbed that we could scarcely move. At last we reached the road and began moving toward the river. I kept along with the column until we came to what appeared to be a tannery which had been burned and was still a great mass of embers. Seeing it I made a bee-line for it, and the way I soaked up heat was a

caution. Lying down on some bark I got a good nap before a cavalry man woke me up and said, 'Get out of here, the Johnnies are coming and will gobble you up.' I started down the road and in a short distance, not more than a mile and a half, came up to our rear guard. Passing our picket line and reserves, and continuing I joined the company in camp just across the river in the woods. On the next day we went to our old camp. While on the march a general rode by, and someone in the column set up the cry 'Hardtack,' which was taken up all along the line. This angered the general, and attaching blame to our regiment, we were severely reprimanded and given some extra picket duty."

On the 23d day of December General Bartlett rode into the camp and was greeted with cheers and made a speech which Comrade Woodcock reports as follows:

"Soldiers and Comrades in Arms:

"It is with great pleasure I meet you here tonight. I have, even amid the cares of my office, often thought of the brave and gallant 121st. You have won laurels for yourselves and for our noble Empire State. From the first time you met the enemy's infantry in a fierce engagement and received that fearful baptism of fire and blood, I have ever thought of you as a regiment that can be relied upon. Your heavy loss at that time attests your bravery. Two hundred and seventy-three of your companions disappeared, some never again to re-join you, others to suffer in our hospitals. Certain death seemed imminent to you all, still with the valor of veteran soldiers you manfully stood your ground; only yielding when driven by superior numbers and at the point of the bayonet.

"When you first became identified with my

brigade you were untried, and at the first fierce engagement with the enemy I withheld you, and it was with a good deal of fear and anxiety that I awaited your first hour of danger. For the honor of our State I was anxious until you proved yourselves worthy of the State to which you, and I, belong. I should not hesitate now, should I be called upon, to place you at the post of danger. Where I would trust an old and well-tried regiment I would trust you. Under any circumstances I would rely on you. The enemy acknowledged your superiority and all concede your efficiency as a regiment. But I have little time to speak. When I left the brigade, on that very day, under Colonel Upton, you won a name that will be imperishable. Your courage stood a stirring test, but you were not wanting. I allude to the battle of Rappahannock Station. You placed yourselves almost upon the very pinnacle of glory. You accomplished there what few regiments ever did. I was with you. I have but the gleanings left. Would to God every regiment would do as much! This accursed rebellion would soon be put down."

Three cheers and a tiger were given for General Bartlett, also for Colonel Upton, who protested saying, "Steady, steady men, place it where it belongs, upon General Bartlett." Three more cheers and a tiger were given to both General Bartlett and Colonel Upton, and the men dispersed to their quarters in the best of spirits.

Another event that deserves consideration was the breaking up of the Third Corps and the assignment of the regiments to the Sixth Corps.

The conditions of life in a winter camp are so well described by Comrade Beckwith that his description ought to appear in the history of the regiment. He says, "We passed the winter of 1863



and 1864 in camp near Hazel River. We picketed out toward White Sulphur Springs, and our pickets connected with the cavalry pickets a line of which extended for many miles to our right and rear, covering the railroad which was our source of supply. Soon after our return from Mine Run, we got nicely and comfortably fixed in camp, and whenever the weather permitted some duty or drill was the order of the day, to keep the men occupied and fit. Our mails came regularly, and sutlers had an abundant supply of all sorts of good things. An amusement hall was built and an amateur troop gave interesting entertainments. Checkers, chess and cards were favorite amusements in camp, and the festive and alluring game of poker, though forbidden, was extensively engaged in, the stakes being small on account of the scarcity of money. Many of our wounded and sick were returned to the regiment and it began to look like the old time solid battalion of the preceding winter. Boxes of good things from home, made life pleasant and cheerful, and camp life in winter quarters was voted by all the best thing yet in army life. So the winter passed away in pleasurable employment and amusement. The regiment became expert and noted for its efficiency in drill and discipline, and its dress parade had a large number of spectators from the neighboring commands."

Hazel Run is a brook of considerable size that rises in the ridge of hills that form the watershed, between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan, and flows into the Rapidan about half way between Mine Run and the junction of the two rivers. General Meade retired from Mine Run across the Rapidan, and established winter quarters in the angle made by the rivers, the Sixth Corps being located along Hazel Run. He might easily have

retired down the left bank of the Rapidan and occupied the heights behind Fredericksburg, but that movement was forbidden by orders from Washington.

On the 27th of February the Sixth Corps was ordered to support Custer's cavalry on a reconnaissance in the direction of Charlottesville. A disagreeable storm made the expedition a very trying one and the four days' absence from camp made the return to its comforts very enjoyable. But who of that weary muddy company will ever forget the sight of the innumerable mass of crows that had taken possession of the camp, and were literally covering the ground, in spite of the guard left to protect it from marauders!

It was at this camp too that Chaplain Adams of the Fifth Maine became a familiar figure to the members of the 121st. He had previously ministered at the funerals of different members of it when asked to do so since the resignation of Chaplain Sage, near Gettysburg, but now he was asked to conduct services regularly. The Fifth Maine had built a fine chapel and an invitation was given the 121st to worship with them. When the Fifth Maine was discharged soon after, Chaplain Adams received and accepted an invitation to become chaplain of the 121st, and after that the religious features of army life in the regiment were administered wisely and efficiently, to the great advantage of the moral and spiritual interests of all. Doctor Adams' appointment was made by Governor Fenton at the earnest request of all the officers of the regiment.

During the winter also the regiment lost several of its commissioned and non-commissioned officers, who were transferred to colored regiments and to higher commands. Major Mather and Captain Hall were transferred respectively to the 20th

and 43d regiments of U. S. C. regiments as Lieutenant Colonels. Captain Campbell and Lieutenant Bates were made Colonels and assigned to the command of the 23d and 30th U. S. C. regiments. Lieutenant Gary and Sergeant Major Andrew Davidson were made captains in the 23d and 30th. Sergeants W. Ward Rice and Nathaniel Gano were also commissioned for service with the colored troops. These commissions were all granted after an examination by a board appointed for that purpose, and the result was creditable to the regiment and its commanding officers. Colonel Campbell's examination was so creditable that he was made a member of the Board of Examiners. Lieutenants Henry Upton and Henry B. Walker resigned on account of wounds and were honorably discharged. Captain Fish and Lieutenant Morse were detailed to staff duty at brigade headquarters.

## CHAPTER IX

### UNDER GRANT IN THE WILDERNESS

**W**HEN the winter was over and the campaign of 1864 began the regiment was officered as follows: Colonel Upton commanding the brigade; Lieutenant Colonel Olcott commanding the regiment; Major, H. M. Galpin; Surgeon, John O. Slocum; Asst. Surgeon, D. M. Holt; Adjutant, F. M. Morse, serving as Aide-de-Camp to Colonel Upton; Quartermaster, Theo. Sternberg.

Company A. Captain Jonathan Burrell, First Lieutenant Wm. H. Tucker, Second Lieutenant Samuel B. Kelley.

Company B. Captain M. R. Casler, First Lieutenant Thomas C. Adams, commanding in the absence of Captain Casler, wounded.

Company C. Captain Lansing B. Paine, Second Lieutenant George W. Quackenbush, on special duty with Ambulance Corps.

Company D. Captain John D. Fish, A. A. Gen. on Brigade Staff, First Lieutenant Daniel D. Jackson, commanding company.

Company E. Captain James W. Cronkite, Second Lieutenant James W. Johnston.

Company F. Captain A. M. Tyler, on Division Staff, First Lieutenant Silas E. Pierce, commanding company.

Company G. Captain Frank Gorton.

Company H. Captain Charles A. Butts, Second Lieutenant H. C. VanScoy.

Company I. Captain John S. Kidder, First Lieutenant Frank W. Foote.

Company K. Captain John D. P. Douw, First



Lieutenant Lewis C. Bartlett on Brigade Staff,  
Second Lieutenant Sheldon J. Redway.

The many vacancies among commissioned officers were fully compensated by the character and efficiency of the non-commissioned officers, who in the coming campaign were destined and proved capable of upholding the honor and reputation of the regiment.

The 6th Corps as reorganized, under the command of General Sedgwick consisted of three divisions. But in the breaking up of the 3d Corps, the regiments received from it were made the 3d Division of the corps, and the brigades of the old 3d Division were transferred to the 1st and 2d Divisions. The brigade transferred to the 1st Division was commanded by General Shaler. When orders came late in April that all unnecessary baggage should be transferred to Washington, every one knew that the anticipated movement would soon begin. On the 4th of May, reveille was sounded at 3 o'clock and an hour later the march began from the camp over the Hazel River on a pontoon bridge and pushing rapidly towards Germania Ford, where the Rapidan was crossed in the afternoon and the corps went into camp about two miles beyond. The next day the advance continued on the Old Wilderness road, and the 2d Brigade was thrown out on the right flank on a road leading to Mine Run to protect the troops from a flank attack while passing that point. The 5th Corps was in the advance and soon came in contact with the Confederate army posted in a dense thicket of second growth timber. General Lee had divined the intention of General Grant to pass his right flank and had disposed his army to thwart the effort. His army as usual consisted of three corps commanded respectively by Generals Longstreet, A. P. Hill and Ewell. The

5th Corps had struck the middle corps, A. P. Hill's, and was checked by its stubborn fighting. The 6th Corps came up and formed on the right of the 5th, thus coming into opposition to General Ewell's corps, and the 2d Corps passing on to the left of the 5th, faced Longstreet's corps. The new 3d Division of the 6th Corps was on the extreme right of the Union line of battle. The severest of the fighting on that day was by the 5th and 2d Corps until nearly sundown, when a brigade of Ewell's corps struck the right flank of the 6th, and caused considerable loss and more disorder. General Gordon in his reminiscence of the Civil War states that he was in command of the brigade which made this charge, and tells the circumstances under which it was made so successfully.

Early on the morning of the 5th of May he was informed by his scouts that the right of the 6th Corps was exposed to attack without a picket, vidette or skirmisher to give warning of danger. He doubted the statement until he had made a personal investigation. Working his way through the bushes, until in full sight of the Union line, he found it to be true and immediately disposed his brigade, which extended two regiments beyond the right of the 6th Corps, so as to attack both on front and flank. It was just such an opportunity as Stonewall Jackson created, and took advantage of at Chancellorsville. Gordon had his disposition all made for attack by 9 in the forenoon, and urged General Early who commanded the division to let him make it. But Early refused on the ground that he was sure General Burnside with the 9th Corps was close at hand and the attack would be disastrous. It was not till towards evening that General Lee came to that part of the line, and hearing General Gordon's report, ordered the attack. Gordon states that the result would

have been more disastrous to the Union troops if there had been a little longer daylight—that he had to stop the advance because the flanking regiments in the darkness came under the fire of those attacking in front. He, with an orderly, rode into the confused mass of the Union troops and heard officers calling to their men to rally on certain points. He was discovered and fired upon but escaped by throwing himself by the side of his horse and galloping away. His orderly also escaped.

The part which the 121st took in this affair was brief. At the outbreak of the firing General Upton had faced the brigade to the right, when Colonel Duffy of the Division Staff rode up, and called for a regiment to go with him. The 121st was ordered to follow him, and he led it so rapidly that it became scattered in the thicket and a portion of it ran squarely into the ranks of the enemy. One of the party, Baldwin, told the writer that in turning to escape, his foot struck a root and he fell flat upon the ground. He had presence of mind to lie perfectly still, and a Rebel passing kicked him saying, "He's done for," and passed on. But very soon the Reb and his companions came running back, and Baldwin escaped unhurt.

During this scattered condition of the regiment a squad of five or six of Company D suddenly came face to face with about the same number of Confederates. The nearest of them were only about three or four yards away before they were seen by our men through the thick underbrush. Both squads halted when they discovered each other. Then the foremost of the Rebs deliberately dropped the butt of his gun to the ground and said, "Surrender, Yanks! We promise to treat you well. There is no use of resisting for there is a full line of battle just back of us." The Second

Sergeant of the company happened to be in the squad, but made no reply, also J. H. Smith then ranking as Fourth Sergeant who promptly said, "Don't surrender, boys," and at once fired upon a Confederate who stood a little to the rear of their spokesman in a threatening attitude. This action resulted in the surrender of three of the Rebs who were taken to the rear by Frank Piper and another comrade. The others "retreated."

Before the attack was checked, however, the headquarters of General Sedgwick had been nearly reached. It is related that an officer rode excitedly to General Grant and told him that the 6th Corps had been cut to pieces and routed. His reply was a quiet, "I don't believe it"; but afterwards when he first saw General Wright he greeted him with the exclamation, "Why, I heard that you had gone to Richmond." After the fighting ceased Colonel Upton collected the scattered members of the 121st and re-formed the brigade.

When this attack began the 121st was engaged in throwing up earthworks and the arms of half the regiment were stacked while the men worked. The other half stood under arms. When the alarm was given, the men at work were ordered in line, but before they could get to and seize their guns, the armed men were rushed to the scene of action. Colonel Olcott attempted to prevent this division of the regiment and did all he could to keep it together. Arriving at the point of danger, he faced the left companies to the front and rode to the right to get the right companies into line. But he was shot from his horse, a bullet striking him in the head, and was taken prisoner while unconscious. Captain Paine of Company C and Captain Kelley of Company A in their effort to rally their men were made prisoners. Having rallied



on their colors, and being re-formed by Colonel Upton, the regiment charged the enemy and retook part of the earthworks. They held them till withdrawn, and formed on the right flank of the corps to prevent any farther advance of the enemy on the right and rear. About 10 o'clock the order came to move to the left, and the morning found the brigade in the vicinity of the Wilderness Tavern, where rifle pits were immediately constructed.

To give the human touch to this day's affair, the experience of Colonel Beckwith will suffice. "Soon after daylight on May 4, we were in line and marching toward the enemy having the advance of the corps. The 5th Corps was ahead of us. Soon after we started, picket firing and skirmishing told that the enemy had been found. We moved along very slowly and off to the left of the road for some distance until toward noon, when the sound of the firing told that large numbers of the infantry were engaged. We then marched in column of fours, the regiments being far enough apart so that we could swing into line of battle rapidly at the word of command. The 95th Penn., our extreme left regiment, struck the enemy in the thicket and Colonel Carroll who was leading, and some distance in front of his men, received their fire and was instantly killed. A portion of his regiment swung into line and charged, capturing twenty-five or thirty of the enemy. They also secured a good position and connected our corps with the right of the 5th, but the ground held was some distance in front of the 5th Corps' line. They had fought over this ground, and a good many wounded were scattered through the woods and thickets, which were on fire in front and on both sides of us. Many wounded on both sides must have perished in the flames, as partially

burned bodies were seen scattered about on the burned-over ground. The balance of our division was formed on our right, and by night our lines were formed. We lay in line of battle upon our arms, and shortly after dark when the firing slackened, the cries of the wounded between the lines, which were not far apart, was something terrible to hear. Some prayed, some cursed, some cried and some asked to be killed and put out of their misery.

"We had notice to have our breakfast and be ready to attack at daylight the next morning. I unpacked my knapsack and took out what was absolutely necessary. I took off my shirt to put on a clean one, and just as I was putting it on a volley ran down the Rebel line and I thought they were about to charge. Well I hustled all I could to get that shirt on, but it seemed to stick over my head and shoulders and I was in a predicament. The men fell in but the enemy did not advance and in a little time I was dressed and ready for them.

"I made my belongings into a roll and wore it across my body. In addition to being easier to carry, it afforded some protection, because a bullet would not have much force after passing through it. We were up and ready for business in the morning, but the order to advance did not come, and all day long the skirmishers and sharpshooters had their innings, and quite a number of men were hit, one of whom I remember was Michael Fitzjames, whose hand was badly torn by a bullet, causing him excruciating pain. Just before dark heavy firing to our right indicated trouble over there, and in a very short time, Colonel Duffy rode up and ordered us to move to the right and restore our lines, which had been broken. The firing in that direction was pretty well maintained, showing

that the enemy was meeting with steady resistance. Colonel Olcott was at the head of the regiment and we hurried along moving by the right flank in column of fours. I do not know how far we went, but it was not a great distance when we came in contact with the enemy. They seemed to be coming from the direction in which we were going. I thought there were some of our troops in front of us, but instead we ran slam bang into the enemy. They ran over some of our fellows, and I fired into them. A bunch of them ordered us to surrender and fired a volley into us, which hit a number among whom were Dennis A Dewey, John H. Reynolds, and Wm. MacElroy. They immediately advanced and ordered us to surrender and go to their rear. There was a general scattering. Some of our fellows stopped to take care of the wounded, and it seemed to me that some more of our fellows were coming up behind. The Rebels seemed to be in a hurry to get back and hurried us up. It was now quite dusky and you could not tell a man's uniform a little ways off. I ran a short distance in the direction the Rebs wanted me to go, expecting every instant a volley from one of our regiments. Finally some one, a Rebel officer I suppose, said, 'Throw down that gun.' I had it in my hands and dropped it. I went only a little distance farther and threw myself down on my face. I expected to be punched every instant, but the balls were flying pretty thick, and it being near dark I was unnoticed. As soon as I thought it safe I jumped up, went and picked up my gun, and started right back the way I came, until I saw some of our men going to the rear; and following in that direction a few moments, I came to the edge of the woods and saw Goodman of our company leading Colonel Olcott's horse, and a Company G man told me

that the colonel was shot in the head, and a prisoner. As I came out of the woods a little way, I saw a line of battle was formed and the men as they came up joined it. I loaded my gun which I had fired only once during the affair. The men I had seen as I came back must have been Rebs hurrying to their lines. In this affair Matteson, Proctor, Tieny, Young, Conklin and Beals were taken prisoners, and were sent to Andersonville. They were not exchanged for months and did not return to the regiment until after Lee's surrender. Shortly after we had formed in the field by the batteries, we were moved back into a line of entrenchments. About 10 o'clock the same night we marched back to the road, and following it some distance to the rear, moved off it again and went into line of battle near Wilderness Tavern, and threw up entrenchments. The same morning we marched to Piney Branch Church, and were given time to get breakfast. Here it was found that something like a hundred of our regiment were missing, and one-half of them were dead or wounded. Quite a number of the missing turned up that day and the next. I thanked my stars that I had escaped from capture, and pitied the fellows who were caught, especially Dewey and Reynolds, whom I knew to be wounded."

The responsibility for the exposure of the right of the 6th Corps on this occasion, without scout, picket or vidette was never ascertained. Probably it was never investigated for the guilty officer was probably among the killed or captured. It was one of the usual misfortunes of the 3d Corps following it into the 6th. But it is certain that it was never repeated, and the like had never occurred before.



## CHAPTER X

### THE TENTH OF MAY

FROM the 5th to the 10th of May the regiment, with the brigade, occupied several positions of importance, covering the left wing of the army, and on two occasions came into skirmish action with the enemy, and suffered several casualties. On the 10th of May the regiment formed a part of the first line of an assault on the entrenchments of the enemy, which was brilliantly successful and ought to have resulted in the utter rout of Lee's army.

The account of this sanguinary assault is best begun by quoting Colonel Upton's official report of it: "The point of attack was at an angle near the Scott House, about half a mile from the Spottsylvania road. The enemy's entrenchments were of formidable character, with abatis in front, and surmounted by heavy logs, underneath which were loopholes for musketry. In the re-entrant to the right was a battery, with traverses between the guns. About one hundred yards to the rear was another line of works, partly completed and occupied by another line of battle.

"The position was in an open field, about two hundred yards from a piece of woods. A wood road led from my position directly to the point of attack. The ground was looked over by General Russell and myself, and regimental commanders were also required to see it, that they might understand the work before them. The column of attack consisted of twelve regiments formed in

four lines of battle, lying down in the piece of wood as soon as formed. The lines were formed from right to left as follows: First line 121st N. Y., 96th Pennsylvania and 5th Maine. Second line: 40th Pennsylvania, 6th Maine and 5th Wisconsin. Third line: 43d N. Y., 77th N. Y. and 119th Pennsylvania. Fourth line: 2d, 5th and 6th Vermont.

"Our position was so close that no commands were to be given in getting into position. The pieces of the first line were loaded and capped, those of the others were loaded only. Bayonets were fixed. The 121st N. Y. and 96th Pennsylvania were instructed to turn to the right and charge the battery. The 5th Maine was to wheel to the left and open an enfilading fire upon the enemy. The second line was to halt at the works and engage the front. The third line was to lie down behind the second and await orders. The fourth line was to advance to the edge of the wood and await the issue of the charge. All officers were instructed to repeat the command 'Forward' constantly from the commencement of the charge until the works were carried.

"At ten minutes before 6, Captain Dalton brought me the order to attack as soon as the column was formed, and stated that the artillery would cease firing at 6 P. M. Twenty minutes elapsed before all preparations were completed, when at the command the line rose, moved noiselessly to the edge of the woods, and then with a wild cheer rushed for the works. Through a terrible front and flank fire the column advanced quickly, and gained the parapet. Here occurred a deadly hand to hand conflict. The enemy sitting in their pits, with pieces loaded, and bayonets fixed, ready to impale those who should leap over, absolutely refused to yield the ground. The first of our men who tried to surmount the works fell pierced through

the head by musket balls. Others seeing the fate of their comrades, held their pieces at arm's length and fired downwards, while others, poising theirs vertically, hurled them down upon the enemy, pinning them to the ground. The struggle lasted but a few seconds. Numbers prevailed, and, like a resistless wave, the columns poured over the works, quickly putting *hors de combat* those who resisted, and sending to the rear those who surrendered. Pressing forward and expanding to the right and left, the second line of entrenchments and the battery fell into our hands. The column of assault had accomplished its task. The enemy's lines were completely broken, and an opening had been made for the division that was to have supported, but it did not arrive.

"Reinforcements arriving to the enemy, our front and both flanks were assailed. The impulsion of the charge being lost, nothing remained but to hold the ground. I accordingly directed the officers to form their men outside the works and open fire, and then rode back over the field to bring forward the Vermonters in the fourth line, but they had already mingled in the contest and were fighting with a heroism which has ever characterized that élite brigade. The 65th N. Y. had also marched gallantly to the support of their comrades and was fighting stubbornly on the left.

"Night had arrived, our position was three-quarters of a mile in advance of the army, and without prospect of support was untenable.

"Meeting General Russell at the edge of the wood, he gave me the order to withdraw. I wrote the order and sent it along the line by Captain Gordon of the 121st N. Y., in accordance with which, under cover of darkness the works were evacuated, the regiments returning to their former camps.

"Our loss in this assault was about one thousand

in killed, wounded and missing. The enemy lost at least one hundred at the first entrenchments, while a much heavier loss was sustained in his efforts to regain them. We captured between a thousand and twelve hundred prisoners and several stands of colors. Captain Burhans of the 43d N. Y. had two stands of colors in his hands, and is supposed to have been killed while coming back from the second line of entrenchments. Many Rebel prisoners were shot by their own men while going to the rear. Our officers and men accomplished all that could be expected of brave men. They went forward with perfect confidence, fought with unflinching courage, and retired only on receipt of a written order, after having expended the ammunition of their dead and wounded comrades."

In this engagement the 121st had one officer and thirty-two men killed and a large number wounded. Captain Butts was wounded in the advance upon the works, and while being assisted to the rear was again hit and instantly killed. Major Galpin, Captains Kidder, Jackson and Cronkite and Lieutenants Foote, Johnson and Tucker were wounded. Lieutenant Foote was wounded while trying to turn the guns of the battery just captured upon the enemy. He fell into the hands of the enemy, and was for a long time supposed to have been killed. Lieut. Jas. W. Johnston, on mounting the parapet, had a bayonet thrust through one of his thighs when raising his sword to strike down the Confederate who had thrust the bayonet through him. The Rebel begged for mercy, was spared, and sent to the rear a prisoner.

The reason given at the time among the soldiers, why the supporting division did not arrive as expected was that the commanding officer was intoxicated. Whether the report was true or not,



it is certain that he did drink to excess, for on another occasion he was so under the influence of liquor that an enlisted man slipped up behind him and cut the roll of blankets from his saddle and got away with it. The writer heard the story from the man himself.

Colonel Beckwith's account of this affair, gives the enlisted man's side of it. "About 5 P. M. we moved over the works down into the woods, close up to our skirmishers (the 65th N. Y.), who were keeping up a rapid fire, and formed in line of battle. Regiment after regiment came up and formed in line, we being in the first or front line and the right of the column, the 96th Penn. on our left and the 5th Maine on the left of the 96th. Behind us was the 49th Pennsylvania, behind it the 43d N. Y. and behind it the 2d Vermont. Behind the 5th Maine were in order the 5th Wisconsin, the 119th Pennsylvania and the 6th Vermont. The Rebel rifle pits were about two hundred and fifty yards in front of our skirmish line. They had no skirmishers out, ours having driven them in, but they were firing from their breastworks, on top of which they had logs to protect their heads. Our batteries (one on the right and three in the rear of us) were belching away at them, and they were answering but feebly. Occasionally the hum of a bullet and the screech of a shell gave notice that they were on the *qui vive*.

"As soon as we were formed Colonel Upton, Major Galpin and the Adjutant came along and showed to the officers and men a sketch of just how the Rebel works were located, and we were directed to keep to the right of the road which ran from our line direct to theirs. It was a grass grown farm road leading to the main or Catharpin road, which was the road we wanted to get and hold. We were ordered to fix bayonets, to load

and cap our guns and to charge at a right shoulder shift arms. No man was to stop and succor or assist a wounded comrade. We must go as far as possible, and when we broke their line, face to our right, advance and fire lengthwise of their line. Colonel Upton was with our regiment and rode on our right. He instructed us not to fire a shot, cheer or yell, until we struck their works. It was nearly sundown when we were ready to go forward. The day had been bright and it was warm, but the air felt damp, indicating rain. The racket and smoke made by the skirmishers and batteries, made it look hazy about us, and we had to raise our voices to be heard. We waited in suspense for some time. Dorr I. Davenport with whom I tented, said to me, 'I feel as though I was going to get hit. If I do, you get my things and send them home.' I said, 'I will, and you do the same for me in case I am shot, but keep a stiff upper lip. We may get through all right.' He said, 'I dread the first volley, they have so good a shot at us.' Shortly after this the batteries stopped firing, and in a few minutes an officer rode along toward the right as fast as he could, and a moment afterward word was passed along to get ready, then 'Fall in,' and then 'Forward.' I felt my gorge rise, and my stomach and intestines shrink together in a knot, and a thousand things rushed through my mind. I fully realized the terrible peril I was to encounter (gained from previous experience). I looked about in the faces of the boys around me, and they told the tale of expected death. Pulling my cap down over my eyes, I stepped out, the extreme man on the left of the regiment, except Sergeant Edwards and Adjutant Morse who was on foot. In a few seconds we passed the skirmish line and moved more rapidly, the officers shouting 'Forward' and breaking into

a run immediately after we got into the field a short distance. As soon as we began to run the men, unmindful of, or forgetting orders, commenced to yell, and in a few steps farther the rifle pits were dotted with puffs of smoke, and men began to fall rapidly and some began to fire at the works, thus losing the chance they had to do something, when they reached the works to protect themselves. I got along all right and there were a number of us in the grass-grown unused road, and several were shot, but I could not tell who, because I was intent upon reaching the works. We were broken up some getting through the slashing and the abatis. By this time the Rebels were beginning to fire the second time, and a rapid but scattering fire ran along the works which we reached in another instant. One of our officers in front of us jumped on the top log and shouted, 'Come on, men,' and pitched forward and disappeared, shot. I followed an instant after and the men swarmed upon, and over the works on each side of me. As I got on top some Rebs jumped up from their side and began to run back. Some were lunging at our men with their bayonets and a few had their guns clubbed. Jim Johnston, Oaks and Hassett, were wounded by bayonets. One squad, an officer with them, were backing away from us, the officer firing his revolver at our men. I fired into them, jumped down into the pits and moved out toward them. Just at this time, our second line came up and we received another volley from the line in front of us and the battery fired one charge of cannister. Colonel Upton shouted 'Forward' and we all ran towards the battery, passing another line of works, and the men in them passed to our rear as prisoners, or ran away after firing into us. Continuing we ran over the battery taking it and its men prisoners,

and on beyond, until there was nothing in our front, except some tents by the roadside and there was no firing upon us for a few moments, of any magnitude. I looked into the ammunition chest of the battery to see if I could find something to put in the vents of the guns to prevent their being fired again in case we had to leave them. There were several of our company there. I remember Jesse Jones and Dorr Davenport, Johnny Woodward, Judson A. Chapin and I think they took the wheels off one of the guns, and I broke off a twig in the vents of two guns, but we were ordered to go to the works and moved to the right. While moving as ordered, some Rebel troops came up and fired a volley into us. We got on the other side of the rifle pits and began firing at them and checked their advance. It was now duskish and it seemed as though the firing on our front and to our right became heavier, and the whistle of balls seemed to come from all directions and was incessant. I said to the man next to me 'I guess our men are firing from the first line. We had better go back there. I don't believe our men carried the works on the left.' (We had been told that Mott's division and a division of the Ninth Corps were to charge immediately after us if we carried the works in our front.) He answered 'The fire is all from the Rebs.' In a moment a battery opened upon us and we fell back to the first line over which I got and came across some of the regiment. There were also some from the 5th Maine and a number of other regiments. We continued firing. We could now see the flashes of the guns and knew they were coming in on us. A great many of our men were shot in this locality, but I thought the wounded would all have a chance to get back. I knew that we could not stay there. The wounded between us and the Rebs were in



terrible plight, and must all have been shot to pieces by the fire from both sides.

“Colonel Upton asked for volunteers to make a rush on the Rebel battery, but did not get any. The undertaking looked too desperate. He asked for men from the 121st New York, saying, ‘Are there none of my old regiment here?’ But there were only a few of us there and our cartridges were running low. I do not know how long we remained there firing. It seemed like an hour, but I don’t suppose it was. Finally word was passed along to fall back quietly to our skirmish line and back we started. Getting back into the open field, it was covered with dark forms lying on the ground, and many more moving back. I came at once across a group and recognized Tom Parsons of the 5th Maine. He was shot through the wrist, both bones were crushed and he suffered terrible pain. Between him and another man was a wounded captain and Parsons said ‘For God’s sake help us back with him.’ Giving the man my gun, I stooped in front of the captain, and catching him by the legs hoisted him as gently as I could upon my back, carried him to the edge of the woods, and under shelter of our skirmish line, and there left him with some of his regiment. I kept on trying to find some of our own fellows.

“Reaching the works we started from, I found one of the company. Back of the works a little ways, in the edge of the pines where our men were assembling was the 95th Pennsylvania. Occupying these works less than an hour we began to get some idea of the awful loss we had sustained. I looked around for Davenport, made inquiries, but could get no tidings of him. I went to the brigade hospital, and saw many of our regiment, shot in all shapes, but Dorr was not with them. Just as I was starting back, a Company I man

said, 'One of your company is lying in the woods just where we started to charge.' I went out to the skirmish line again. There was some firing on the line by the Rebels. There were some wounded men out in the field, as we could tell by their cries and groans, and I went out a little way, passing several dead men, and helped bring in a badly wounded man. Realizing how hopeless it was to find Dorr, I came back, tired out and heartsick. I sat down in the woods, and as I thought of the desolation and misery about me, my feelings overcame me and I cried like a little child. After a time I felt better and went back to camp. I found the men, and talked over the charge for a long time.

"On the morning of the 11th we mustered barely a hundred men. Captain Gordon I think was in command of the regiment. We changed our position a little on the 11th and as we glanced along the terribly thinned ranks and upon the shattered staff and tattered colors, we were filled with sorrow for our lost comrades, and deep forebodings for the future. A splendid regiment had been nearly destroyed without adequate results. In but a week's time, since leaving our pleasant camp on Hazel River, pitiless war had destroyed our bravest and best men. The loss of General Sedgwick had been keenly felt. He had ever been a source of pride to us and his calm courage and masterly military skill was an anchor of hope, and an abiding confidence in our ability to whip the foe!" (Here it may be well to tell what the writer knows of the death of General Sedgwick. His brother was on the skirmish line and within a few feet of the general when he was shot, and heard his last words. The sharpshooters of the enemy were firing at the battery, when General Sedgwick came up as he passed the battery he

said: "Don't dodge, men. They couldn't hit an ox at this distance." He stepped forward a few paces, raised his glasses to look and immediately received the fatal shot that ended his brilliant military career, to the loss and sorrow of the men who had served under him.) Colonel Beckwith continues his narrative thus: "The weather too became bad, raining steadily, and increased the wretchedness of our physical and mental condition. I think at this time we were consolidated into a battalion of four companies. Colonel Upton had been made a brigadier general upon the field by General Grant, and a popular and hard won promotion it was; and at this time after years of mature reflection I know of no officer, who ever came within my knowledge, for whom I have a more abiding admiration and respect. He was in my judgment as able a soldier as ever commanded a body of troops, and I never saw an officer under fire who preserved the calmness of demeanor, the utter indifference to danger, the thorough knowledge of the situation, and what was best to do, as did Colonel Upton. Since the war I have had the pleasure on many occasions of meeting the gallant soldier, who was chief of General Wright's staff at the time of this assault at Spottsylvania under General Upton; and the following account of the inception, organization and execution of the battle is from his own lips. It was told me by him recently in answer to some inquiries I had been making of him, why the assaulting column was not better supported after it had carried everything in front and swept the enemy's lines on each of its flanks for some distance. He said, 'I'll tell you why. On the 9th of May I rode with General Wright to army headquarters. When we arrived there we found Generals Grant, Meade and several others, and shortly

after our arrival General Meade informed General Wright that he had ordered a general attack along the whole line for 4 o'clock on the following day, and ordered him to attack on his front at the same time. But he wanted him to organize a column of assault, consisting of twelve or fifteen picked regiments from the Corps, making the attack at the point which he should select, and point out to him. He would carefully reconnoiter the enemy's line and have an engineer officer locate the most favorable point of attack. General Wright was informed that Burnside's Corps, Mott's division, and a portion of the Fifth Corps would coöperate with him on both his flanks, and to seize any opportunity his success might afford to crush and drive out the enemy in his front. With this order and understanding General Wright rode away to make the necessary arrangements for the attack. He selected General Russell to take general charge of the entire movement, and at his chief of staff's suggestion chose Emory Upton, then colonel of the 121st New York Volunteer Infantry, commanding the Second Brigade of the First Division, to lead the assaulting column. After selecting twelve regiments from different brigades and divisions of the Corps, he ordered his chief of staff to send for Colonel Upton to report to him early in the morning for orders and instructions. Colonel Upton reported promptly and the chief of staff met him, and taking from his pocket the list of regiments selected handed it to Colonel Upton, and said, "Upton what do you think of that for a command?" Colonel Upton took the list, ran his eyes over it and said, 'I golly, Mack, that is a splendid command. They are the best men in the army.' He said 'Upton you are to lead those men upon the enemy's works this afternoon, and if you do not carry them you are not expected to come back,



but if you carry them I am authorized to say that you will get your stars.' Colonel Upton in reply said, 'Mack, I will carry those works. If I don't I will not come back.' The staff officer then told him of the troops and batteries that would coöperate with him in the attack, and of the general attack of the whole army. He described how enthusiastic and pleased Colonel Upton was, with the duty assigned him, and also said that he was one of the most enthusiastic soldiers he ever knew. As Colonel Upton rode away he said, 'Mack, I'll carry those works. They cannot repulse those regiments.'

"After Colonel Upton rode away, I was busy getting batteries into position and moving troops to positions assigned them, and everything in our Corps was going smoothly and as arranged, and all our reports, received from regiment, brigade and division commanders of the Corps, indicated that they were fully alive to the requirements of the occasion, and ready for the duty assigned them. Finally we opened our batteries on the Rebel lines, concentrating a number upon the point of Upton's attack, and I rode out and saw his column moving into position in the woods just in the rear of our skirmish line, which a little while before had driven, by a determined advance, the enemy's skirmishers into their works. Riding back to General Wright I met Colonel Tompkins, chief of the Corps' artillery, and the general instructed him to continue the fire of the batteries till 5 o'clock, which would give Colonel Upton ample time to form his column and prepare for the assault.

"At the appointed time the attack began along the entire line and the thunder of the artillery and the crash of musketry was heavy and incessant on our right and left, but Burnside's men had not come up. Telegrams were sent to headquarters,

and staff officers dispatched to know the cause of delay, and ascertain where they were, but without success; and like all movements where the field telegraph was used, and written orders given, there was delay in their execution, and precious time was rapidly passing. It had been arranged with Upton that when the batteries stopped firing, he was to attack at once and the time had been set at 5 o'clock. As it was near 5 o'clock, officers were sent to delay the attack and continue the fire of the batteries, delaying as long as possible so that other dispositions could be made. As it became evident that we could not wait longer for them, and orders coming from headquarters to send Upton in, I rode out by prearrangement with Colonel Tompkins, and at a point where I could see him and Colonel Upton, I took out my handkerchief and waved it. Both Upton and Tompkins answered my signal, and rode—one to his batteries and stopped their firing, the other to the head of his column to set it in motion—and in a very little time the crash of the Rebel volleys and the cheers of our men told that the work was under way, and immediately the swarms of Rebels from the captured works rushing to our lines under a heavy fire, told that Upton had succeeded and the works were ours. I immediately galloped to General Wright and reported that Upton had got through and taken a large number of prisoners, and it was telegraphed to headquarters. At the same time General Wright received a dispatch stating that the attack had failed all along the lines. Shortly after, another dispatch was sent to headquarters, saying that Upton had broken the enemy's line, taken his men, works and guns, and asking if we should pile in the men and hold them. As this dispatch was on the way, another was received saying, that, as the attack had failed at

other points, you had better withdraw Upton, and the order was given to him to withdraw his men. Shortly after another order was received, saying, 'Pile in the men and hold the works.' But it was too late as the previous order had been partially executed and the opportunity lost, which would have resulted in our holding the works, forcing the enemy to fall back to a new line, and made unnecessary the assault of the 12th (two days later), and its terrific struggle and losses, without compensating results. Upton's formation, arrangement and conduct of the assaulting column was superb. There was not a single miscarry in the whole affair. The men behaved with splendid courage and skill, which had made them famous throughout the army. The Rebels fought desperately and were accounted as good as there were in Lee's army.

"That night after we had corrected our formation and put our lines in order, for an anticipated counter attack, I met Upton at Corps headquarters, and found him much depressed over the result, of what had promised such a brilliant success, and he ventured the opinion that with a fresh compact body of troops, on each of his flanks, he could have swept the enemy's lines for a great distance each side of where he had broken through. He was also greatly grieved at the great loss his regiment and brigade had suffered. He took a special pride in his regiment, in which he placed unlimited confidence, and believed he could accomplish any undertaking with them. After some further talk he rode away. As I bade him goodnight I said, 'Come over in the morning, Upton, I want to see you.'

"After he had gone I hunted up a pair of brigadier general's shoulder straps, and wrapping them up carefully, put them in my pocket. I then went

to General Wright and said to him, 'General, you remember when Colonel Upton was selected to lead the charge it was the understanding that if he took the works he was to win his stars. Now I think he ought to have them. So with his permission, I telegraphed to General Meade, asking if he would not request the commanding general to promote Colonel Upton to brigadier general. The general responded, 'Certainly,' and wired Washington that night and received a reply from the President, that his commission was made out and signed. In the morning when I saw Upton, I said, 'Upton, you remember when I told you that you were assigned to lead the charge, and if you succeeded you were to have your stars, and if you did not you were not expected to come back?' He replied, 'Yes, I remember.' 'Well,' I said, taking the stars from my pocket and unrolling the paper, 'Here they are.' He took them in his hand, looked at them, and at me in an inquiring way (as though I was joking), for some seconds. Seeing that he was incredulous or uncertain about my meaning, I repeated to him what had already been done by the president and commanding general of the army, upon hearing which his pleasure and gratification was funny to see. He remarked how proud and glad his men would be to know that their efforts had been so distinguished, and his pale face lighted up with animation, as he went over some of the incidents of the previous night, and he spoke of the desperate work of his men as they reached the enemy's entrenchments. He cut off his eagles and we got some thread and had the stars sewed on his shoulders, and he rode directly to his command to show them his preferment. The next day at the Bloody Angle he showed the stuff he was made of. He would not have been sent in there, but his brigade was in the advance

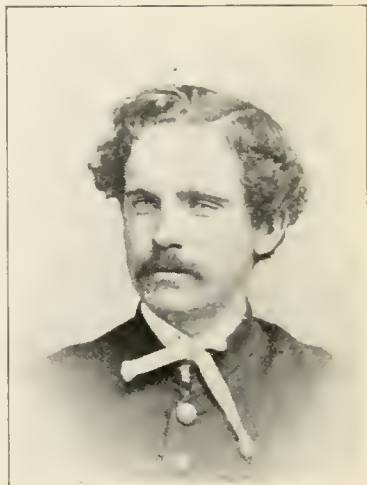


of the Corps, and the emergency was great, as the enemy had rallied, and with fresh troops had driven our men, in some places, away from the captured works. He saw the importance of immediate and rapid action, and double quicked one of his regiments right up and into the danger center, and immediately strengthened it with the rest of his command. There all day long, with bulldog courage and terrible slaughter, he held his ground against all attacks—the whole Corps at one time and another being engaged there. It was a great service he rendered that day, enough to win a field of stars. But Upton was easily the ablest of all the young West Pointers, who were just at that time distinguishing themselves.”



T. S. ARNOLD,  
Adjutant and Captain  
of Co. H.

F. E. LOWE,  
Adjutant.





CAPTAIN and BREVET MAJOR  
JAMES W. JOHNSTON



MAJOR and LIEUTENANT COLONEL  
HENRY M. GALPIN

## CHAPTER XI

### THE BLOODY ANGLE

THE angle in the fortifications of the enemy was obtuse and turned back from the ridge along which the line to the left ran. This ridge continued for some distance to the right from the apex of the angle. A tree of considerable size stood at the angle, and from it in both directions traverses were built at frequent distances along the rifle pits to protect their occupants from a flank fire. The works were of the most formidable character, with the log on the top to protect the heads of the defenders while they were able to fire under them in comparative safety. Early on the morning of the 12th under cover of a dense fog, the Second Corps had assailed and carried these entrenchments with comparatively little loss. Their defenders were so utterly surprised that many of them did not fire a shot, and the entire division occupying them was taken prisoners. General Lee had made provision for just such an attack and had placed General Gordon with his brigade of Georgians, in the center of a circle within the angle so as to be equally distant from the sides, with instructions to be ready to attack and repel any successful assault that might be made on any portion of the line. When the Second Corps men were advancing with exulting shouts, confident, and disorganized, they were struck unexpectedly by this veteran brigade, and hurled back in confusion to, and in some places, over the works, they had so recently carried. It was this brigade



of Georgians that had on the 5th struck the left of the Sixth Corps so staggering a blow, and now with quickly gathered reinforcements was attempting to retake their captured works. General Upton's report of the all-day battle is as follows: "May 11th the brigade made some unimportant changes of position. Early on the 12th it moved with the division toward the right flank of the army but to the left again at 7 A. M., arriving in the rear of the Second Corps at 9:30 A. M. The right flank of this Corps being threatened, General Russell directed me to move to the right at double quick to support it. Before we could arrive it gave way. As the 95th Pennsylvania Volunteers reached an elevated point of the enemy's works, about six hundred yards to the right of the Lendrum House, it received a heavy volley from the second line of works. Seeing that the position was of vital importance to hold, and that all the troops had given way up to this point, I halted the 95th Pennsylvania, faced it to the front and caused it to lie down. Its left rested near the works connecting with the Second Corps, while its right lay behind a crest oblique to the works. Had it given way the whole line of entrenchments would have been recaptured, and the fruit of the morning's victory lost; but it held its ground till the 5th Maine and the 121st New York came to its support, and the 96th Pennsylvania passed on to its right. Shortly after, the Third and Vermont brigades arrived. A section of Gillis' battery of the 5th U. S. Artillery, Lieutenant Metcalf, came up and opened fire, but was immediately charged and lost nearly every horse, driver and cannonier. The enemy charged up to his works within a hundred feet of the guns, but a well-directed fire from the infantry, behind the crest prevented his farther advance. At the point where our line

diverged from the works the opposing lines came in contact, but neither would give ground. And for eighteen hours raged the most sanguinary conflict of the war. The point remained in our possession at the close of the struggle, and is known as 'The Angle.' "

During this all-day conflict, the tree, a red oak, standing at the angle of the works was cut down by the bullets fired from both sides, but mostly by men of the 121st. Colonel Upton noting that the enemy kept seeking shelter behind it from which to fire upon the battery and our troops, ordered Captain Weaver with a part of the regiment to keep up a constant fire upon that point, and thus prevent the Rebels from putting their heads above the works. After keeping up this fire for several hours the men saw the tree begin to waver and it soon after fell with a crash upon those near it, inside the enemy's rifle pits. A section of the tree in the ordnance department at Washington is labeled as having been "cut down by musket balls in an attempt to recapture the works previously captured by the Second Corps, Army of the Potomac, May 12, 1864. Presented to the Honorable Secretary of War by Brevet Maj.-Gen. N. A. Miles, commanding First Division, Second Corps, Army of the Potomac." The dimensions are given as 5 feet high and 22 inches in diameter. So this must have been the stump of the tree below the point where it was cut off. The inference from this label is that men of the Second Corps are to be credited with the cutting down of the tree. But the fact is that the Second Brigade of the First Division of the Sixth Corps, occupied the position directly in front of the tree, and Captain Weaver and his men fired for hours directly at the Rebels seeking shelter behind it, until it fell.

For the particular part which the 121st took in this affair we may turn again to the narrative of Colonel Beckwith. "It rained all night and by the smoky pine fires we could scarcely boil our water for coffee, or scorch our pork for our breakfasts. Then we moved some distance to the right and halted in the pines. At this place an officer rode up with a yellow tissue paper in his hand, and as we stood at attention, he read a congratulatory order from the general commanding; and we were informed that a Rebel division and twenty cannon had fallen into our hands that morning. While the men were cheered at the news, there was but little cheering. In a few moments we moved back, our company leading the regiment, passing on beyond our former position and in the direction of the heavy timber. Some of the boys said, 'D——n those yellow paper orders. That means more fight,' and about 9 o'clock we came under fire again. Moving quickly forward we passed over an elevation that was swept by bullets, and rushed down to a line of works occupied by the 95th Pennsylvania of our brigade. The fog, rain and mist, loaded with smoke, obscured our view partially. The enemy's fire came from our right and front, but we were partially protected by their works and we kept up a continuous fire. This was the point where the Second Corps had carried their works early in the morning. Where we were, the works were V-shaped, the point or bottom of the V being toward us. We held the works from the point down the left side of the V as it faced us, and the Rebs held the right side and the works beyond towards where we charged on the night of the 10th. The Second Corps had been driven out just as the 95th Pennsylvania came up and held the works, until our regiment and the 5th Maine came to their support. The ground

on which we were was boggy and swampy, and we sank in the mud up to our ankles. Here all day long we kept up a constant fire. The wounded had to take care of themselves, officers as well as men, and many were killed. Captain Adams of our company lost an arm, and several others of our officers and men were wounded. A little after we went in, the Third brigade of our division joined us, also the Vermont brigade and the 49th New York and the 119th Pennsylvania. Some of the Vermonters came in where we were, and a line behind us fired over our heads. Every time we were reinforced the Rebs seemed to put in a new line, and the firing would break out more fiercely. We nearly shot away the head logs on the works. A section of a regular battery, the 5th U. S. Artillery, commanded by Lieutenant Metcalf, came up on a run, unlimbered, and ran the pieces as close to the Confederate works as they could be used effectively, and opened fire upon the crowded mass of Rebels in the angle with cannister. The Rebels elated by their success in forcing us back for a short space from their captured works, vainly endeavored to take the guns, and for a time withstood the terrible slaughter of the combined infantry and artillery fire, but finally gave up the attempt and sullenly retired. Not however until they had shot the men and horses, and in fact disabled the guns themselves with musketry fire.

“It was at this time that Capt. J. D. Fish of Company D, 121st, then acting as acting adjutant general to General Upton, was killed while engaged in bringing up cannister to the guns of the battery. It was also at this time that the works on both sides were crowded with combatants and the killing and wounding of the closely crowded men was awful. The smoke from the guns and bursting



shells mingling with the mist and rain sometimes obscured the view of the Rebel works, close as they were. The accumulation of the dead and badly wounded increased the horror of the situation and added to the desperation of the combatants and their efforts to bring the battle to a conclusion. Where we occupied the reverse side of the breastworks, men would load and stick their guns over the head log and raising the butts of their pieces, fire down into the mass of men huddled on the opposite side. Now and then a soldier or an officer, crazed with excitement, would jump upon the parapet and fire down into the enemy, but they speedily paid the penalty of their reckless daring, by being shot, and falling to one side or the other.

“Batteries behind and in front of us kept the air full of the shrieking noise of their projectiles, and a mortar battery behind us sailed shell after shell over us, and dropped them on the massed Rebels in the trenches. The rain fell continuously. Occasionally a lull would occur in the firing for a little time, and many Rebels, taking advantage of it, would raise a white flag and surrender themselves as prisoners. An incident of this kind would be followed by a burst of firing again, usually better directed than the preceding one, and so we stopped the white flag business, the last squad of surrendering Rebels, about thirty of them, getting the fire of both sides, nearly all being shot. So the battle continued. Ammunition was brought up on pack-mules, and served to us. Some of it would not fit our guns and the boxes with other emptied boxes, filled with dirt and placed in front of us, made some protection.

“After noon the Rebels finding it useless to attempt to drive us back to our works, slackened their fires somewhat, but it was not till dark that the firing

diminished below the roar of battle. It was a day never to be forgotten for its fierce fighting, bulldog tenacity and terrible slaughter.

"Just before dark we got word for Upton's men to assemble behind our rifle pits in the rear, and many went back, but I waited until after dark, preferring to stay where I was, than to run the gauntlet of the rain of bullets, that swept the ground up to the crest, or rise, in our rear.

"This was the worst day's experience I ever had, and it thoroughly disgusted me with war. Finding the regiment after a short search, I found Baldwin, Chapin and Tucker of my company and several others were there also. Being nearly starved we got some hot coffee and cooked some pork and crackers. We were all covered with mud and powder and smoke and grime, hands parboiled with rain, and our clothing loaded with moisture. We presented a very tough appearance, but being very near exhaustion it was possible for us to huddle about the smoky pine fire with our rubber blankets over us and get some sleep, even though bullets and shells flew in close proximity to us, at frequent intervals during the night.

"In the morning the Rebs were found to have fallen back from the 'Bloody Angle' during the night, and the firing had almost stopped, but sharpshooters kept the curious, and carelessly inclined reminded of their skill."

The writer though not a combatant, visited the scene of conflict during the 12th, and for a time watched the working of the mortar battery, of which Comrade Beckwith speaks. It was commanded by a Frenchman who appeared greatly excited. He was never still. Dancing around the guns while they were being loaded, and springing upon the parapet, when each was fired to observe where the shell fell, he seemed the incarna-

tion of activity. After visiting brigade headquarters, and not having anything else to do, I retired to a safer place and waited for the result. In the morning I went to the angle and surveyed the field. The wounded had been removed during the night but the dead lay strewn thickly over the ground, on our side of the breastworks, and along the ridge to the right. On the brow of this ridge, early in the day, Captain La Mont of the 96th Pennsylvania I think, had fallen and all day from both sides bullets had been fired across the ridge, and there did not seem to be a square inch of his body that had not been penetrated by a bullet. But horrible as was the sight on our side of the works, that on the other side was far worse, for the gray clad bodies were piled in the trenches from three to five deep. Our loss was terrible but that of the Confederates was far greater; and if the importance of the victory of the morning is to be measured by the desperate effort made to retake the position captured, it certainly was a decisive victory.

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM THE ANGLE TO COLD HARBOR

THE 121st came out of this engagement with four company officers and 185 enlisted men present for duty, and was held in reserve with the rest of the brigade during the 13th of May, but on the 14th the brigade was ordered to cross the Nye River and occupy Myer's Hill, an elevation to the left, and in front of the Fifth Corps. At this point quite a sharp engagement occurred. The position was occupied easily, but being attacked sharply by a force large enough to flank the troops engaged, they were compelled to fall back a little distance until reinforcements arrived, when the enemy in turn retired and the hill was reoccupied and the picket line extended to the left.

Colonel Cronkite who was not present, having been wounded on the 10th, speaks very briefly of this affair, but Colonel Beckwith describes it quite minutely. "On the morning of the 13th we moved to our left and early in the morning of the 14th crossed the Nye River, a narrow, sluggish, deep stream where we crossed, and moving a short distance came to a brigade of regular troops which we relieved. We moved forward a short distance and were deployed in a heavy skirmish line, taking down a rail fence and making a protection of the rails as best we could. A little way in our rear was a line of log cabins formerly occupied by the slaves. On a conspicuous eminence, called Myer's Hill, was quite a large mansion, and our line of battle



ran in front of it. On the right our line ran into the timber. In our rear a short distance, fringed with timber, ran the Nye River, dark and silent. As soon as we got our rail protection completed we began to build fires and get breakfast, and had gotten it nicely under way when word was passed along from the left, that the enemy was advancing. We rapidly got into our rail barricades, and swallowing what we could of our food in a hurry at the same time, we watched for the Reds to appear. We knew we would be the first to be attacked because a piece of woods in our front reached to within 600 feet of our position, and the rail fence running along it would conceal and shelter the advancing force until they came up to it. In a few minutes word was again passed from the house, that the Reds were advancing in skirmish line, supported by a line of battle with artillery accompanying it. In a few minutes their skirmishers appeared in our front and opened fire, which we returned so effectively that they seemed reluctant to come on out of the woods and into the open, where they would offer a fair mark. At the same time their battery opened on us, a few shells bursting very near but not hitting any of us. While we were attending to the enemy in front, the 96th Pennsylvania moved out in line of battle and advanced toward the woods. We expected to continue this advance, but the 96th had scarcely disappeared in the woods when they met the enemy, and immediately the battle broke out. The Rebels charged and drove our men out, their advance reaching to our front. The troops on our left gave way, and we ran back toward the river. Some of our men jumped into it to wade across, but the water was too deep and they were fished out, wetter and wiser men. Jack Schaffner was one of the waders. Moving along

to the right parallel with the river, we were met by Lieutenant Redway who ordered us to rally. A shell just then bursting near us, stopped his efforts, and we continued down the river. In a short distance we met General Upton who directed us to move onto the road and down to the bridge, cross to the other side and rally on the colors which we would find in the field beyond. The Rebels in the meantime had occupied the position we had just vacated, and were throwing shells into our ambulance train, which was hurrying back out of range of their fire. Just at nightfall we moved forward and reoccupied the position under cover of our artillery and skirmishers without serious resistance. The 15th and 16th we remained at Myer's Hill (dubbed by the men 'Upton's Run'). Just before dark on the 16th we moved forward in line of battle a long distance into the woods in our front, but did not find the enemy. Returning to our lines we were marched to our right, reaching and forming line of battle just to the right of the 'Bloody Angle.'

"A little after daylight glancing around we saw that a heavy column was massed there, and saw troops on all sides of us. Heavy skirmishing in our front and a brisk artillery fire continued for some time and then died down. This gave notice that there was a hitch in the program, and a little later we learned that the enemy's position and works were of such a nature as to render the result of an assault doubtful, and it had been given up at that point.

"An incident occurred while we were lying in line of battle, illustrating the pitiful fate of dumb animals under fire. A mounted officer had fastened his horse by the bridle reins to a stump so that the animal stood side to the front. A cannon shot passed under him cutting the covering of

his intestines, letting them run out. The poor brute stood for some little time looking pitifully around, until the officer, coming up looked at the wound, drew his revolver and killed him, removing his trappings after the death struggle was over."

General Gordon in his reminiscences, speaks of this affair as a desperate effort of the Second and Sixth Corps to break through the Confederate line, and a disastrous repulse. The brigade moved back to Myer's Hill in the evening of the 18th and the next day moved to the right and rear of the Fifth Corps and threw up entrenchments. The day after it relieved a portion of the Third division of the Second Corps. General Ewell made an effort to attack the right of the army by a flank movement, but ran into a regiment of heavy artillery that was coming to the front and was so badly handled by them that he gave up the attempt. The opportune arrival of these fresh troops, saved the brigade from another encounter with the enemy.

On the 21st, the brigade again returned to Myer's Hill, and here the 2d Connecticut Heavy Artillery joined the brigade. It was a magnificent body of men, more than 1,800 strong and containing many veterans who had reenlisted. At about 11 P. M. of the 21st another movement to the left was begun and the brigade marched by long and tedious stages, to Guinie Station, Lebanon Church, and arrived at Jericho Ford on the North Anna River about midnight of the 23d. In the morning of the 24th the Corps crossed the river and took position in line of battle on the right of the Fifth Corps. The most of the day was spent in tearing up and destroying the railroad. Colonel Beckwith describes the method of destruction in this manner: "We would form on the uphill side of the track, and taking hold and lifting turn the track completely over, and removing the ties stack and cord

them, and setting fire to the piles, place the rails on top of the ties thus piled. The fire would heat a portion of the rails in the middle red hot. Then we would take the rails off the piles and wind them around trees or stumps or bend them double, and so effectually prevent their further use."

The army of General Lee was found posted in an advantageous place, and strongly fortified, so that no attempt was made to assail him, and on the 26th another movement to the left was made. The division in this movement guarded the trains to Chesterfield Station, where Sheridan had arrived after his brilliant raid around Lee's army in which he had defeated the Confederate cavalry under Stewart at the outer defenses of Richmond, and inflicted an irreparable loss to the Confederate cause by the death of General Stewart, the most able and efficient leader of the cavalry of the South. Sheridan was in dire need of the supplies we brought him, both of food and ammunition. Resuming the march in the evening we reached and crossed the Pamunky River in the morning and pushed on by what seemed to be forced marches to Hanover Court House, and now having joined the other divisions of the Corps, we marched to Atlee's Station on the 30th and the next day arrived at Cold Harbor.



## CHAPTER XIII

### COLD HARBOR

**C**OLD HARBOR is one of the points near Richmond which General McClellan reached during the Peninsular campaign and from which he was compelled to retire at the beginning of his retreat to Harrison's Landing on the James.

It is situated about directly northeast of Richmond, and almost within sight of the city. General Lee having correctly interpreted the design of General Grant, had transferred his army to this point and was found occupying works advantageously located and very strongly constructed.

The Sixth Corps arrived at Cold Harbor about noon of the 30th and at 5 o'clock in the afternoon was formed in line of battle, on the left of the Third division and the 121st were deployed in close order as skirmishers, and relieved the cavalry skirmishers, who had suffered quite heavily.

Let Beckwith tell the rest. "Word was sent along the line that the enemy's line was in the farther edge of the old field-pine thicket in our front, and that we should charge this line on the dead run as soon as we got into striking distance and run the Rebs into their rifle pits. This we did. They broke as soon as they saw us begin to charge and we kept them on a dead run until they reached their works. We continued firing at anything in sight on the pits, and also shot the battery horses as they galloped up with the Reb guns going into position. Lying down we were screened from sight by the clumps of scrubby pine

and broom sedge covering the old fields, but were very much exposed to the bursting shells from both sides, poorly timed and bursting prematurely. Two men were wounded in this way, and several more on our right were hit near a cabin by the roadside. Among these Frank Lowe, afterwards our adjutant, who was shot through the body. We kept up a brisk fire upon the Rebel breastworks, and our batteries made it lively for them, the cannon shot throwing up the dirt in front of them very often. In about twenty minutes up came the line of battle behind us in beautiful order and four lines swept over us at a quickstep, and just beyond us the front line started on a running charge toward the breastworks, obliquing to the right where the Rebel breastworks were on a little eminence in the edge of the pine woods. The formation of our brigade was in four lines, the 2d Connecticut forming three of the lines. The 95th and 96th Pennsylvania, the 5th Maine, and the part of the 121st New York not on the skirmish line formed the fourth line. As soon as they passed us we were ordered to act as rear or provost guard to prevent any but wounded men from going to the rear. As soon as the heavies began to charge, the Rebel works were bordered with a fringe of smoke from the muskets and the men began to fall very fast, and many wounded began going to the rear. A little in front of the works there was a hollow, and as the column went into this it seemed to pause and the rear lines closed up. The Rebel fire was very effective and it seemed to us from where we stood that our poor fellows would all get shot. The ground over which they had passed was covered with men. We could see them fall in all shapes. Some would fall forward as if they had caught their feet and tripped and fell. Others would throw up their arms and

fall backward. Others would stagger about a few paces before they dropped. To us the suspense was horrible. We could not understand the pause before reaching the works and we said to one another, 'What are they stopping for? Why don't they go on?' But the agony was soon over. Their colonel had halted to bring his men into line for the final rush, and as soon as they closed up and filled the gaps in the line, they gallantly moved forward, and again met the devastating fire of the sheltered Rebels which they could not overcome. They were forced back after getting up to the works and their right crossing it and capturing some of its defenders, who were North Carolinians.

"Our men could not get up to their works in line of battle because the trees had been cut and so piled together that in places men could not get through. In some places gaps or lanes had been left in the slashings, and it was in these places that our men reached the works. After a determined and desperate attempt to take them they lay down in front of them and General Upton took a portion of the command to the right where the works had been carried, and moving down to the left, drove the Rebels out of the works in front of which our men had been repulsed, and were lying in their front. Here, occupying the outside of the Rebel works that had been captured, an incessant fire was kept up, for the enemy seemed determined to retake the works and kept up a scorching fire until after midnight. They inflicted but little loss upon our command, and finally fell back upon a second line of works, and we at once turned and strengthened the captured works. In this charge the 2d Connecticut lost their colonel, Kellogg, killed, and 386 men killed, wounded and missing. Although a new regiment they sustained

themselves without support on either flank for many hours. After the enemy had given up their attempt to regain the works, the 96th Pennsylvania went into the front line, supported immediately in the rear by the 2d Connecticut. Then came our regiment, then the 5th Maine. (The dead were buried where they fell in shallow graves.) We skirmishers assembled, and returned to our regiment, as soon as the charge was over, and lay on our arms in line of battle during the night. The next day we relieved the 96th Pennsylvania whose commanding officer, Major Lessig, said that in the continuous fire they had fired 90,000 rounds of ammunition.

"We continued the firing, the Rebel line being but a short distance in our front, and we could plainly see any movement on their side. We fixed head logs on the works and built sheltered outlooks with ammunition boxes filled with dirt, rigged decoys for the Rebels to fire at and would fire at their puffs of smoke. This firing was kept up day and night. At night someone in a tone of command would shout 'Forward, double quick, charge,' and a volley would run along the Rebel rifle pits in our front in answer. The men not in the trenches lay in line of battle in rear of the works. In the pines occasionally a man would be wounded by a ball striking in the top of a tree and glancing down. One of our men, Webster, of Company I was wounded in this way. He was lying on his back against a pine, reading his Bible, when a bullet struck him in the eye, destroying it and passing through the roof of his mouth into it, from which he spat it out. Another was struck on the brass plate of his cross belt and seriously hurt. A number of others received lesser injuries.

On the third of June we formed for a charge. We were in the trenches when Generals Wright



and Russell, and some staff and engineer officers passed along the line of works and attracted considerable attention from our men as well as from the Rebels who frequently sent lead messages to them as they exposed themselves. They spent considerable time in the trenches to the left of us talking to General Upton. Shortly after they went away, word was passed along that the order to charge had been countermanded at this place. Generals Russell and Upton deeming the position too strong to be taken. This was very welcome news to us, because had we charged a majority of us must inevitably have been shot. Every inch of that ground in front of us was commanded by sharpshooters and our works being farther advanced than those on either flank we would have received a partially enfilading fire. On the 4th of June we made an effort, and got all we could of the poor fellows, who had been lying wounded between the lines, since the previous day's battles. But many were left, it being impossible to get them on account of the fire of the sharpshooters. The poorly interred corpses of our men within our line, and the dead lying between the lines had now become decomposed and putrid, and made an awful stench. The water was very poor and a long way off, and many of the men complained of being sick. On the 7th of June under a flag of truce we gathered the wounded between the lines that were still alive and buried the putrid bodies of the dead that threatened a pestilence to the living. The wounded were in a horrible condition. One officer of the 106th New York I think, had a wound in the thigh that was infested with maggots. All the wounded yet alive could have survived but a little time longer. They had exhausted their water supply, and sucked their moist clothing to get the rain and dew from it. They had

scooped out holes in the ground to shelter themselves, and put moist clay in their mouths to prolong life. Imagine, if you can, their horrible predicament, lying on a bullet-swept field, without ability to crawl, their wounds infested with maggots, and existing five days or more before being succored, and you can get some idea of the horrors of war. I think it was the 8th of June that the enemy brought up some Coehorn mortars, and began business with them. The first shot landed in the 5th Maine regiment and killed and wounded several men. They continued this practice while we remained in the entrenchments, and we were kept busy watching and dodging the flight of shells. Fortunately we escaped being hurt by them.

“The term of service of the 5th Maine had now about expired, and they were ordered to the rear for muster out. They had served three years, and had performed gallant and distinguished service on many battlefields, and we regarded them with a strong feeling of affection and pride. There was no elaborate leave taking. We were glad that they were going, and yet sorry because we should miss their gallant and effective support and cooperation, in the future as in the past. And we realized that we should never see them again. If the State of Maine holds for them the pride and affection that their comrades of the 121st New York have, it is something of a gratifying nature to have brought from the war. They went away, and the 2d Connecticut Heavy Artillery were installed in their place, with us. On the 10th of June a young engineer officer, Lieut. R. S. McKenzie, took command of the 2d Connecticut. When I saw him I immediately recognized him as the officer who had led us to the position from which we charged on the 10th of May at Spottsylvania. Being a very brave and skillful officer he soon won the confidence

and respect of the regiment, which had now become reduced to the size of an ordinary infantry regiment, by losses in battle and by the hard campaigning to which they were now accustomed. After the first few days, during our stay at Cold Harbor, we received fresh beef, soft bread and vegetables, of which we were in great need. This was possible because our base of supply had been changed to White House Landing.

"On the night of the 12th of June orders were given to draw out of the lines. The utmost caution was enjoined. The picket lines kept up a continuous fire to drown the noise of the withdrawal. The artillery wheels were muffled to prevent the rumble of their wheels being heard. Thus silently we moved away from the lines which had cost so many lives of brave men on both sides, to assail and hold. Our losses had been much greater than those of the enemy, as they had the advantage of entrenchments. At daylight we were some distance from the works, the brigade all together, except those left on the picket line and the 5th Maine on its way home, and at dark we were across the Chickahominy, crossing on a pontoon bridge at Jones' Bridge. We had not been followed by any force of the enemy, and no firing of any account was heard until afternoon, when the faint sound of cannon and musketry told that the Johnnies were after our rear guard, which consisted of Wilson's cavalry and the Fifth Corps. We were all glad to get away from Cold Harbor."

Several personal incidents may be of interest to the reader. The writer's brother was a member of the 106th New York Volunteers, and was on the skirmish line at the opening of the first assault. He was severely wounded, a bullet having shattered the bone of his right thigh. Word was brought me that he was in the Corps hospital and I went to see him, taking a roll of blankets for

his comfort, I saw him placed in one of the baggage wagons for the journey over long stretches of corduroy road to White House Landing. He told me afterwards that several men died on the trip. Returning to headquarters I passed behind the house in which the surgeons were caring for the wounded. It was built on a side hill, the ground dropping away a full story to the rear. Out of the two back windows the amputated members were being thrown and the two heaps had already reached to the windows, and were continually being added to.

I had a few days before stood on the dead strewn field of the "Bloody Angle," and been deeply affected by the sight there presented, but nothing struck such a chill to my bones as did those two heaps of mangled arms and legs. In returning to the front, I reached the works a little to the left of brigade headquarters, and in walking along just behind the entrenchments, on a little rise where a battery was located, a Rebel sharpshooter in a tree made me a target and his bullet barely missed my head, and struck the embankment between two men who were digging a pit for ammunition. They turned and looked at me a little wildly, and I passed on out of range. Cold Harbor was the only battlefield on which I heard the shriek of a wounded man. To the right and front of brigade headquarters a man had fallen near the Confederate works, and when night came his frequent cry of anguish pierced the air with a weird, heart chilling effect. Gradually it died away, growing fainter and fainter until it was a relief to think that the poor fellow was dead and out of pain. In our army this was a strange thing. Usually our men endured the greatest pain with stoicism, muttering perhaps, and groaning, and grinding their teeth. If an outcry was made it was usually in the voice of a foreigner.



## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM COLD HARBOR TO PETERSBURG

IT is generally conceded that General Grant's purpose in the movement from Cold Harbor was not anticipated by General Lee. All his other movements had been accurately divined so that he was able to get to the position most advantageous to him before the advance of the Union army had reached it in sufficient force to hold it. This movement to the James River seems to have left Lee in perplexity as to where the Army of the Potomac was, and where it was going. The part which the 121st took in it, is of interest to us. The regiment, reduced by deaths, wounds and sickness, now numbered about one hundred men of the healthiest and hardiest of its members. But in the marches that followed these were tested to the utmost. The way was through a low and swampy country, the weather was exceedingly hot, the water was poor, and the roads thick with dust. To the brigade was assigned the duty of protecting the artillery trains. This made us the rear guard of the corps and the march was made with flankers thrown out on both sides to guard against any possible attack from either flank. The march continued steadily till the 15th when the James River was reached at Wilson's Wharf. The brigade formed a line guarding the position on the river until the 17th when it was transferred by boats to Bermuda Hundred. Beckwith says, "Here we saw the first colored troops. Some of us going out after something to eat, found the roads picketed

by colored cavalry men, who good naturedly took our chaffing."

The brigade disembarked at Point of Rocks and marched thence to Bermuda Hundred. We found that our Third division had already preceded us and were massed ready for rapid movement. Instantly a report was circulated that we were to assault in front of Butler's lines and take and hold the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad. We found the line occupied by Butler, elaborately fortified—covered ways and bombproofs for the protection of the men, redoubts and forts covered with mantlets covering the embrasures, and rapid fire guns in battery, the first of the kind we had seen, as well as many brass and rifled cannon. The place looked formidable. The lines were manned by Ohio State Militia, enlisted for 100 days. They were heartily sick of the job, and told us that they had not enlisted for fighting at the front, but to guard points held by old troops, so that the old troops could be sent to the point of danger. They told us that they were ordered to sleep in the bombproofs. Of course our talk with them did not improve our feelings. Many of our men were prejudiced against Butler, and thought it unjust for us to do his fighting for him, and that it wouldn't hurt the Ohio Militia to get a little touch of war. After dark we were moved out in front and formed in column, our brigade being on the right. The Johnnies drove in Butler's pickets, and General Foster who commanded in our vicinity called for help, and Ricket's division was sent to his assistance, but the attempt to retake the position was postponed, it was reported, until we had formed. Then a rush was to be made to seize and hold the railroad. As we after dark moved out to form in rear of the skirmishers, the militia stood by the side of the road which we passed out

upon, and we envied them their good fortune. Hour after hour passed away after we had formed. We could hear the sound of axes and the falling of timber in our front, the passing of railroad trains, and all indicating the arrival of troops, and we knew that we had a tough job before us. Just before daylight orders to charge were countermanded; and we returned inside the fortifications, pleased that we were not going blindly into the crash of battle, without knowing anything of our position. Afterward we learned that the Johnnies had evacuated their works in front of Bermuda Hundred, on the Bermuda Neck. When our men discovered that fact they advanced and took possession of them, and also went out and took possession of, and for some distance, tore up the R. and P. Railroad, and the advance line occupied the Rebel works. But in the evening Longstreet's men came up and promptly attacked the feeble force holding the works and drove it out, and instantly set to work to repair the mischief inflicted upon them. We should have occupied their works immediately upon our arrival, and awaited their attack upon us in them. After they had recovered the position and retaken their works, to attack would have been to assail strong fortifications manned by veteran troops with the same result as before. The line of assault had been formed with General Terry's troops in advance, our Second division supporting him and the Second brigade on the right to act as a flanking column.

As we marched out in rear of the works a sutler had just come in from the landing with some supplies, and although we had little money we began purchasing his wares. None of the men in the camp were awake and about, and after several deals not satisfactory to him, the sutler said he

would not sell any more goods, they were for the men of the regiment of which he was sutler. This did not suit some of our people, and in a moment each man who could get into the shanty was acting as clerk for himself, and it took but a few moments to clean out the whole outfit. The sutler begged to be left a comb to comb his hair with, but I doubt if his petition was granted. I secured some hot pies and some canned goods. An effort was made by some officers to discover who had perpetrated this outrage, as it was called, but without any success.

"We remained at Bermuda Hundred waiting an order to attack. It was reported on the 18th that General Wright and General Butler had quarreled, but it had no influence upon our movements.

"On the morning of the 19th we crossed the river and marched to the Petersburg front, to the vicinity of the Petersburg and Norfolk Railroad, which position we occupied, relieving some of General Martindale's division of the Eighteenth Corps. At daylight on the 20th firing began on our front, and a battery just to our right kept up a continuous fire. Shortly after sunrise a Rebel picket came into our lines. He had a number of canteens and seemed to be confused and lost, and was greatly surprised when he jumped over the works.

"During the day of the 20th a Rebel mortar battery opened upon us, and for a little while made it very lively for us. Where we were posted the railroad had been torn up, the ties used to face the inside of the breastworks with a tie standing on end against the facing and another placed bracing the upright tie to hold all in place. The third mortar shell fired, I discovered, was coming into the works and I shouted 'look out, it is coming right into the works.' There was a



scampering to get out of the way by the men who were crowded around Hank King and Ben Jones who were issuing a cooked ration. The shell dropped close beside a sergeant of Company F who lay with his back against the breastwork and his legs sprawled out, fast asleep, unconscious of the danger. I jumped behind the upright tie and crowded myself into as small a space as possible, and glanced around. I saw the shell sizzling away, and the men about it and the sergeant asleep. It seemed as though it would never burst, as though it were spellbound. Finally it went off and the sergeant was badly hurt, being hit by many of the balls it contained. Ben Jones also received a wound in the seat of his pants, and it spoiled our rations which were upset by the rush to cover. The Rebs continued their mortar practice for some time longer, but did us no more mischief. Several men were hit by sharpshooters during the day, among them Captain Mather, a rifle ball passing through his head, inflicting a serious but not fatal wound. A large body of colored infantry passed by us going toward our right. They had been relieved by our troops. Some of them had been in battle the previous day and had lost considerably. As they passed by us, they kept up a running fire of talk. One old fellow had his pants torn and I asked him how it was done. 'Oh, dere's war I got picked wid a piece ob shell.'

"On the night of the 21st we were relieved by some troops of the Eighteenth Corps, and marched to the left of the army, taking position on the left of the Second Corps, in the thick woods covering the country. Just at evening we advanced a considerable distance to the front of our entrenchments, and finally began to get careless, thinking as we had gone so far, the Rebs had left our front. Coming to a large tree that had blown down, its

roots with a large mass of earth attached formed a shield, reaching considerably above our heads, the trunk lying from us and obstructing the road. Lume and I passed to the right, and Barr with the 96th drummer to the left. I had scarcely got around when I saw a Reb on a horse with his carbine leveled at me. Instinctively I crouched and shrunk myself together as he fired and missed me. I was so rattled when I fired that I missed him as he galloped away, the drummer on the mule in pursuit. The Reb vidette, for such he was, had dropped his Mississippi carbine as he fled. We rushed forward and in a hundred yards more came to the edge of the timber, and before us was a field of grain in which were picketed some Rebel cavalry, upon whom we opened fire. The way they hustled and got onto their horses, and galloped away was lively. We had fired but a few rounds when Colonel Lessig and his adjutant rode up and forcibly ordered us to cease firing, and fall back. This we did without any loss, except it was claimed that a man named Cotten was left behind, or taken prisoner. We reached our lines without other loss, bringing the vidette's carbine with us. I shuddered afterwards when I remembered the scare that Johnnie gave me. He was probably nervous because we were on both sides of him, and that affected his aim.

"Returning to camp we made ourselves as comfortable as possible. We had a hard task to get water. We had to dig wells or trenches quite deep in the clay into which the water would percolate very slowly, but by digging a good many holes we managed to get a sufficient supply, of a milky color. The weather was beastly hot. The 2d Connecticut Heavy Artillery was camped on our right and its regimental headquarters were back in the pines. We had cut down a wide strip

of pines in the rear of our works, and our shelters were in this opening. A guard patrolled up and down in front of the camp of the 2d Connecticut. As I lay in my tent I heard a groaning and discovered that it came from one of their men who was tied up by his thumbs to a pine tree. The poor devil was in awful agony and just ready to collapse. I stood it as long as I could and then said to one of our fellows, 'I am going to cut him down.' He said, 'You had better not,' but I took out my knife and getting as close to him as I could without attracting attention, when the guard's back was to me I ran up and cutting his cords said, 'run for the woods,' but the man just sank down in his tracks, as I bounded away to my tent for shelter. That caper cost me the corporal's stripes I wore, and some extra picket duty. I sometimes think one of the fellows told who did it, but was never certain. For a number of days we were idle, but on the 29th of June we moved out to Ream's Station to help out Wilson's cavalry, who had been out on a raid, and had been cut off by Hampton, Lee, and some of Pickett's troops. We did not meet the enemy, but some of Wilson's men came to our lines, and we learned from them, that he had been badly used up and many of his men and guns captured.

"On the 30th we returned to our old camp on the Jerusalem plank road, from which we returned on the 2d of July to the position on the left of the 2d Corps. Our sutler, Sam Miller, came to us here and we rapidly filled up with the stock he brought, among which was some alleged Herkimer County butter and cheese, the former in tin cans was melted and the latter soon developed skippers."



DR. JOHN R. ADAMS

The universally honored and beloved chaplain of the 121st N. Y. Infantry, from Sept. 16, 1864, to the end of the war.





REV.  
J. R. SAGE,  
Chaplain,  
1862 to  
September 16,  
1864.

THEODORE  
STERNBERG,  
Quartermaster,  
from January 5,  
1864, to end  
of war.



## CHAPTER XV

### FROM PETERSBURG TO HARPER'S FERRY

THE Fourth of July was duly celebrated along the lines in front of Petersburg and Richmond by a shotted salute of all the cannon along our extended line. It must have been a day of seriousness to the Confederate authorities and people. The war was evidently going against them, and the old flag was floating over the camps that were constantly encroaching on their narrowing lines of defense; and on the vessels closing all the seaports of Rebeldom. To break the tightening grip of Grant upon the defenses of Richmond, General Early had been sent down the valley of the Shenandoah to make a raid into Maryland and towards Washington. To meet the raid General Lew Wallace gathered all the troops he could, but they were not sufficient to stay the advance of Early. It was determined to send the 6th Corps to the defense of Washington.

On the 6th of July the 3d Division of the Corps marched to City Point and boarded transports and steamed away. On the 8th of July the rest of the corps followed. The night was very dark, and the first part of the march was through the cut over ground from which wood had been procured, and the walking was execrable until the road was reached.

The method by which a barrel of onions was secured from the pile guarded by a colored sentinel, the rough and tumble row between men of the 121st and 96th Pennsylvania on the boat to the

different sides of which they were assigned, needs no more than a mention in the history of the regiment; the living participants will no doubt recall both transactions vividly. Colonel Beckwith did not forget any feature of it in writing his remembrances. The name of the transport was the Transylvania and the speed she made caused a refreshing breeze which the men on board enjoyed exceedingly. The next day Washington was reached and the men of the corps, rested and refreshed by the trip, but very hungry, disembarked at the Sixth Street wharf, and were quickly formed in rank and hurried up Seventh Street. Beckwith writes, "As we passed along we were greeted with clapping of hands, waving of handkerchiefs, and many remarks such as 'Bully for you,' 'Hurrah for the 6th Corps,' and we soon learned that the enemy were attacking the line of defenses on the Seventh Street road out near Brightwood, known as Fort Stevens, and that our advance brigade, Bidwell's of the 2d Division was already at work. Every man was ordered to keep in the ranks, and as we passed along water and ginger beer were given to the men and hundreds of people anxiously cheered us. The negroes were very demonstrative and saluted us with many quaint remarks one of which was, 'God bress Massa Lincum for the Six Co.,' and another, 'Dey's done got to clear out for dem red cross sojers. Wee's all saved now.'" President Lincoln was riding to the front while the 6th Corps was marching up Seventh street and was soon joined by General Wright, and together they went on to Fort Stevens, on the rampart of which the President stood surveying the scene until urged almost imperatively by General Wright to leave that exposed position.

Colonel Beckwith gives the best account of what immediately followed that I have seen. "The day

was exceedingly hot and that made the marching in the thick dust very hard after we had left the pavements of the city. When the sound of musketry reached us just before reaching Brightwood, we saw General Wright stopping by the road side with a gentleman whom we immediately recognized as President Lincoln. He answered our greeting and cheers by raising his hat. Instantly afterward we heard the sing of a bullet and we knew that the President was under fire. Moving up to the fort and deploying to the left in rear of our line of works, we found them swarming to suffocation, with all sorts of people, invalid reserves, convalescents, clerks, citizens, marines, any and everybody who could or would be able to fire a gun. Among them was Hank Johnson, a Company D man of our regiment. He ran over and saluted his friends in that company. As soon as we were deployed, before in fact, General Bidwell rushed forward with the 7th Maine, the 61st Pennsylvania, 43d, 45th, 77th and 122d New York regiments, and swept back the troops of Rodes' division of Ewell's corps, then under Early, and pushed them down across Rock Creek and beyond Montgomery Blair's residence at Silver Spring, losing quite heavily at the outset, but inflicting a greater loss upon the enemy. Under the eyes of President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton and a vast multitude of soldiers and civilians standing upon the works, where they had for many hours fearfully awaited the advance of Lee's choicest troops, the superb veterans of Bidwell rushed upon their old time foes and pushed them from our front, under a devouring fire of musketry, but stimulated by the cheering of the spectators. We were proud of our comrades, and glad that the President had an opportunity to witness something of the terrible reality of war.



Bidwell's success, and darkness coming on, ended the day's fighting, and we were not engaged. The next morning we went down the road and over the ground where the severest fighting had taken place, and saw many of our gallant fellows lying cold and stiff in death, as they had fallen. Their dead also lay scattered about thickly showing the determination of our advance and the courage of their resistance. The wounded had been gathered up, and taken to the hospital. Our loss amounted to nearly three hundred killed and wounded. The killed were buried in an enclosure to the right of the road in front of Fort Stevens, now a national cemetery, over which float the colors for which they gave their lives."

General Gordon says that the objects of this movement under Early were two, first, to draw some of Grant's troops from in front of Lee, and second, the release of the Confederate prisoners confined at Point Lookout. The capture of Washington was not contemplated, and Early was perplexed as to what to do, when his troops reached the outworks of the city. He might have entered before the arrival of the 6th Corps, if he had desired to do so, for a portion of the works in his front was bare of defenders. But all the facts seem to point to a different conclusion. Gordon goes on to say that the first of these objects was attained, but it was found impossible to free the prisoners, and no attempt was made to reach them.

In the affair at Fort Stevens only two divisions were engaged. The 3d Division, which started from City Point the day before the rest of the corps, was disembarked at Baltimore and advanced from that city to Frederick City, where it joined the forces of General Lew Wallace, and took part in the battle of the Monocacy. In this battle the small force of General Wallace, by suc-

cessful maneuvering and stubborn fighting, delayed General Early an entire day, and thus gave the time necessary for the 6th Corps to arrive at Washington, before the Confederates could enter.

General Early afterwards said that when he saw the banners of the 6th Corps in the works at Fort Stevens, he gave up all hope of taking the city. One of his officers said, "Damn the 6th Corps, we find it everywhere." These were the men whom the corps had fought at the Wilderness battle at Spottsylvania, on the 10th and 12th of May, and a part of it at the Monocacy. Gordon's Georgians had had a conspicuous part in all those terrible battles, and they knew the metal of which the 6th Corps was made.

The day following the battle of Fort Stevens, the corps advanced and found that the enemy had retreated. This was rendered necessary from the fact that General Wallace had restored the morale of his defeated army, and was threatening Early's rear and flank. The advance continued through Rockville and Seneca on the river road to the vicinity of Poolsville, the 1st Division having the lead. At Poolsville the enemy was found, but gave way before the attack of our cavalry. The corps encamped there for the night. The next day by a long and dusty march, the cavalry leading, Edwards Ferry was reached. On the 16th the river was crossed and the advance reached Leesburg, and passed beyond to Clark's Gap. Here the 3d Division under General Ricketts rejoined the corps. They showed the effect of their hard fight at Monocacy. Of them Beckwith says, "They gave us an account of their fight there, and spoke of the confidence with which the Rebels charged them, until they found out what troops were in front of them. Prisoners said that the Rebel officers told their men, that the troops in front of them were only

militia and did not know how to fight, and would run at the first charge, but as soon as we fired our first volley, they knew mighty well that, 'You uns wan't no militia,' and the first thing they asked when they saw the crosses we wore, was, 'Where did you uns come from? Is you everywhere?' They told us that they were outnumbered and outflanked, and the new troops did not hold their ground. They made as good a fight as possible under the circumstances, (a fact that General Gordon fully acknowledges). If we had been there, we could have whipped the Rebels, and now that we were together again we were anxious to get at them and show them that we could."

Part of the 19th Corps under General Emory joined us at Clark's Gap and a cavalry engagement of some importance was fought in our front. We advanced again on the 17th along the Snickerville Pike through the gap and to Snickerville Ford on the Shenandoah River. Here the 19th Corps, under General Emory, joined the army. Twice the regiment crossed the river and advanced without serious opposition some distance into the valley.

The result of these observations convinced General Grant that Early had been called back to Petersburg, by General Lee, and he ordered the 6th and 19th Corps to report as soon as possible at Petersburg. This left the 8th Corps under General Crook in the valley.

While the two corps were resting and being provided with new clothing at Georgetown, Crook attempted to advance up the valley from Harper's Ferry, and was met with a stubborn resistance by a superior force and driven back. It was soon evident that Early with an increased force was still in the valley and bent upon more mischief. The 6th and 19th Corps were therefore ordered back through the villages of Maryland, north of the Po-

tomac to Frederick City. A short halt was made, near the Monocacy battlefield, but the march was resumed and continued all night until Harper's Ferry had been passed and camp was made at Halltown.



## CHAPTER XVI

### WITH SHERIDAN IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

SOME of the troops of General Hunter after his disastrous defeat by Early, had by a circuitous route arrived at Harper's Ferry, and with the two corps returned there, constituted considerable of an army. General Hunter resigned and General Sheridan was sent to command the department constituted as the Middle Military Division, and the army was designated as "The Army of the Shenandoah." It was Sheridan's first independent command, and he was cautioned against attempting any general engagement until his army had become unified in operation, and more developed in morale. He took command on the 7th of August. The army consisted of the 6th and 19th Corps, and the army of West Virginia under General Crook, Averill's cavalry and the cavalry divisions of Torbert and Wilson, sent from the army of the Potomac. In all about thirty thousand men.

A glance at the map, will give some conception of the conditions under which the succeeding operations were carried on. From Harper's Ferry the Potomac River bends to the northwest until only a narrow strip of Maryland lies between it and the border of Pennsylvania. Then it bends slightly southwest to the western limit of the state. This conformation of the country gave to the Confederate army south of the river an advantageous field of operations. Under cover of the river, movements could be freely made to threaten Maryland and Pennsylvania, and Early was a master

of strategy. He had the example of Stonewall Jackson's previous successful campaign, and the troops with whom it had been made. His army consisted of three divisions of veteran troops, commanded by Generals Breckenridge, Rodes and Gordon, and they were operating in a friendly country, on familiar grounds. The task before Sheridan was three fold, to prevent another raid into Maryland, to keep so close to Early's army that none of it could be dispatched to Lee, and to keep from a general engagement. These three facts are needed to explain the complicated and erratic movements of the period from the 7th of August to the 19th of September. The itinerary of the brigade is given in a report made by the Adjutant General of the brigade as follows:

August 10: Marched at 6 A. M., camped at Clifton, fifteen miles.

August 11: Marched at 5 A. M. and camped six miles from Winchester, southeast.

August 12: Marched at 7:30 A. M. in rear of trains, camped at Middletown.

August 13: Crossed Cedar Creek at 7 A. M., halted eleven and one-half miles from Strasburg. Enemy found in position at Fisher's Hill. Recrossed Cedar Creek at 10 A. M. and camped on old ground.

August 16: Commenced march to Winchester at 10 P. M.

August 17: Continued march, passed through Winchester at 8 A. M. Camped on Opequon Creek at 4:30 P. M.

August 18: Marched at 6 A. M. via Berryville and camped two miles from Charlestown.

August 21: Enemy appeared at 8 A. M. Skirmished all day.

August 22: Retired at 2 A. M. toward Harper's Ferry. Camped on former ground. At 12 M.

moved to Crook's left and remained in reserve.  
August 28: Marched at 1 A. M. and camped eleven and one-half miles from Charlestown, in position held on the 21st inst.

September 3: Marched to a position near Clifton and remained until Sept 19.

September 19: Broke camp at 3:30 A. M., crossed the Opequon Creek at 9 A. M.

To fill in the incidents of this period of apparently erratic movement, resort must be made to Colonel Beckwith's narrative. He writes, "While at Halltown, Colonel Olcott and quite a number of men, who had been away wounded and sick, returned to the regiment and increased its strength and appearance materially. On the 16th we started back down the valley, marched all night and passed through Winchester at 8 o'clock in the morning and got some pies and eggs with jewelry advertisements which the inhabitants mistook for greenbacks. On the 21st the enemy drove in our pickets and we were sent out on the skirmish line and skirmished all day. On the way out, when some distance, as we supposed, from the line, Captain Van Shaick commanding our (4th) company, and Bob Topping were wounded, the Captain seriously, and Bob slightly. Both were greatly surprised however, as none of us heard the shots fired that struck them. Going out in regimental front, we were deployed on the run in heavy skirmish order in front of a wood and advanced some distance to the middle of a field from which the wheat had recently been cut. In front of us were some farm buildings, stacks and rail fences along which the Rebs were posted, and they kept up a rapid fire as we advanced. We were finally told to lie down and hold the position. General Upton rode along the line and said to us, 'I want you to show the army, that no Rebel line of battle

can drive this regiment from its position.' We held our ground all day long, firing all the time. Wilbur Champany of our company was instantly killed by a sharpshooter posted near the stacks before mentioned. We had warned him to be cautious, as they had placed several balls very close to us, one lodging in the blankets of one of the boys, and another in Hank Cole's gunstock. But Wilbur said, 'I'll have another shot at him any way,' and was in the act of aiming when a ball pierced his head. He was a fine, fearless soldier, and had not been back with us long, having just recovered from wounds in both legs, received at Salem Church. At dark we carried him back and buried him. At 2 o'clock in the morning we were assembled and marched back to our old camp. After we had gotten some sleep and a meal we marched out to our left and lay in reserve behind Crook's West Virginians, the remainder of the day."

On the 16th of September, General Grant visited Sheridan and after listening to his plans and approving them, gave him the laconic order, "Go in," and returned to Petersburg, confident that Sheridan would give a good account of himself and his army. Nor did he have long to wait. On the morning of the 19th of September at daylight the army drew out of camp in front of Berryville and took the pike leading direct to Winchester. Wilson with his division of cavalry was leading, followed by the 6th Corps in double column flanking the pike which was occupied by the artillery and trains. The crossing of the Opequon and the succeeding battle is described, so far as the 121st and the brigade took part in it, more accurately by Colonel Beckwith than by any other writer so far read. He says, "We were well armed, carried extra ammunition, four days' rations in our haver-



sacks, and had had a good long rest. Wilson's division of cavalry had crossed the creek and pushed the enemy back, fighting continuously over two miles of rough ground. The 3d Division of our corps moved up, relieving the cavalry. The 2d Division following formed on the left of the 3d. The 19th Corps (Emory's) was formed on the right of the 6th. Our division was moved to the left of the pike and massed in reserve, ready for instant movement to any point. All this under a heavy fire of musketry and artillery. These dispositions occupied a long time and it was nearly noon before a general advance was ordered. The roar of cannon and musketry told that it had begun, and the battle was on. For a time, things seemed to be going our way, and the enemy had been driven back a considerable distance by both corps. But in advancing, a gap had been opened between the right of our corps and the 19th which Getty's division could not close. Seeing this weak spot and an opening in our line, the enemy massed some troops of Rodes' division and made a gallant and desperate charge upon the left of the 19th Corps. It was at this time that we were sent in, moving by left of regiment at quickstep across the pike and for some distance through a field into a wood. There we were ordered to lie down, General Upton riding out some distance to hurry the broken troops behind our line. The 65th and 67th consolidated New York passed to our rear and right and formed. The 2d Connecticut formed to the right of the pike a little to the rear. We could see the enemy coming up in line of battle, and some of the men said it was our own troops, and others said, 'No, they are Rebs.' I remember Wilbur Phillips making several such statements before being convinced. To our right we could see our line advancing and the enemy in retreat both fir-

ing, the color sergeants waving their standards to encourage the men. But our attention was fixed in that direction but a moment, yet that was of great encouragement to us. We could see a great gap in our line to the right and knew that we were at the point of danger and that perhaps the fate of the battle rested with us. General Upton ordered us to fix bayonets and not to fire until he gave the command, and the word was passed along the line. At last the enemy reached to where there could not be any doubt of their identity, and General Upton gave the order, 'Ready, aim, fire,' and crash went that volley of lead, and down tumbled those brave fellows. 'Forward, charge,' rang out Upton's short, incisive command, and away we went. Reaching the point where their line had stood we saw many of them lying there, not all shot however. Some of them had dropped down to escape death and became our prisoners. But those who could get away fled for their lives, not stopping on the order of their going. At once out rushed our companion regiments in fine order. The 2d Connecticut advancing and firing, was compelled to withstand a severe fire from the right as well as front, and suffered severely. We reformed and were immediately moved forward and placed on the left of the 37th Massachusetts to close up a gap. This splendid regiment, armed with Spencer repeating rifles, had charged in on the charging Rebels in the nick of time, and had saved our (Stevens') battery near the road, while we had reached their front and poured in our volley. It was about this time that we lost another of our famous and gallant commanders, Gen. David A. Russell, commanding our division. He was killed by a shell while moving up with his old brigade on the charge. His command devolved upon General Upton, who shortly after 5 o'clock was also dis-

abled by a severe shell wound, and compelled to leave the field. The command of the division fell upon Colonel Edwards of the 37th Massachusetts. Captain J. D. P. Douw was commanding the regiment. Some little time after we had formed on the left of the 37th Massachusetts, the 15th New Jersey formed on our left and some other troops formed in our rear. We continued firing some until about 4 o'clock, and the 37th, being in the open, kept up a continuous fire. We being screened by small trees and brush, could not see anything to fire at, but we kept a few men in advance a little distance to keep any one from stealing upon us. About 4 o'clock we advanced about a third of a mile to some heavy timber, where the enemy opened a heavy fire upon us. But we charged them on the run, and they did not stop running away from us till they got to the village of Winchester, and we advanced to the railroad. After leaving the last piece of woods they kept us dodging their cannon shots, from two batteries playing upon us as we advanced. It was a splendid sight to see our troops coming up on the right—Crook's and Emory's, I think they were, and the cavalry on the left closing in on them and charging over the open field, with their batteries on the hill back of the town, glistening in the rays of the sun, blazing away at our charging columns. To the fact of our drawing four days' rations and my haversack's being full I owe my life. On that day just as we reached the road, a shell burst in front of us (I was on the color guard), I just felt a shock and tumbled forward. A piece of shell had struck my haversack, passed through it and my rations of pork, hardtack, sugar, coffee and tin plate. Then it struck my folded knife, fork and spoon in my pocket and glanced off. In running up the haversack had swung around in front of me and

so received the piece of iron. I rolled over on my back surprised. Several of our fellows stooped over me and asked how badly I was hurt and if they should help me back. I said I would see, and very, very carefully felt for a wound, but to my great delight could not find one, and so told them, and that they could go on, I could get along all right. Except a numbness and a bad bruise, I was unhurt and soon got over it. I was somewhat lame, but managed to keep on the march, getting to our camp by the roadside shortly after the regiment. Our total losses of the day were two men killed, and one officer and 12 men severely wounded, several having slight wounds not being reported. As I remember, Charles Carmody was the only seriously wounded man from our company."

There is no doubt that the crisis of this battle was the check given to the charge of Rodes' division of the Confederate army, upon the left of the 19th Corps. If Rodes had succeeded in driving through to the head of the ravine from which the road debouches, the army of Sheridan would have been cut in two, and the result would have been disastrous at that stage of the battle. General Upton's quick perception of the danger and his prompt disposition of the brigade and especially of the 121st New York not only checked the advance of the charging column, but also threw them into such confusion that they did not recover from it during the rest of the conflict. Due credit was given to General Upton, and the 121st New York in the official report of the battle. But Lossing, in his Pictorial History of the Civil War, gives the credit to General Emory instead of Upton and to 131st New York instead of to the 121st New York. The death of General Rodes at this crisis of the battle was a severe blow to the Confederates, as was



that of Russell to us. Captain Weaver in giving an account of this special affair at the crisis of the battle says that Captain Cronkite rushed out alone and captured a Rebel flag. Neither Beckwith nor Colonel Cronkite mentions this in their accounts of the affair. Of the result of the battle Colonel Beckwith says, "We were all greatly encouraged by the splendid victory we had won. We knew the men we had been fighting and we considered them as good as any, if not the best, in Lee's army, but they were no match for us on open ground. It was voted a luxury to be permitted to fight on a fair field instead of in the jungle we had been in, from the Rapidan to the James, and it did us great good. We knew that the Louisianians of Rappahannock Station were there, the Alabamians of Salem Church, the Virginians and Georgians of the Wilderness, and Dole's and Battle's men of Spottsylvania, and we did not fear them with a fair chance. But we were deeply depressed by the loss of Generals Russell and Upton. While it was reported that Upton's wound would not permanently disable him, we feared it would."

Of all the battles in which the brigade had been engaged since the writer was detailed to duty at brigade headquarters, this was the first in which he had not been under fire. In crossing the field later in the afternoon he came to a point where the two lines of battle must have stood for some time, steadily firing at each other. Between two thickets, probably twenty rods apart there was a row of blue clad dead lying close together, and fairly touching each other; and only a few yards in front of them a similar windrow of gray clad dead, lying as closely and straightly aligned as were their opponents of a few hours before. The wounded had all been removed.

This battle cost the enemy, besides their dead

and wounded, 2500 prisoners, 15 battle flags and 5 cannon.

Sheridan's report of this engagement written in Winchester was, "We have just sent the enemy whirling through Winchester and are after them tomorrow. We captured 2500 prisoners, 5 pieces of artillery, 9 battle flags and all the Rebel dead and wounded. Their wounded in Winchester amount to some three thousand."

According to promise the pursuit was taken up the next day, and on the 22nd of September Early was found twenty miles south of Winchester in a very strong position on Fisher's Hill. Sheridan immediately disposed his army to assail the enemy. He placed the 6th and 19th Corps in front of the Rebel works and sent the 8th Corps by a concealed and circuitous route to concentrate on the left flank of the Rebel works. When this was accomplished, late in the afternoon the command was given to charge, and while the main force of the enemy was engaged in resisting the attack in front the 8th Corps broke over the works on their left flank, and another route, more disastrous than that at Winchester, resulted. The writer had found a good position from which to view as much of the scene of battle as possible, and with a companion was watching eagerly the battle, when a Rebel battery, evidently thinking him and his companion persons of distinction and authority, sent three shells in quick succession at us, but without serious effects. The fragments fell uncomfortably near us however and we moved down out of sight towards the front.

Of this fight Colonel Beckwith gives the part taken by the 121st New York. "About 2 o'clock of the 22d we moved farther to the left, and then forward through some woods down a hill. Coming out of the woods we came to the railroad, and

could see across a ravine, the Rebel works. The gulf was spanned by a trestle work and a number of us started to cross it, but we had gone only a few steps when we discovered a gap burned in it, and we had to go back and go down the bank, cross the stream (Tumbling Run), and climb up the steep bank on the other side through the brush and briars. We used them to pull ourselves up by, but going up we were protected by the extreme steepness of the hill, from the Rebel fire. When we reached the top they were on the run, having left their breastworks, thanks to Crook's operation on the left. I do not think we could have carried their works in our front by assault. The ground was so rough that we could not have reached them in any sort of order; or in sufficient numbers at the same time, to have driven them out. Besides they had fine breastworks to protect them. That they expected to give us a very warm reception, was evidenced by the fact that they had arranged cartridges along their breastworks for rapid use. They did not take time to gather them up. They also left several cannon behind. We captured several prisoners and had only two men hurt in the whole affair. As soon as we got over their works, we formed and moved forward in pursuit. About this time Generals Sheridan, Wright and others with their staff officers rode onto the field near us and engaged in some congratulatory talk. We all believed that Early's army was completely broken up and pushed on after them with eager steps."

General Gordon says of this battle that the position at Fisher's Hill was considered impregnable, and the battle was lost by the fault of an "unprotected flank." That term covers a large number of strategic disasters. At Chancellorville it was the cause of Hooker's disaster. In the Wilderness it made the 6th of May a sad date for the 6th Corps. In many other engagements it wrought evil to the

Union forces, and now in the valley it had twice brought disaster to the army of the Confederacy. And it was destined to nearly wreck the brilliant career of the army of the Shenandoah within another month after this battle of Fisher's Hill, lost and won because of an exposed flank. In other words the strategy that discovers and takes advantage of the exposed flank of the opposing army is apt to be the successful strategy.

To take up again the itinerary of the army of the Shenandoah from Fisher's Hill to Cedar Creek. September 22: Pursued the enemy all night.

September 23: Halted near Woodstock to issue rations at 8 A. M. Marched again at 12 M. and camped at Cedar Creek.

September 24: Marched at 6 A. M. Found the enemy in position at Mt. Jackson. Formed line preparatory to an advance, when the enemy withdrew. The brigade held the advance, constantly skirmishing with the enemy, till 6 P. M., when it camped for the night six miles beyond Newmarket.

September 26: Marched without interruption to Harrisonburg, and camped on the hills east of the town.

September 29: Marched to Mt. Crawford.

September 30: Returned to camp near Harrisonburg.

October 5: Marched to Mt. Jackson. Camped at 6 P. M.

October 7: Marched to Strasburg, camped on Shenandoah River at 1 P. M., and remained in camp till Oct. 11.

October 11: Marched to near Front Royal, camped at 4 P. M.

October 13: Moved to Millwood, camped at 4 P. M.

October 14: Marched at 2 A. M., reached our present camp near Middletown at 4 P. M.

In this advance up the Shenandoah Valley and



return, frequent skirmishes with the enemy occurred. The country was beautiful and fertile, and the men lived high on what they were able to obtain in one way or another, but sometimes with not very pleasant results. Beckwith relates an experience he had which will stand for the manner in which like conduct was treated by some of the officers, not all of them: "On the 29th we were ordered into camp, and the officers had their tents put up. I thought I would take a stroll into the country and see if I could not gather some more of the luxuries with which it abounded, when we first got to a new field. So with Goodman who was a first rate forager, I went out to a little place called Bridgewater and secured a fine supply. We were not gone over two or three hours, but when we got in sight of the camping place I saw that the troops had moved. Going to where the regiment had camped we found our traps, and getting them on we started to catch the regiment, loaded down with our commissary supplies. We got to Harrisonburg and found the regiment in camp at its former location. We were pretty well tired out, but managed to get a hearty meal and a good night's sleep. The next morning at roll call the sergeant, Duroe, ordered me to report to Captain Douw, where I found several others. After reading us a sermon on the enormity of leaving camp without orders and enquiring about where I had gone and what I got, he said he must punish me severely as an example to other men and to prevent foraging. So my corporals chevrons were again taken from me, and I was compelled to do a lot of police work, which was clearing up the litter made by other men. It was pretty tough, but I stood it without a murmur. I made up my mind that when the opportunity came I would get even, but I never did, for in a short time I was promoted to corporal again."

## CHAPTER XVII

### WITH SHERIDAN IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY (Continued)

#### CEDAR CREEK

THE Army of the Shenandoah settled down in its fortified camp behind Cedar Creek with perfect confidence that it was secure from any successful attack by the forces under General Early. But that doughty warrior thought otherwise and planned to make one more attempt to win back his laurels as a fighter and strategist. His first plan was to make a surprise attack upon the right flank of the Union army. But General Gordon persuaded him to make the attack on the left.

Gordon led his men by a narrow path along the front of the mountain Front Royal, very quietly single file, in darkness and fog, and at dawn of day was ready to assail the unprotected flank, while yet the defenders were fast asleep. Of the confusion that followed and the utter rout of the 8th and 19th Corps, many persons have written and our narrative involves only the story of the part, a portion of the 6th Corps took in the affair. It is enough to say of the entire corps, that it was not at any time disorganized, that it fell back to a more favorable position in good order, that General Wright had succeeded in rallying a large portion of the 19th Corps and considerable of the 8th, and that there had been no serious fighting for two hours, when General Sheridan came up. No doubt his presence and words were cheering

and inspiring to the entire army. A tried and trusted leader is always a source of courage and determination to an army, even in a time of extreme hazard. But the reputation and work of General Wright, commanding the army in the absence of General Sheridan, have not received the credit that was really due him.

Comrade Beckwith writes very interestingly of the condition of affairs in the camp on the night of the 18th. His description of the feeling of security and gaiety that prevailed among officers and men, reminds one of Lord Byron's description of the care free gaiety in Belgium's Capital the night before the battle of Waterloo.

He says, "In the interval between the 14th and the 19th we lay in camp at Cedar Creek. I went out one day with the teams for forage, and in addition got some honey, apple butter, butter, apples, and mutton, also visited a cave in the vicinity and explored it with several others.

"On the 17th we were paid, as I remember, and on that day, all who were voters had the privilege of sealing up their votes and sending them home. Each party had a representative in camp. I don't know how the vote stood in our regiment as I never heard it announced, except that it was said that President Lincoln had a majority. We also drew clothing and shoes, and the sutlers came up and opened a tempting display of their goods, which were eagerly sought after. Supplies and mails from home, and the exhilaration of our late victories made life as pleasant, if not more so, than we had known it while in the service. The weather was delightful, the days bright, warm and pleasant, the nights cool, making a blanket comfortable. I remember I was corporal of the guard that day with but light duty, three guards in a relief, one at Colonel Olcott's headquarters, one at the com-

missary and one at the sutler's. One of the men in my relief had just come back to the regiment, and he entertained me with his experiences while away. When my relief was off, instead of going to sleep I played penny ante with Rowle Boothroyd, Judson Chaplin, Baldwin and some others until nearly time to go on my relief. There was a party also at the headquarters of the 65th New York or the 2d Connecticut, and our colonel was over there and they were having a jolly time. It was a bright moonlight night. Off toward the creek a streak of fog was rising, which in the distance looked like a long, narrow streak of snow against the side of the mountain. Our camp was located to the right and rear of the army, between Meadow and Middlemarsh brooks, two small tributaries to Cedar Creek, which is quite a good sized creek, and is tributary to the north fork of the Shenandoah, emptying into the river a little over a mile from the left of the entrenchments, in front.

"The entrenchments extended from this point to the right and to the Middletown and Strasburg turnpike. From this pike extending to Meadow Brook was entrenched the 19th Corps. A division of the 8th Corps occupied the entrenchments on the left flank of the army, commanded by General Thorburn. In rear of this division camped on the pike was R. B. Hayes' division of the 8th Corps. Pickets and videttes covered the flanks and front along the North Fork and Cedar Creek. General Gordon says that the cavalry videttes were stationed in the river itself and could be heard splashing through the water while traversing their beat. But the dense fog obscured their vision.

"At 5 o'clock on the morning of the 19th I was called to stand my trick. The entertainment of the night before, had robbed me of some needed sleep,



and I was reluctant and slow about turning out. Finally I got out, rubbed my eyes and shook myself, looking round to get my bearings. Everything was quiet, except the snoring of the men in the tents. I walked to the fire and crouched around it to get warm letting the corporal I was to relieve, growl for my not hurrying up. The rest of the relief by this time were up and ready, so we marched around and posted them and the relieved guard turned in. I asked where the officer of the day, and the officer of the guard were, and think that I was told that they were at the headquarters of the colonel of the 65th New York. I filled and lit my pipe and sat down by the fire, thinking I would take a walk over there as soon as I got warm and see what was going on. I had been smoking a few minutes by the fire and was getting sleepy. 'This won't do,' I thought, and got up and stretched myself and took a look about. Looking towards the Belle Grove House, General Wright's headquarters and extending my gaze to the right over the line of camps, I noticed they were hid in a bank of fog, and that the moon had gone down or was obscured. The time could not have been over half past five, and all was as peaceful and quiet as though no sign of war would ever be seen in that peaceful valley again. Sheridan's army lay in quiet upon the beautiful fields, oblivious of the fact that a Rebel host in battle array was close upon it, and in an hour one of the most remarkable battles in the annals of war would be in progress.

"As I turned to the fire again, I heard a few shots down to the left. Then a few shots followed by a volley, then a volley to the right. Instantly I thought that some of Moseby's bushwackers, as we called them, had attacked our cavalry outposts. Immediately another volley was fired. I im-

mediately ran to the tents, and kicking the feet of the sleepers, yelled, 'Get up. There is an attack on the line.' On the left two or three came running up, and I sung out, 'Wake up the drummers. Call the Colonel and the Officer of the Day.' In a moment the men came swarming around. In the mean time more musketry was heard, and the noise of the awakening camps grew on the ear, and the long roll of the drums broke out in the different regiments. The men rapidly got on their accoutrements, the officers came up, and before the long roll had ceased we were mostly in line, with our arms, ammunition, blanket-rolls, haversacks and canteens slung, waiting for orders. The roar of the battle increased, growing nearer rapidly. We moved a short distance in the direction of the sound, then filed abruptly toward the left and toward the Middletown pike, the left of the regiment in advance. For some distance the fog was so dense nothing could be seen, but enough could be heard to warn us that some dreadful calamity had befallen the army. Finally we were halted, faced to the front and advanced a short distance. The 2d Connecticut was on our left towards the pike, the 65th and 67th New York (consolidated) on our right and the 95th and 96th Pennsylvania (now consolidated) on the right of the brigade.

"By this time the first gray of dawn began to show, and up from the fog in our front came men moving rapidly toward us, the continued noise and tumult of conflict growing nearer all the time. The first men to reach us were partially clothed and without arms, and pausing an instant under orders of our officers to halt and rally, they told us that they had been fired upon in bed, and had run away to prevent being taken prisoners, not having time to dress or get their arms. Following these came a disorderly mass of men, officers and

privates, as helpless and panic-stricken a crowd as ever was seen. They evidently had been aroused from sleep, and grabbing whatever they could put their hands on, had rushed away from the foe they had not seen, and kept on running until they struck our line. Our officers made strenuous efforts to check and compose them, but with no success. Colonel Higinbotham of the 65th New York begged and pleaded with them to shake off their fear and be men, but without avail. They were simply insane with fear, and so cursing them, we permitted them to continue their flight. And it was well that this was done, because they would have been of no use with us. They belonged to many commands and were only partially armed and clothed and there was nothing to organize. It was pitiful to see men who had behaved gallantly on other battlefields and performed heroic service, so lost to all sense of reason. But I suppose that almost any body of troops under like circumstances, fired into as they were, while lying asleep in their beds, would have been panic-stricken and stampeded.

“Finally our officers, seeing that there was no use in attempting to rally them, rode out in front into the fog and hurried them back behind the lines, so that they would not impede our action in checking the advance of the Rebels. We could hear the artillery and wagon trains along the road and near headquarters, rushing away in disordered haste to our left to reach the Winchester pike and get to the rear. The whistle of bullets began to become distinct in our vicinity. We were close to the road that runs from the pike to Hurtle’s Ford on Cedar Creek. There were no troops to the left of our brigade toward Middletown. It was reported afterwards that a brigade of the 19th Corps had been posted on our left when we first formed.

If there was we never saw them. At this time it was possible to distinguish a man fifty paces off. We had been in this position a short time and the men from the surprised camp had about all passed. A few brave fellows coming back kept firing as they retreated. We moved towards the rear a short distance, our regiment being posted along the top of a little ridge, with the other regiments in the road. Battery C (Lamb's) 1st Rhode Island was posted along the ridge with us. As the enemy came up we opened fire, and the onward career of Gordon's division was checked. His division consisted of Evans' (Georgians), of Terry's (Virginians), of Hays and Safford's (Louisianians) whom we had met at Rappahannock Station. The tide of battle was stayed for a time, but they poured a withering fire upon our little brigade, and Lamb's gunners and our men were falling fast. We maintained our position for nearly half an hour, until the fog lifted and revealed our position to be perilous in the extreme. To our left the enemy had advanced past our rear, and on the right our line sagged away back to our old camp. As the fog lifted the enemy in our front saw the exposed position we occupied, and the fewness of its defenders, and charged for the guns of Lamb's battery. But our well-directed fire drove them back, and we, receiving orders to retire, withdrew in good order and brought the guns with us, hauling one by hand.

"Here we lost heavily, Captains Douw and Burrell being desperately and fatally wounded and Lieutenant Johnston severely. W. H. H. Goodier was shot by my side. We made an effort to get our wounded back but the enemy was so close upon us that we were obliged to abandon the effort and they fell into the hands of the enemy. However, Wilber M. Phillips of Company D, who



here lost a leg, was saved by comrades from falling into the hands of the enemy. Falling back across the open ground we made a stand in a belt of timber about 800 yards distant and kept up a fire on the enemy to our left who were nearest us. Those in our front did not press us, evidently reluctant to face any more of the music we had been giving them. To our right the enemy were pushing our men back, and to our left, even after falling back, we seemed to be as far advanced as any portion of our line, and we had a splendid view each way. We had no confusion in our ranks nor sign of demoralization. The stampede of the other troops and the spectacle they presented, I think, stimulated every one of us to do his share, and their's too if possible. Our officers had exhibited great heroism and daring, offering too fair a mark for the enemies' rifles, and many of them in the brigade had been shot down. After remaining a little while in the woods firing upon a battery which the enemy placed near the place vacated by Lamb's Rhode Island battery, an officer rode up and ordered us back, and we formed again in a field to the rear and right of the timber we had vacated, without the enemy's coming up to rifle range, although they still continued their artillery fire. We remained in this position for some time, and Colonel McKenzie of the 2d Connecticut took command of the brigade in place of General Hamblin who had been wounded. Colonel McKenzie then deployed our regiment in heavy skirmish order, and we moved back again slowly for a long distance. The enemy did not follow us closely, and we advanced again about the same distance and formed line of battle in a piece of woods. Our brigade and the New Jersey brigade were formed in two lines with the 65th New York, the 95th Pennsylvania and the 2d Connecticut in the first

line, and our regiment and the Jersey brigade in the second line. Here we remained until about 3 o'clock when we were ordered to advance. At this time General Sheridan rode upon the field and along the line from our left. There were a number of officers with him, among whom I saw Colonel McKenzie and Colonel Olcott. He rode rapidly along, making some remarks I did not hear, but we cheered him enthusiastically. A few moments after he had passed the order to advance was given and forward we moved. As the first line reached the edge of the woods they received a heavy volley and halted. Colonel McKenzie rode out in front and cheered them forward and they moved forward again some distance and again were checked. We were then ordered up and reaching our front line, charged forward and drove the enemy from the hill in front, and occupied it. Colonel McKenzie being wounded, Colonel Olcott took command and we held the crest for some time and kept up a continuous fire upon the Rebels who were posted behind some stone walls running nearly parallel to our line, about two hundred and fifty yards in front. The enemy opened some guns upon us from a high hill behind their line of battle, making our position very uncomfortable. Here James Jenks, our color sergeant, received his death wound. He was kneeling with the color staff in front of him when a shell burst and a fragment tore away the lower part of his face and lacerated both hands. Eli Oaks said, 'Carry him back, he is a dead man,' but the gallant fellow raised himself up and attempted to unbuckle his body belt, but we did it for him. Doctor Slocum said he had the greatest nerve of any man he ever saw, and if he had been in a hospital where he could have had extra good care, he believed he would have recovered. But he was so terribly wounded that he died several

days later. The noble fellow had lived through all the battles of the regiment and had borne the colors to the front on every field, ever since he had taken them from the hand of Sergeant Bain at Salem Church. No better soldier ever lived. The enemy along the stone wall kept up a severe fire, and a good many were hit here, and John Rowland of Company D was instantly killed by a solid cannon ball. One of those hit was Swartout, of Company F, through the shoulder. He used to be our fortune teller. His predictions were all good whether they came true or not. After remaining, it seemed to me an age, we were ordered to charge and drive the enemy from his position. It looked like death to us all, but the moment we jumped up and advanced over the crest, the devils behind the wall broke and ran as fast as they could, and it was a race without any order, after them all the way to Cedar Creek. But before we reached it, the cavalry came in on the left. I stood on the bank and fired at the last of them, as the cavalry swarmed down upon them, and continued the pursuit on horseback which we had begun on foot. They kept up the pursuit until they had driven the fugitives that escaped behind the fortifications of Fisher's Hill. All the captures of the morning except the prisoners were retaken and as many more of men and cannon. In the last charge Lieutenant Tucker was killed and Major Galpin and Lieutenant Howland were wounded. Our losses for one day had been one officer killed, two mortally wounded (Captains Douw and Burrell) and two wounded, nine men killed and thirty-eight wounded, seven mortally, out of a total of eight officers and two hundred and twenty-one men present for duty in the morning, nearly one-fourth of the entire command. The other regiments of the brigade had suffered equally. So in a blaze

of glory had ended the battle of Cedar Creek. The appalling disaster of the morning had been retrieved and a brilliant victory won from the tried veterans of General Early. His beaten and disorganized army, in apparently irretrievable disorder was pursued by our relentless cavalry far up the valley, toward their mountain fastness and hiding places.

“Coming back from Cedar Creek after the cavalry had taken up the pursuit, we went over the ground the Rebels had taken, and it was an awful sight. They had stripped our dead and wounded, and many of their wounded still lay where they had fallen, although the ambulance corps men were gathering them up as fast as possible. Going to where we had the first fight in the morning, I saw several of our regiment dead and nearly naked. I remember Cady of Company A because he had a peaceful look on his face and appeared as natural as life. Captain Douw had an awful experience. He had on a pair of fine high top boots, and they had pulled off the one on his sound leg and attempted to do the same from his wounded leg, but could not because it had swollen so, and it caused him terrible pain. Finally a Rebel officer came along and made them desist, and covered the wounded leg with some straw. Both Captains Douw and Burrell were gallant soldiers and great favorites with the men, Captain Burrell especially so. We buried our dead with simple ceremonies and visited our wounded at the division hospital on the 20th. We slept in our old camp the night of the 19th. It had been fought through and was a wreck, several dead men lying in it when we returned.

“Much has been said and written about the battle of Cedar Creek, but none of the Union writers have given to General Horatio G. Wright, our



corps commander, and the commander of the army during that trying and terrible day, the praise and credit due to his superb courage and skill which saved the army from utter defeat."

(General Gordon, however, gives to General Wright the credit of having restored the morale of the demoralized corps and bringing the army of the Shenandoah into readiness to renew the battle before the arrival of General Sheridan.)

"Buchanan Read's poetical description of Sheridan's ride from Winchester to the army on that day seems to have hidden the deeds of our grand corps commander, and deprived him of his just meed of praise. His own corps knew what he did and what they did, and gave him his just reward, by their admiration for the heroic part he performed at the battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864."

After returning to the former location and again pitching his tent and setting up the desk of the A. A. General, the writer noticed a body lying unburied a little way off and went to see why it had been left unburied. A bullet had torn the scalp from the top of the man's head and from the wound his brains were oozing out, but he was lying absolutely still and breathing as regularly and quietly as an infant. Another visit in the morning and again in the afternoon disclosed no change in his condition except a weaker action of his lungs; but the next morning he was dead, and they buried his body.

General Gordon in describing the battle of Cedar Creek, says that when he arrived with his division in front of the 6th Corps he made preparation to attack it, but was restrained by General Early who assured him that the corps would soon retreat, and that he answered, "General, that is the 6th Corps, and it will not leave the field without a fight." But

Early was certain of a complete victory already won, and did not want to lose any more of his men in what he considered unnecessary fighting. He exulted in the conviction that he had avenged his defeat of a month before at Winchester.

The cavalry pursued the retreating Rebels, followed and supported by the 19th Corps as far as Strasburg and Fisher's Hill. The cavalry pushed on to Edenburg keeping the Johnnies on a jump and gathering prisoners and spoils of war at every step.

This virtually ended the services of the 121st in the valley of the Shenandoah.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### BACK TO PETERSBURG AND WINTER QUARTERS

THE corps remained in the camp near Middletown until November 9th, the men doing only picket and guard duty. Then it retired to Kernstown where a slight skirmish with the enemy occurred on the morning of the 10th. Picket and guard duty continued until the 1st of December, when the corps broke camp and marching to Stevenson's Station entrained for Washington. The next day it embarked on steamers and arrived at City Point on the 4th. There cars were taken to Parke's Station. Here the railroad was left and the corps or a portion of it, relieved the 3d Division of the 5th Corps, and occupied their finely laid out, and well constructed winter quarters near the Jerusalem plank road, the position we had left five months before. The regiment now numbered not far from 175 men and was commanded by Colonel Olcott. On the 9th of December a reconnaissance was made to the vicinity of Hatcher's Run. Rain and then snow made farther operations impossible, and the corps returned to camp and went into winter quarters.

Of these weeks of rest and recuperation, Beckwith writes: "We passed the holidays in pretty good shape, but the first lot of boxes of goodies that were permitted to be sent us had been rifled of their contents, much to our discontent, and it would have gone hard with the thieves, if we could have gotten hold of them.

"However, others soon came, which consoled us



SURGEON JOHN O. SLOCUM,  
Who served from July 1, 1863, to  
the end of the war.

D. M. HOLT,  
Assistant Surgeon,  
from September  
2, 1862, to October  
16, 1864.







REV.  
ISAAC O. BEST,  
the compiler and  
author of this  
history.

CLINTON BECKWITH,  
From whose writings many  
extracts are used in com-  
piling this history.



for the loss of the first. Some socks and mittens came to us from the Sanitary Commission. There were plenty of sutlers with the army, so we managed to pass the time away. The weather as a rule was bad and picket duty the toughest work we had to do. We had to keep on the lookout for the Johnnies constantly. Quite a number of North Carolinians came in and entertained us with a description of the condition of the Rebel forces. Their bill of fare, their clothing and their personal appearance bore out the startling stories they told. They seemed glad to get away, and swore that they would not fight any more secession battles. The Union and the Old Flag was good enough for them; but they had been conscripted and forced to come. The months of January and February were but repetitions of December, without special incidents. Many men came back to the regiment, who had been sick, wounded and on detached duty, and on dress parade we made a very tidy looking battalion."

At this point in his narrative Colonel Beckwith gives a very amusing account of his experiences while on furlough granted on the 25th of April, which he managed to prolong to the 14th of March. During the winter an effort was made to fill up the regiment so that the officers who had been commissioned, but could not be mustered in, because the number of enlisted men was below the required standard, might receive their full rank. These were Lieutenant Colonel Olcott, Captain Cronkite and Captain Kidder, who had been commissioned respectively Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel and Major. Several recruiting officers were sent home to Herkimer and Otsego Counties to obtain recruits, but their efforts did not avail to fill the regiment and the 1st of March found the regiment still deficient in numbers. Application was then made to the

Secretary of War for the assignment of four hundred recruits to the regiment. This application was endorsed as follows: By General McKenzie, commanding the brigade. "Approved," by General Wheaton, commanding the division, "I think it greatly for the interest of the division that the 121st New York Regiment be filled. Its services have been most marked and conspicuous, not surpassed by any regiment I can name, and its gallant commander is entitled by continuous and valuable services to be mustered as Colonel, he having held the commission for more than a year, and has frequently commanded a brigade in battle, and with great credit." By Gen. H. G. Wright, commanding the corps, "Respectfully forwarded, with urgent request that recruits or drafted men sufficient to fill up this regiment be promptly assigned to it. And I hereby endorse all that has been said by Generals McKenzie and Wheaton in regard to the services and standing of the regiment, and the merits of its commander." General Meade forwarded it to Washington with this endorsement: "It is *especially* requested that this regiment may be specially designated to be filled up by assignment of men to its ranks, in consideration of its *gallant* reputation, and the distinguished services of its commander." This application, thus endorsed received consideration by the War Department, and four hundred additions were ordered to be sent to the 121st; but they did not arrive until after the surrender of Lee, and while the corps was at Burksville Junction. Then the officers were duly mustered.

During the winter also changes were made in the field and staff, by appointment and promotion. Dr. James P. Kimball was commissioned Assistant Surgeon. Vice Dr. Holt resigned. Frank E. Lowe was promoted to be Adjutant, Sergeant Major J. L.

Morthon, Sergeant Newber, N. A. Armstrong, Thomas J. Hassett and Philip R. Woodcock were promoted to lieutenants. Morris C. Foote, of Cooperstown was also commissioned as lieutenant. Lieut. E. C. Weaver resigned on account of sickness and Lieutenant Kelly died of disease.

The ordinary duties of camp life, drills, picket and fatigue, in trenches and forts, was broken once when in February 5th to 8th the brigade was sent to support the 5th Corps on an expedition to Hatcher's Run. At one time the line of the 5th Corps was broken and some of the troops fell back in confusion. The brigade restored and stiffened the line and became lightly engaged. It crossed the Run to the front twice and lost seven men wounded. The weather was very bad, and the return to camp was a great relief. Perhaps some of the surviving members of the regiment remember what happened when they were sent on St. Patrick's day with the teams to get pine poles to be used for strengthening Fort Fisher, and failed to get past the Irish Brigade that was celebrating the day with races and games of all sorts. They had an enjoyable day, but the toting of a log of cord wood all night, and extra picket duty somewhat cancelled the pleasant remembrance of it. Major Cronkite then in command of the regiment, did not escape denunciation by the transgressors.

General Grant says in his memoirs that at this time he was in great anxiety lest Lee should leave his position protecting Petersburg and Richmond, and leaving only a thin line for the purpose of deception send or take the greater part of his army to the assistance of Johnston and overwhelm Sherman in his advance through the Carolinas. If he should do this before the roads became passable for artillery and trains, a great disaster to the Union cause might result.



But General Lee determined to make one more desperate effort to break the vice-like grip that the Union army had on Petersburg; and so directed General Gordon with a chosen force to attack, and if possible break through the besieging forces at Fort Steadman. This attempt was made on the morning of the 25th of March. Fort Steadman was taken, but immediately was retaken by the Union forces in the vicinity.

Upon the breaking out of the tumult of the attack on Fort Steadman, the 6th Corps, or the 1st Division of it, was ordered out and advanced rapidly towards the point of attack. But before it reached there, the affair was over, and the division returned to the rest of the corps. We had become familiar with one feature of General Grant's strategy, the relieving of an attack on one portion of his line, by an attack on some distant portion of the enemy's line, and were not surprised therefore when orders came to form line of battle and advance on the works of the enemy. Let Colonel Beckwith tell what was done. "About noon we marched back to camp, and then moved to the left and formed line of battle and charged the skirmishers in front. We ran over their skirmish line for some distance, taking some prisoners. We then advanced on their main works, getting up to the house near them, under a heavy fire of artillery and musketry. We occupied this position until ordered back to the enemy's former skirmish line, but after a short time went forward to the top of the knoll and threw up breastworks. At midnight we returned to camp, leaving some of the regiment on picket in the new line we had built."

Colonel Cronkite then in command of the regiment gives a fuller account of this affair. The 2d Brigade was on the right of the corps, and the 121st on the right of the brigade. The advance carried

the regiment to within seven hundred yards of the main work of the enemy, and the right of the regiment was exposed to a severe fire from front and flank. When the line had fallen back and thrown up the breastworks, it was within a hundred yards of the Rebel fortifications and the right flank was still exposed to an enfilading fire of artillery and musketry. An effort by a body of the enemy to turn the right flank of the corps was met by the two companies on the right changing front and opening fire on the advancing enemy, which drove them back to the shelter of their works. Beckwith continues: "The only man killed was Lieutenant Duroe, who commanded our company. He was the largest man in the regiment, and a brave and impetuous officer. We brought his body to camp and gave him a soldier's burial.

"We reached the conclusion that the enemy's lines were thinly held, else he would not permit us to peaceably hold the strong position we had taken and entrenched, within easy striking distance of his main line."

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CAPTURE OF PETERSBURG BY 6TH CORPS

THE 31st of March was spent by the 121st on the skirmish line, and on its return to camp, orders were received to hold itself in readiness for moving at a moment's notice. On the 1st of April firing was heard off to the left, and it was rumored that the 5th Corps had already begun the anticipated attack upon the enemy's works.

At 10 o'clock of April 1st the 6th Corps, under orders to leave all unnecessary accoutrements under guard in camp, and to move as quietly as possible in light marching order, moved quietly out of camp and formed in column of assault in the rear of our picket line. This was done so silently, as not to be detected by the pickets of the enemy. The position occupied by the corps was the one captured on the afternoon of the 25th of March, behind the picket line then formed, not more than two hundred yards from the works of the enemy. A fierce artillery fire had been opened along the whole line to cover the point of attack, and the roar of the cannon from both sides, and the flight of the shells distinguished by their burning fuses made the night one long to be remembered by those who saw and heard the grand duel of the artillery. The time set for the assault was 4 A. M., but on account of the darkness and fog the order was not given till 4:45.

Colonel Olcott's report gives the part of the 121st in it: "The brigade being in two lines, the 121st New York was on the right of the second

line. When the order to advance was given, the regiment moved rapidly forward, maintaining a good line till within about 200 yards of the enemy's works when the second line was moved a short distance to the left and then forward again. This together with the darkness and the character of the ground, divided the regiment somewhat. Most of the men with the colors entered the works farther to the right than intended and captured two guns. One of these was immediately turned upon the enemy, loaded and fired by Sergeant Redfield M. Dustin, Company F. Sergeant Dustin served for nearly two years in the 1st Massachusetts Battery, and is a skillful artillerist. These guns were carried off and receipt obtained for them. The portion of the regiment engaged in taking the guns mentioned, with a part of the 95th Pennsylvania, 2d Connecticut and 95th New York advanced along the enemy's works for nearly a mile, capturing all the artillery in them and holding the works until ordered to join the part of the regiment to the left. The regiment in this charge captured about two hundred prisoners."

The more circumstantial account of this affair given by Colonel Beckwith, is as follows: "About midnight we moved out of camp and marched to Fort Fisher, near the lookout tower, and moved out of the works. The strictest silence was enjoined. As we approached the line taken by us on the 25th of March, we formed in line of battle in rear of the 2d Connecticut and had scarcely gotten into position when we were ordered to lie down. At the same time the pickets began firing, as we supposed, to cover the noise of our forming, and we were treated to the sensation of lying upon a field for a long time exposed to the fire of the enemy's skirmishers without any shelter. Every once in a while some one would get hit with a ball,



and we could hear his cry of anguish as the lead tore through. Finally our men, by stopping their fire and crying, 'April Fool, Johnnies,' restored quiet, and for a long time we lay perfectly quiet, waiting for the time to come when we could move forward. The night was cold and damp and we were chilled and numb. There was some firing away to our right but not more than usual. Word was passed along, that when the battery opened at Fort Fisher it was the signal to charge. We were to advance without further orders and as silently as possible. It seemed to me as though that battery would never open. Anson Ryder, who lay beside me, said 'I would rather charge than lie here in this suspense and misery.' As the first gray dawn began to show, out belched the guns, and we could mark the course of the shells as their fuse left a dim spark passing to the Rebel works. We were up in another moment, in closed ranks, feeling for the man on our right we plunged forward in the darkness. In another instant the Rebel skirmishers delivered their fire and their battery in our front opened. Almost its first shot cut Jimmie Hendricks of Company A in two. A little farther on, and the Rebel works were marked by the jets of flame from their rifles as they fired upon us. Another instant and we were up to their abatis, and we got into a tangle looking for a place to get through. Finally some fellow to our left sang out, 'Here's a road,' and a lot of us made for it and followed it on a run to the Rebel works at that point a fort. Climbing up the sides, it being now light enough to see a few paces ahead, I went in through the embrasure of the guns, one of which had been firing on us. The Johnnies had run back among the huts and were firing back at us. We ran down toward them and they ran back into the field. Quite a number hid in the huts, and our

fellows hunted them out. Afterwards a lot of us fellows charged over the field to the road, and fired into the running Rebs, and also into some wagons which were passing. We also twisted off the telegraph wires with our bayonets, continuing our firing at everything in sight. The Johnnies made it too hot for us in the road, as there were but a few of us, and so we went back to the house where a good many of our men had gathered and from which we were directed to move to the right along the enemy's lines. This we did for a long distance without much opposition, until we came to a fort, which commanded and enfiladed the line on which we were advancing. Our advance was checked until a division of the 24th Corps came up from the direction we had come, and word was passed along for the 2d Brigade men to move back and assemble, which we did. Getting back to Fort Fisher we found the balance of the regiment and the brigade. Some of the regiment had gone to the left when they got into the works. The friendly darkness had destroyed the Rebels' aim, and by reason of it many a man's life had been spared, but we had lost enough. Anse Ryder had been hit in the leg near the thigh, Robinson had lost one arm, Frank Lowe had been hit, and a number of others, I do not now recall. We had taken a lot of Johnnies prisoners, had killed and wounded some, and taken their guns; but we did not stop to bother with them—just told them to get to the rear and hunt up the provost marshal, which they were apparently very glad to do, and without escort at that. We dumped the brass guns over the fort and ran them towards our line to guard against accident. The wounded were carried back to the hospital near the observatory where we found Anse Ryder. Doctor Slocum said it would kill him to amputate his leg, and that he would

die if it was not done, and Anse wanted to die with it on; so the doctor fixed him up and sent him to the hospital, and he is living to-day with the Rebel bullet and the bone of his leg cemented together like old friends."

"The brigade as soon as assembled was ordered to the right to support a portion of the 9th Corps. In this movement it passed by its camp, but was not permitted to stop for the accoutrements left there, but was hurried on to the vicinity of Fort Sedgwick and passing through entered the first line of the enemy's works that had been captured by the men of the 9th Corps, but they had there been checked. Many of the dead and wounded were still in these works, and it was by no means a pleasant duty to occupy them the rest of the day and during the night, until 3 o'clock, when the brigade was formed in skirmish order and advanced on Petersburg. It thus happened that the 2d Brigade of the 1st Division of the 6th Corps was the first organization of the army of the Potomac to enter the city of Petersburg, and unfurl its flag on a public building there. About the same time an officer of another corps had ridden in and placed a flag on another building, but he was not accompanied by a body of troops. It was with him an individual adventure, but our flag was raised in the regular course of official service."

Our flag was unfurled on the Court House, the other on the Post Office. Beckwith continues: "We secured a lot of Confederate currency and postage stamps, and routed out a lot of stragglers and sneaks, hid about the city. At the Commissary we secured some nice hams and some apple jack that was quite smooth, and under its softening influence we forgave a good many of our foes. Some of the women, whose houses we entered, to get the Johnnies the darkies told us were

hidden there, gave us a startling exhibition of their ability to blackguard us. About noon we were in line again and on our way to our old camp. Passing along through the city we saw President Lincoln and General Grant, and gave them a marching salute. Soon reaching camp, we slung our traps, and the same night reached our division fagged out, but ready to push on after Lee's broken columns. On the morning of the third we were on the road from Petersburg to Burkesville. Our progress was not very rapid and we saw but little evidence of Lee's retreat. During the day we heard firing in our front but as we advanced it seemed to recede. After a ten-mile march we went into camp by the roadside near an old church."

The 4th and 5th of April were passed in marching, sometimes slowly, at other times passing along rapidly as if to meet an emergency, and all along were evidences of the disorganized condition of a large portion of the enemy and the straits he was in. But General Longstreet's corps, which had occupied the works north of the James River, and therefore had not been engaged in the previous disastrous battles, had come up and now formed the rear guard of the fleeing army. His troops were still capable of strenuous resistance and maintained a bold front against attacks of cavalry and infantry. General A. P. Hill had been killed and his corps assigned to the two other corps making the corps of Longstreet and Ewell by no means insignificant bodies of troops. Ewell had the advance, and Longstreet brought up the rear. Ewell's corps was the one that suffered the most, because it was Grant's purpose to cut off the retreat of Lee and compel a surrender. The 2d and 6th Corps up to this point had been following the rear of the retreating Confederates. General Sheridan



had asked for the 6th Corps to be sent to him at Five Forks, but the 5th was nearer, and was sent instead.

Lee's intention was to take his army to Danville, to which place Davis had removed the Capital of the Confederacy, and he was expecting to retain the control of the railroad to that point. But at Jettersville, a station on the railroad, he found that Sheridan had anticipated him. Quite a severe battle was fought at Jettersville in which the Rebels were defeated, and were compelled to turn the head of their column toward Appomattox. Of the next day's march Beckwith says, "On the morning of the 6th we marched at 6 o'clock in rear of our 2d Division, and in the expectation of hearing musketry firing break out in our front at any moment. For several miles we moved through the woods over a very rough country, crossing deep ravines, and streams through swampy bottoms and dense thickets, but did not find the enemy. About 10 o'clock we moved out to the road. We followed our 3d Division by way of Jettersville toward Deatonville. Everything and everybody now seemed to be in a hurry. Everything on wheels was halted in the open places except the artillery and ambulances, which were making desperate efforts to keep up with the infantry, and it became evident to us that at the rate we are going we should soon catch up with the enemy. Crossing Flat Creek we kept on with our rapid march, the sound of musketry and artillery increasing in our front. Finally coming to an open place we could see a road in our front crossing the road upon which we were marching, and we were told that it was the road along which the enemy was retreating, and that our cavalry had overtaken them and captured a portion of their wagon train and many prisoners, and that we were

close to Lee's infantry. As we came out of the woods into the open field that stretched down to Sailor's Creek, we could see the troops in our front, the 3d Division, deploying in line of battle to the right of the road and moving forward. Beyond on the opposite hillside we could see across the valley about a mile away, the enemy's line of battle formed and awaiting our attack. We instantly realized the work we had to do, and a tough job it looked to be. Rushing along we were soon in line of battle, with the 37th Massachusetts on our right and across the road along which we had come. The troops on our left had deployed first and we had to run to get into line with them, but we were on good ground and got along all right until we came into the vicinity of the creek and into the range of the enemy's fire, which now was rapid and heavy, but on account of the conformity of the ground not very destructive. Here after halting for a short time to reform we were ordered to charge, and drive the enemy from their works. Forward on a run we went as rapidly as the steep hill would permit, and in a moment we were up to, and over their slight earthworks, the occupants offering no further resistance, after emptying their guns in our faces. On our right the 37th Massachusetts did not get on as well. They were more exposed, had a farther distance to go and suffered very heavily. Colonel Olcott, finding the ground in front of him clear and the enemy holding on to the works on the right, half wheeled the 121st to the right and moved lengthwise and partly in the rear of the enemy's line and they immediately abandoned their works and surrendered. These last troops we encountered were Marines, or land sailors, and had never before been in battle. They were mostly boys and were commanded by G. W. Custis Lee who fell into our hands with a

large number of prisoners and several stands of colors. One of these was a beautiful silk banner belonging to the 8th Savannah Guards, whose organization dated back to 1804. This was captured by H. S. Hawthorne of Company F and by him turned over to Colonel Olcott. The inscription on this flag was as follows:

“To the Defenders of Our Altars and Our Hearths. Presented by the Ladies of Savannah, Ga., to the Eighth Savannah Guards.”

“This indicates how complete was the misconception at that time on the part of its donors, of the objects and purposes of the Union Army. It indicates that they regarded us as marauders, with no high or patriotic purpose, but bent upon the destruction of the sacred things of the family fireside. Our captures numbered at least 500, and our little regiment had again covered itself with glory. Our losses had again been very severe and left a great gap in our already thinned ranks. Our captain, TenEyck Howland, than whom no more intrepid soldier ever faced a foe, had fallen dead into the arms of his men, his heart pierced by a musket ball. Lieut. Tracy Morton had also been killed. My friend, Jimmie Norris, had suffered a like fate. The total casualties were two officers and seven enlisted men killed, and one officer and twelve enlisted men wounded, nearly one-fifth of those who entered the battle. After the battle we assembled on the top of the hill up which we had charged and stacked our arms in the open field, just outside of the woods. Here we built fires and some of us took off and wrung out our wet and muddy pantaloons. It was dark and we did not expect to move again until daylight. But I had just got ready to cook my supper, and had my pantaloons drying by the fire when a mounted officer rode up and enquired for Colonel Olcott. He not being present at the moment, Major Cronk-

ite announced his presence, and as being in command of the regiment during Olcott's absence, the officer ordered the regiment to be moved to the right following the 65th New York loud enough to be heard. I said to Lume Baldwin who was at the fire with me, 'Did you hear that?' He said 'Yes.' 'Well,' I said, 'I am not going any farther to-night, at least until I get my breeches dry, and something to eat. They will only move a little way to form a line and spend half the night to do it. We can catch them in the morning in a little while.' So I ran over to the stacks that were about fifty yards away, and feeling among the guns, found mine and took it out to take back to the fire. As I did so Major Cronkite had called for his horse, mounted and ridden around in front of the stacks and ordered, 'Fall in.' Just then there was a flash and a report to my right, and a cry from Major Cronkite that he was shot. Instantly men ran towards and surrounded him, and it was learned that he was seriously wounded, his leg afterwards having to be amputated. It was a very lamentable occurrence. Major Cronkite had borne a conspicuous part in the regiment, and was a gallant and skillful soldier, and this terrible accident to him was deeply regretted by all the men of the regiment. The accident was explained by the supposition that some man in taking his gun from a stack had knocked it down and one of the guns had been discharged inflicting the wound upon the Major."

The report of Colonel Olcott of this battle is essentially the same as the account given by Comrade Beckwith, except that he was given command of the first line consisting of the 121st New York and the 95th Pennsylvania, leaving Major Cronkite in command of the regiment. He also states that an effort of the enemy was made to get into the rear of the brigade, which was defeated by the



second charge of the 121st. Longstreet's account of the battle verifies this statement. He says: "Anderson crossed Sailor's Creek, closely followed by Ewell. As Anderson marched he found Merritt's cavalry square across his route. Humphreys, who was close upon Ewell, waited for the arrival of the 6th Corps. Ewell deployed his divisions, Kershaw on the right, G. W. C. Lee on the left. Their plan was that Anderson should attack and open the way while Ewell defended the rear. As Anderson attacked, Wright's corps came up. Humphreys had matured his plan, and the attack of Anderson hastened that of the enemy upon the Confederate rear. Anderson had some success at first, and Ewell received the assaults with resolute coolness, and at one moment pushed his fight to aggressive return, but the enemy, finding that there was no artillery with the Confederates, dashed their batteries into closer range, putting in artillery and infantry fire, front and flank, until the Confederate rear was crushed to fragments. General Ewell surrendered, as did also General G. W. C. Lee. General Kershaw advised such of his men as could to make their escape, and surrendered with his division. General Anderson got away with the greater part of B. R. Johnson's division and Pickett with 600 men. Generals Corse and Hunton and others of Pickett's division men were captured. About 200 of Kershaw's men got away."

General Lee being informed of this disaster rode back, with a portion of Mahone's division and when he saw the confusion of the retreating Confederates, he exclaimed, "My God, has my army dissolved?"

The effort of Ewell to push "his fight to an aggressive return" was the fierce attack on the 37th Massachusetts, which was defeated by the flank attack of the 121st, by the right half wheel under the direction of Colonel Olecott.

## CHAPTER XX

### APPOMATTOX AND AFTER

THE battle of Sailor's Creek to the 6th Corps was of special interest, for it settled by the capture of General Ewell and the remnants of his corps a long succession of bitter conflicts between them. They had met during the previous year, in the Wilderness, May 5th and 6th, again on May 10th in the charge led by General Upton that broke through their works. In the all day fight of the 12th of May they had again been antagonists. The campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah had been waged against Early's division of Ewell's corps, and now at the very close of the war the final conflict between them had resulted in the destruction of the corps, so long led by the veteran general of Lee's 3d Army Corps.

The result was disastrous also to the Army of Virginia. After the loss of Ewell's corps no other route was left open for the retreat of the Confederate army except to recross the Appomattox River at High Bridge, and make for Lynchburg. This was done and the bridge was burned behind the retreating Confederates. The 6th Corps followed at once but was compelled to wait at Farmville until a new bridge could be thrown across the river. The corps was massed in bivouac just outside the village, and when the bridge was completed it was about midnight, a dark moonless and starless night. When the corps drew out of its bivouac and had fairly entered the village, all the houses of which were closed and dark, a band

in the van struck up, "John Brown's body lies mouldering in the ground, but his soul goes marching on." The other bands took up the tune and the soldiers joined in the song; and such a volume of triumphant music has seldom waked the midnight echoes of any town.

The next day the pursuit was halted and our brigade bivouaced in the rear of the Confederates, several miles from Appomattox Court House. It was rumored that Lee was surrendering and the brigade waited in eager anxiety for certain information. Late in the afternoon General Hamblin was seen coming towards the camp, his splendid black horse on the dead run, his hat in his hands, his cheek bloody where he had failed to escape the limb of a tree, and as soon as his voice could be heard he shouted, "Lee has surrendered." And then what a tumult broke out among the troops. Cheers, shouts, laughter, hats and countless other things flung into the air. Some were too affected to cheer and stood with tears running down their faces. The excitement communicated itself to the animals. The mules brayed, the horses neighed and the author's dog leaped up and with his fore paws on his breast barked joyously. It seemed as though all nature was glad. It meant to us all, no more fighting, no more long, weary marches, home, friends, peace, a saved country, a triumphant flag.

But the 6th Corps was not permitted to see the surrender of the Confederate Army. It was marched back through Farmville and thence to Burksville Junction on Richmond to Danville railroad. There the 121st received the 400 drafted men and substitutes that had been promised it, and the officers that had been holding commissions for over a year were mustered into the service. Lieutenant Colonel Cronkite immediately resigned

his commission in order that Major Kidder might be commissioned as Lieutenant Colonel.

The itinerary of the march from Appomattox to Burksville was as follows: April 11th through New Store and Curdsville to the vicinity of Little Willis River, April 12th through Farmville to Sandy River. April 13th past Rice's Station on the South Side railroad to Burksville. It was at Rice's Station that the battle was being fought at the time of our fight at Sailor's Creek, and being won by our forces, and which cut off any possible escape of the Confederates in that direction, after the surrender of Ewell.

Colonel Beckwith gives his experiences with the citizens of Virginia in a very interesting manner: "We met a great many more of the citizens of the country than we had in the pursuit of Lee, and had opportunity to talk with them. They claimed that they had been impoverished, had no negroes, no stock and no seed to put in a crop, and saw nothing before them but starvation. Many of them availed themselves of the generosity of the government to draw supplies from our commissaries. Most of them had been at one time or another in the Confederate army, and some had been disabled by wounds or broken down by disease contracted in camp. These men were the most steadfast in their allegiance to the Rebel cause. Some went so far as to predict a renewal of the war, saying that the South was not conquered, but worn out."

A large and motley company of colored people assembled at Burksville Junction and these also were dependent upon the government for their sustenance.

On the 13th of April the corps began an advance to Danville, one hundred miles south of Burksville and on the border of North Carolina. The object



of the movement was to interpose between Johnston's army and Lynchburg. A great portion of the journey was made along the railroad track. It was a primitive form of railroad. Long sleepers were mortised into the ties and on the top of the sleepers heavy straps of iron were spiked, on which the cars ran. This march was one of the most remarkable the corps ever made. In four days and four hours from the time the head of the column drew out of camp at Burksville it entered the streets of Danville. While on the last day's march news was received of the assassination of President Lincoln and his death. "A thrill of horror and rage ran through the ranks, and it would have fared badly for any armed Rebels who fell into our hands at that time." (B.)

Danville was a village of considerable importance. A Confederate prison camp and hospital were located there, and it was one of the centers of supply for the Confederate army defending Richmond and Petersburg. Consequently there were gathered there large stores of every thing needed for the support of the army, the hospital, the prison and the inhabitants. All these fell into our hands, and the city was delivered up to General Wright by the civil authorities to whom it had been turned over by the military officers.

Johnston's surrender, rendered our stay at Danville no longer necessary, and only three or four days were spent there.

The 6th Corps arrived at Danville on the 27th of April. Johnston surrendered the same day and on the 1st of May the corps began its march northward to Washington and home. The 121st was ordered to take the train leaving Danville at 8 A. M. for Burksville and there await further orders.

The march from Burksville to Richmond

seventy-two miles, was made in four days and camp was pitched near Manchester. A delay of two or three days gave the officers and men an opportunity to visit the city and see its condition after so long a siege. The worst feature of it was the havoc produced by the fires set by the retreating Rebels. Libby Prison and the Prison Camp on Belle Isle were places of special interest to those who had experienced their horrors.

The regiment arrived at Manchester on the 16th of May and remained in camp seven days. On the 23d it began its march from Richmond to Washington and arrived near Hall's Hill on the 2d of June, about five miles from Washington, and just outside of Georgetown.

Hall's Hill will always be associated with the 121st New York because it is the place given on the muster out rolls of the regiment. This part of the journey homeward was hard and tedious. Reveille sounded every morning at 3:30 A. M. and sometimes the march was prolonged till after dark. It rained frequently and the most of the streams had to be forded. The march was through the section over which the corps had fought during the entire war, past the battle fields of Cold Harbor, Chancellorville, Spottsylvania, The Wilderness, Fredericksburg, Bull Run—names that recall terrible experiences and bloody scenes. Chaplain Adams tells of a visit he made as follows: "I left the column while on the way and visited the battle ground near Spottsylvania Court House, where the terrible fighting occurred on the 12th of May. It still bears the marks of the conflict. It was at this point that two trees, one of twelve inches and one of twenty-three, were cut off by our minnie balls, for we had no batteries in play at that time. The trunk of one of these trees is now in the Patent Office at Washington. The trees in the vicinity

are dead, killed by the poison of the lead. I will not describe the appearance of the field as our men found it when they entered the works. I do not wish to recall the sights, they are too shocking. The 5th Maine and the 121st charged at that point; they fought bravely, but lost heavily, as they did also on the 10th, a mile farther to the right, near the spot where General Sedgwick was killed."

From the 2d of June when we reached Hall's Hill till the 27th the time was spent in making out the muster out papers of the men and the transfer of the men whose term of service had not expired to the 65th New York Veteran Volunteers. The total number of men discharged at Hall's Hill was 320, of whom 275 were original members of the regiment and 45 recruits and transferred men.

The review of the corps took place on Thursday, the 8th of June, in the following order:

1st: Major General Wright, Staff and Escort.

2d: The 1st Division, Major General Wheaton commanding

3d: The 2d Division, Major General Getty commanding.

4th: The 3d Division, Major General Getty commanding.

5th: The Artillery Brigade, Brevet Major General Andrew Cowan commanding.

6th: Detachment of 50th New York Engineers, Brevet Major Van Brooklin commanding.

Leaving camp at 4 o'clock in the morning, marching the five miles to Washington over Long Bridge, up Maryland Avenue to mass at the foot of the Capital grounds, was the first portion of the long and tedious process of the review.

Then at 9 o'clock passing down Pennsylvania Avenue at wheeling distance, past the reviewing

stand before President Johnson, General Grant and other dignitaries, and crossing Acqueduct Bridge march back again to camp, was the second part of the proceeding. All this on a hot day in July made this review an experience more pleasant to look back upon than to participate in. I have never heard an enlisted man enthuse over the memory of that review.

On the 27th of June the regiment took the cars, baggage cars mostly, for New York, reaching there on the morning of the 30th and spending the rest of the day, Sunday, in the old armory, corner of Center and Grand streets.

Beckwith says, "On Monday, July 1st, we marched up Broadway, having with us the stands of Rebel colors we had captured at Rappahannock Station and Sailor's Creek. We received a great ovation."

Arrangements had been made and permission obtained from Washington for the regiment to go to Little Falls to participate in the celebration of the Fourth of July. This home-coming reception is described as follows by Lieut. Jas. H. Smith: "Most of the members of the regiment were in line, with their arms, and with the seven Confederate regimental flags which they had captured during the preceding three years, and which the War Department had granted them the unparalleled privilege of carrying as trophies of their valor, and their sacrifices, to this reception, given by the parents, wives, sisters, brothers and friends of this brave remnant of that noble band, nearly 1000 strong, which they had bidden goodbye, and God speed, in 1862. At that time they heard their country's call, they realized its danger, they accepted the personal responsibilities and duties of citizenship, with all its hazards, and all the sacrifices due to the Republic from every loyal citizen.



Their work had now been done. The country's flag again floated freely as the undisputed emblem of authority throughout all our broad domains.

"Before we took our departure from Camp Schuyler in August, 1862, we were presented with a beautiful flag, by the mothers, wives and sisters of our boys. It was presented with the admonition that it should be carried forward, victoriously and unsullied, that it should never be permitted to fall into treasonable hands, and that we bring it back an emblem of victory. How faintly did the donors of that flag realize the terrific cost, in suffering and in blood, which was involved in carrying out their admonitions.

"We now bring back that flag, with every requirement of its donors for its care and defense, literally fulfilled. Shot and shell have pierced its folds, and its staff, until it can no longer be unfurled, but it has never been desecrated by the touch of treasonable hands. Would that we might also have brought back to this reception, every young man who three years before had marched forth, bravely and hopefully, in its defense. This volume tells us on the pages giving a list of our engagements and their losses that in following our flag through the conflicts where duty called, that 275 of our men were called upon to pay that 'last full measure of devotion,' which is the glory of those who fall upon the battlefield for a righteous cause. Beside these there were 121 others, equally brave and devoted, who had died as a result of exposure and disease. We thus have a total of 396 fatalities. Our ranks were still further depleted by the 450 wounded, a large proportion of whom were discharged for the disabilities they had thus suffered, and these added to the number discharged for disease made a total of 420 discharged.

“The value to our country of the services of the 121st New York Infantry is measured not alone by its losses in battle, unequalled tho they were, by those of any regiment from the state, and exceeded by but *three* of the more than 2000 regiments which served in the Union Army during the war, nor in the seven Confederate regimental flags which it had captured, and which it carried as souvenirs of its valor, at its home-coming reception, but is based as well, upon its having captured approximately 1500 prisoners from the ranks of the enemy. The exact number of these prisoners it is impossible to determine, but it is beyond doubt that they exceed the entire enrollment of the regiment prior to Lee’s surrender. It had made for itself a record which its survivors believe was unsurpassed, if not unequalled by that of any other regiment which served in the Union Army during the Civil War. And here in Little Falls, New York, this small but devoted remnant of the 121st Regiment after parading through its streets with its original flag unfurled as far as its battle scarred condition would permit, and with its captured Confederate flags as trophies of its devotion, stood shoulder to shoulder, and after a bountiful banquet and addresses lauding its heroic services, gave a parting salute to the flag they had followed for three long years and for which so many of their comrades had fallen.”

The return to Albany and the final payment of all dues was the occasion of the dissolution of the regiment, the men as soon as paid slipping away alone or by squads to their homes, regretful at parting, but glad that for them there would be no more of the toil and danger and suffering and violent death that are the every day experiences of war.

To the writer these last weeks of service brought

no relief from work in the line to which he had been accustomed. At Hall's Hill he was set to making out muster out rolls, and at Albany his time was employed in work on the pay rolls of the regiment. The day spent at Little Falls was one of the dreariest he ever endured. He had no musket, was not in the ranks, knew very few of the men of the regiment, and those he knew were eagerly visiting with their friends who had assembled from the two counties; and so alone and friendless, he wandered around, feeling like an Ishmaelite in a strange country.

In spite of this, however, he could not help being proud that his name was enrolled among those who had made the regiment worthy of all that was then and has since been said about it. As the years since that day have passed and he has become personally acquainted with so many of the "Onesters," his appreciation of, and pride in the regiment has been steadily increased, and the study of its records in the preparation of this history has aroused his admiration and made the work a "labor of love." To be in any manner associated with men who did so much and did it so valiantly, who suffered so much and suffered it patriotically, is an honor not to be despised.

## APPENDIX

The regiment left Fort Schuyler with 30 officers and 946 enlisted men or a total of..	976
It received by transfer: From the 16th New York, 125; from the 18th New York, 31; total .....	156
From the 27th New York, 3; from the 31st New York, 2; total.....	5
From the 32d New York, 33; from other organizations, 63; total.....	96
Recruits, including officers and men to January 1, 1865.....	169
Recruits, including conscripts and substitutes, after Lee's surrender in 1865.....	<u>413</u>
A total of.....	1815

A careful study of the records in hand convinces the author that an accurate list of the number belonging to the regiment cannot now be made. The lists made differ so radically, both as to names and number, that it is impossible to reconcile them. For instance, the number transferred from the 16th New York differs from 125 to 137. But General Curtis in his history of the 16th gives the names of only ninety-nine who were transferred to the 121st. Some on the other lists had been killed in previous engagements, some were among the missing in battle and some had been transferred to other organizations.

The report of the Adjutant General of the United States for 1903 gives the names of 1897 enrolled. But this includes the names of 413 who joined the



regiment at Burksville *after Lee's surrender*; and therefore do not really belong to the fighting record of the regiment. The only advantage of their connection with the regiment was that their presence enabled the officers who had been commissioned a year before, to be mustered into their full rank. In the published report of the 300 fighting regiments, the number enrolled in the 121st New York is given as 1426. This is twenty-four more than the above table justifies if the 413 added after Lee's surrender are not counted. But for purposes of comparison let the figure stand at the latter number (1426), as the author believes it to be approximately correct.

In the following table the casualties are given in the twenty-five battles in which the regiment is given credit in the army records at Washington as being present. The list of these twenty-five battles is given on the regimental monument on the battle field of Gettysburg, and is found under the head of the "Dedication of the Monument." The following is the list as taken from the records of the regiment.

Name of Battle	Killed		Mortally Wounded		Wounded		Total
	Off.	Men	Off.	Men	Off.	Men	
Fredericksburg		4				12	16
Salem Church	6	98	1	15	3	155	278
Gettysburg						2	2
Rappahannock Station	4			3	1	17	28
Wilderness	2	34		6	1	30	73
Spottsylvania	3	46	2	12	8	84	155
Cold Harbor		1				6	7
Petersburg		1				8	9
Fort Stevens		5		2	1	18	28
Charleston		2			1	4	7
Opequon (Winchester)	4				1	14	19
Fisher's Hill						5	5

Name of Battle	Killed		Mortally Wounded		Wounded		Total
	Off.	Men	Off.	Men	Off.	Men	
Cedar Creek	1	14	2	3	2	35	57
Newtown						1	1
Hatcher's Run				1		3	4
Fort Fisher	1			3			4
Petersburg (Capture)		1			1	24	26
Sailor's Creek	2	6			1	12	21
TOTALS	15	220	5	45	20	530	734

Adding the mortally wounded to the killed in action, the total fatalities amount to 20 officers and 265 enlisted men or 285 in all.

In making this estimate the number reported "Missing in action" is included in the list of the "Killed in action," on the ground that the battles in which they were lost were fought on fields retained by the enemy or immediately vacated by our troops, and as none of the missing reported, nor were reported as wounded or prisoners, and have never since been heard from, it is only right to include them among those known to have been killed.

It is possible that ten of them may be rightly deducted from the number in the above table, leaving the aggregate forty instead of 50. That would leave our fatalities in action at 275.

Of the New York regiments included in Fox's 300 fighting regiments of the Civil War, only one, the 69th New York, is reported as having a greater percentage of loss than the 121st. The record is: The 69th: enrolled, 1513; killed, 259; percent, 17.1.

The 121st: enrolled, 1426; killed, 226; percent, 15.5.

But giving the 121st due credit for its actual fatalities would put it among the very first of all

the regiments of the Union Army during the Civil War. Enrolled, 1426; killed, 275; an actual percentage of 19.28.

In making this statement there is no intention to take the laurels from any other fighting regiment, but simply to claim for the 121st, the standing that rightfully belongs to it. Present in twenty-five battles, bearing the brunt of the fighting at Salem Church, The Wilderness, Spottsylvania on May 10, Opequan, Cedar Creek, the successful assault on Petersburg and the final battle with Lee at Sailor's Creek, suffering losses in eighteen different engagements, counted by superior officers the equal of any regular regiment, its surviving members are not willing to abate a jot from its rightful credit, and they glory in the fact that its place in every exigency of battle was in the front line from which it was never driven nor retired, except at command of its ranking officer.

The officers of the regiment and their terms of service are given as follows:

Colonels: Franchot, July 19 to September 25, 1862; Upton, October 23, 1862 to July 4, 1864; Olcott, April 18 to June 25, 1865.

Lieutenant Colonels: C. A. Clark, August 23, 1862 to March 24, 1863; E. Olcott, April 10, 1863 to April 19, 1865; John S. Kidder, May 22 to June 25, 1865.

Majors: E. Olcott, August 23, 1862 to April 10, 1863; A. E. Mather, May 3, 1863 to February 4, 1864; H. M. Galpin, March 31 to December 21, 1864; J. W. Cronkite, December 24, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

Adjutants: A. Ferguson, July 21 to August 30, 1862; T. S. Arnold, August 30 to October 19, 1862; F. W. Morse, January 5 to July 29, 1864; F. E. Lowe, December 31, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

Quartermasters: Albert Story, July 21 to Decem-

ber 30, 1862; Theodore Sternberg, January 5, 1863 to June 25, 1865.

Surgeons: Wm. Bassett, August 23 to September 30, 1862; E. S. Walker, October 22, 1862 to April 1, 1863; John O. Slocum, July 1, 1863 to June 25, 1865.

Assistant Surgeons: S. P. Valentine, August 29, 1862 to January 21, 1863; D. M. Holt, September 2, 1862 to October 16, 1864; I. W. Hotaling, April 8 to August 22, 1863; J. P. Kimball, January 16, 1865 to June 24, 1865.

To this list must be added the following promotions for which commissions were granted, but muster in was delayed until the close of the war. By an act of Congress after the war, all officers were remustered from the time of their commission, and these officers are fully entitled to the rank to which they were commissioned.

Lieutenant Colonels: James W. Cronkite and Henry M. Galpin.

Majors: Lewis C. Bartlett, John S. Kidder, Francis W. Morse and Robert P. Wilson.

#### COMPANY A

Captains: Henry M. Galpin, August 4, 1862 to March 31, 1864; J. Burrell, April 18 to October 26, 1864; S. J. Redway, November 30, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

First Lieutenants: J. Burrell, August 4, 1862 to April 18, 1864; W. H. Tucker, March 31 to October 19, 1864; S. J. Redway, September 11 to November 30, 1864; G. H. Snell, November 18, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: G. W. Davis, August 4 to October 20, 1862; J. W. Cronkite, October 21, 1862 to April 10, 1863; J. D. Gray, June 5 to July 21, 1863; S. Burdett, January 1, 1864 to March 1, 1865 (Lieutenant Burdett's name is not found in



the list of the Adjutant General of the State);  
Wm. H. Tucker, March 30 to March 31, 1864.

#### COMPANY B

Captains: E. Holcomb, August 13, 1862 to January 20, 1863; M. C. Casler, May 3, 1863 to October 14, 1864; Ten Eyck C. Howland, January 24 to April 6, 1865.

First Lieutenants: Henry C. Keith, August 13, 1862 to January 28, 1863; M. R. Casler, January 28 to May 3, 1863; T. C. Adams, May 3, 1863 to May 10, 1864; T. C. Howland, May 12, 1864 to January 24, 1865; G. H. Snell, December 20, 1864 to January 1, 1865; F. W. Morse, March 23 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: G. A. May, August 13, 1862 to February 26, 1863; C. A. Butts, January 4 to April 10, 1863; T. C. Adams, April 10 to May 3, 1863; F. C. Piper, April 17 to June 25, 1865.

#### COMPANY C

Captains: C. A. Moon, August 23, 1862 to January 17, 1863; C. J. Campbell, April 22, 1863 to March 20, 1864; J. W. Johnston, November 18, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

First Lieutenants: T. S. Arnold, August 23 to August 30, 1862; A. Cameron, August 31 to November 9, 1862; F. Gorton, November 10, 1862 to January 28, 1863; C. M. Bradt, February 20 to April 9, 1863; H. Upton, May 3, 1863 to February 27, 1864; J. A. Heath, July 25, 1863 to December 12, 1864; F. W. Morse, December 23, 1864 to March 23, 1865; J. T. Morton, March 25 to April 6, 1865; Eli Oaks, April 30 to July 24, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: A. Cameron, August 23 to August 31, 1862; C. M. Bradt, August 30, 1862 to February 20, 1863; S. Miller, February 20 to May 13, 1863; H. Upton, April 15 to March 3, 1863;

G. W. Quackenbush, May 29 to July 9, 1864;  
J. W. Johnston, July 9 to November 18, 1864;  
J. H. Smith, April 29 to June 25, 1865.

#### COMPANY D

Captains: J. D. Fish, August 23, 1862 to May 12, 1864; D. D. Jackson, May 23, 1864 to May 17, 1865.

First Lieutenants: D. M. Kenyon, August 16, 1862 to March 22, 1864; A. C. Rice, April 10 to September 20, 1863; D. D. Jackson, February 27 to June 23, 1864; F. E. Lowe, May 23 to December 31, 1864; L. C. Bartlett, June 22, 1863 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: Chas. E. Staring, August 23, 1862 to June 14, 1863; G. R. Wheeler, March 25 to May 15, 1863; J. W. Johnston, May 14 to September 30, 1863; D. D. Jackson, September 20, 1863 to February 27, 1864; N. Post, April 16 to June 25, 1865.

#### COMPANY E

Captains: D. Campbell, August 23, 1862 to April 27, 1863; J. W. Cronkite, May 3, 1863 to December 24, 1864.

First Lieutenants: T. Sternberg, August 18, 1862 to January 5, 1863; J. W. Cronkite, April 10 to May 3, 1863; L. B. Paine, May 3, 1863 to March 4, 1864; F. W. Morse, July 29 to December 23, 1864; L. Burton, December 21, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: H. VanHorn, August 18, 1862 to January 7, 1863; L. B. Paine, April 10 to May 3, 1863; D. D. Jackson, June 20 to September 20, 1863; J. W. Johnston, September 20, 1863 to July 9, 1864; G. W. Quackenbush, July 9, 1864 to April 20, 1864.

## COMPANY F

Captains: N. O. Wendell, August 23, 1862; H. S. Hall, June 10, 1863 to March 20, 1864; L. B. Paine, March 21 to December 19, 1864; A. M. Tyler, June 5, 1863 to June 25, 1865.

First Lieutenants: B. F. Park, August 23, 1862 to March 18, 1863; A. C. Rice, April 10 to September 20, 1863; S. E. Pierce, January 26 to May 13, 1864; H. C. VanScoy, May 3, 1864 to January 1, 1865; C. H. Barr, January 1 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: F. G. Bolles, August 23, 1862 to January 30, 1863; S. E. Pierce, April 10, 1863 to January 26, 1864.

## COMPANY G

Captains: E. Clarke, August 23, 1862 to January 12, 1863; A. E. Mather, January 4 to May 3, 1863; F. Gorton, May 3, 1863 to October 4, 1864; H. C. VanScoy, January 24 to June 25, 1865.

First Lieutenants: J. D. Clyde, August 23 to November 24, 1862; F. W. Morse, December 15, 1862 to January 5, 1863; A. E. Mather, December 20, 1862 to January 14, 1863; L. C. Bartlett, June 22, 1863 to —————; S. J. Redway, July 25 to December 11, 1864; W. H. Tucker, April 17 to October 19, 1864; H. C. VanScoy, January 1 to January 24, 1865; M. C. Foote, March 26 to June 24, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: C. T. Ferguson, August 23 to November 12, 1862; Henry Upton, March 11 to April 15, 1863; F. W. Ford, April 15 to May 3, 1863; H. B. Walker, May 4, 1863 to January 8, 1864; E. Oaks, December 24, 1864 to April 20, 1865.

## COMPANY H

Captains: J. Ramsey, August 23 to October 20, 1862; T. S. Arnold, October 19, 1862 to May 18,

1863; A. M. Tyler, June 16, 1863 to July 21, 1865; C. A. Butts, April 19 to May 10, 1864; T. C. Adams, May 10 to October 14, 1864; L. B. Paine, December 16, 1864 to June 25, 1865.

First Lieutenants: U. F. Doubleday, August 23, 1862 to May 3, 1863; C. E. Butts, April 10, 1863 to April 19, 1864; H. C. VanScoy, March 15 to May 13, 1864; E. C. Weaver, May 19, 1864 to February 14, 1865; J. H. Heath, February 17 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: M. C. Casler, August 18 to December 31, 1862; S. Miller, February 20 to May 13, 1863; H. C. VanScoy, May 20, 1863 to March 15, 1864; E. C. Weaver, May 3 to May 10, 1864; N. A. Armstrong, February 10 to June 25, 1865.

#### COMPANY I

Captains: John S. Kidder, August 18, 1862 to June 22, 1865.

First Lieutenants: J. D. Douw, August 23, 1862 to April 23, 1863; D. Bates, May 4, 1863 to March 15, 1864; F. W. Foote, March 16 to September 24, 1864; J. H. Heath, December 24, 1864 to February 17, 1865; P. R. Woodcock, February 22 to June 25, 1865.

Second Lieutenants: D. Bates, August 18, 1862 to May 4, 1863; F. W. Foote, July 20, 1862 to March 16, 1864; J. A. Taft, April 29 to June 25, 1865.

#### COMPANY K

Captains: S. M. Olin, August 18 to December 27, 1862; J. D. P. Douw, April 24, 1863 to November 11, 1864; T. J. Hassett, April 29 to June 24, 1865.

First Lieutenants: A. E. Mather, August 18 to December 20, 1862; M. C. Casler, December 31, 1862 to January 28, 1863; F. Gorton, January 28 to May 3, 1863; L. C. Bartlett, \_\_\_\_\_; H. Duroe, October 25, 1864 to March 25, 1865;



T. J. Hassett, March 21 to April 20, 1865; S. J. Redway, June 1 to July 25, 1864.  
Second Lieutenants: F. Gorton, August 18 to November 20, 1862; A. C. Rice, January 23 to March 13, 1863; S. J. Redway, April 19, 1863 to June 1, 1864; W. H. H. Goodier, May 22 to June 24, 1865.

To the list of line officers the following named are to be added as by act of Congress:

Captains: F. W. Morse, Erastus Wheeler.  
First Lieutenants: John D. Gray, Charles Hamman, Wm. H. House, Edward P. Johnson and Daniel Stark.  
Second Lieutenants: Dennis A. Dewey, John M. Edwards, Joseph H. Heath, Edward P. Johnson, John V. N. Kent, Elias C. Mather and Charles F. Pattingill.

On September 15, 1865, the following brevets were granted for distinguished conduct on different occasions: Major James W. Cronkite to be Lieutenant Colonel; Captains John S. Kidder, James W. Johnston, Daniel D. Jackson and Hiram S. VanScoy to be Majors; Lieutenants Frank E. Lowe, Morris C. Foote and Thomas J. Hassett to be Captains.

On June 24, 1865, six officers and 448 enlisted men are reported as transferred to the 65th New York Veteran Volunteers. The officers were Surgeon Kimball and Captains Hassett, Tyler, Bartlett and Hall, and Lieut. Eli Oaks.

Undoubtedly no event in the history of the regiment since the war has been of so much importance and interest as the erection of the monument on the battle field of Gettysburg. An account of it belongs naturally in a published history of the regiment.

In 1886 an act was passed by the Legislature of the State appointing a commission to determine the location and the movements of the eighty-two organizations from New York that participated in that battle, and the next year another act was passed appropriating \$1500.00 for the erection of a monument to mark the spot each organization had occupied.

The commission requested that a committee be appointed from the 121st to assist in locating the position held by the regiment. This request was sent to Colonel Cronkite who passed it to the president of the Regimental Association, and he appointed a temporary committee, consisting of Comrades John S. Kidder, James W. Cronkite, Clinton Beckwith, Douglas Campbell, Frank E. Lowe and George McClean. This committee reported at the next meeting of the association, and a permanent Gettysburg memorial committee was appointed as follows: John S. Kidder, James W. Cronkite, Clinton Beckwith, Timothy Dasey, Andrew Davidson, Elias C. Mather, Douglas Campbell, Herman I. Johnson, Frank E. Lowe, J. K. Tyler and J. M. Lovejoy. This committee met on October 7, 1887 and organized by electing as officers, President J. W. Cronkite, Treasurer J. S. Kidder, Secretary Frank E. Lowe, Corresponding Secretary J. M. Lovejoy. Executive committee, Comrades Cronkite, Kidder, Beckwith, Lovejoy, Davidson and H. I. Johnson.

The work of this committee was so energetically and efficiently done in canvassing for additional funds, that the monument might be worthy of the fame of the regiment, in selecting and contracting for the monument and in locating the position it should occupy, that the day of dedication was fixed for October 10, 1889.

The location is on the north west slope of Little

Round Top. The monument stands on the spot where the flag of the regiment was placed. Two granite markers fix the position of the flanks of the line, and from the location a view of nearly all the battle ground is obtained.

The monument is composed of four pieces of the best Quincy granite, surmounted by the figure of a soldier seven feet in height, made of American standard bronze. The base is six feet square and the entire height is fourteen feet and three inches.

On the front is the legend, "The 121st New York Infantry (Colonel Emory Upton), 2d Brigade, 1st Division, 6th Corps, held this position from the evening of June 2d, until the close of the battle." There are also on the front the 6th Corps cross, and the coat of arms of the State of New York.

The reverse side has a life size medallion of Colonel Emory Upton in bronze. On one side a bronze panel contains the inscription, "Organized in Herkimer and Otsego Counties; Mustered in August 23, 1862; Officers 30, Men 910; Casualties, killed and mortally wounded: Officers 14, Men 212 (This total of killed and mortally wounded should be 275 as shown by preceding record); Wounded: Officers 27, Men 596; Died of Disease: Officers 4, Men 117; Discharged for wounds, disease, etc.: Officers 37, Men 283; Transferred to other commands: Officers 12, Men 262; Mustered Out June 25, 1865, Officers 25, Men 283."

The bronze panel on the other side contains the list of the battles for which the regiment is credited in the military archives at Washington as follows: "Crampton's Pass, Fredericksburg, Mary's Heights, Salem Church, Salem Heights, Gettysburg, Rappahannock Station, Mine Run, Wilderness, Spottsylvania C. H., North Anna, Totopotomy, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Fort Stevens D. C., Summit Point, Winchester (Opequon), Fisher's Hill, New



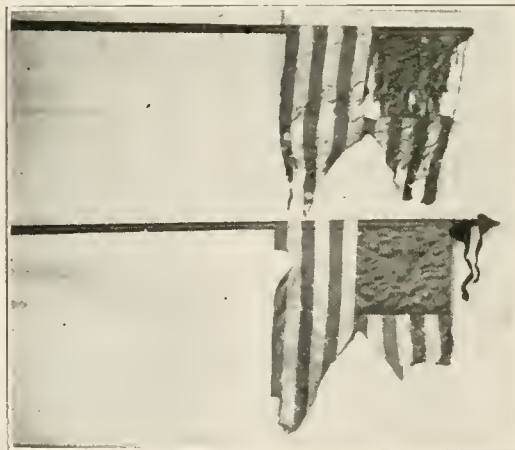


OUR REGIMENTAL MONUMENT,  
Located on the northern slope of Little Round Top, Battlefield  
of Gettysburg. Photo by Lieut. Jas. H. Smith.





THE ORIGINAL FLAG OF THE 121ST N. Y. INFANTRY,  
Presented by the ladies of Herkimer and Otsego counties.  
Photographed about thirty years after the war  
by Lieut. Jas. H. Smith.



THE GUIDONS OF THE 121ST N. Y. INFANTRY,  
Photographed about thirty years after the war by  
Lieut. Jas. H. Smith.

Market, Cedar Creek, Hatcher's Run, Petersburg (Fort Fisher), Petersburg (Assault), Sailor's Creek, Appomattox C. H."

At the Dedicatory Exercises held on October 10, 1889, music was furnished by the Gettysburg band, prayer was offered and the benediction pronounced by the Rev. J. R. Dunkerly of Gettysburg. The monument was unveiled by Mrs. Maria Upton Hanford, an Oration was given by the Hon. A. M. Mills of Little Falls and an original poem was read by Prof. A. H. J. Watkins.

Colonel Cronkite, who presided, read letters from Generals H. G. Wright, H. W. Slocum and Colonel Cowen, who commanded the battery frequently mentioned in the history. He also read a short speech made by General Upton when he entered Augusta, Georgia, on May 8, 1865.

"Soldiers, four years ago the Governor of Georgia, at the head of an armed force, hauled down the American flag at this Arsenal. The President of the United States called the nation to arms to repossess the forts and arsenals that had been seized. After four years of sanguinary war and conflict, we execute the order of the great preserver of the Union and liberty, and to-day we again hoist the Stars and Stripes over the Arsenal at Augusta. Majestically, triumphantly, she rises."

The company that assembled at the dedication of the monument consisted of ninety-eight persons, comrades, their wives and sons. A picture of them clustered around the monument was taken. It may be well to add that the number of surviving comrades of the regiment at that date was reported to be 163, and the contributors to the monumental fund numbered 581. The cost of the monument and the two markers was \$2,000.00. It is accounted one of the finest regimental monuments on the battle field of Gettysburg.

The surviving members of the regiment so far as known to the secretary at the date of this writing are:

Quartermaster Theodore Sternberg, Major U. S. A., retired, Kanopolis, Kans.

Lieut. N. A. Armstrong, Warren, N. Y.

Lieut. G. P. Borden, Brigadier General, U. S. A., retired, 330 W. 95th St., New York City.

Lieut. Charles M. Bradt, M. D., St. Charles, Mich.

Lieut. Dennis A. Dewey, Captain 108 U. S. C. T., West Winfield, N. Y.

Lieut. Francis N. Piper, 148 Webster Ave., Syracuse, N. Y.

Lieut. G. W. Quackenbush, 2746 S. Lincoln, Englewood, Denver, Colo.

Lieut. James H. Smith, 3541 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, Ill.

#### NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND PRIVATES

##### COMPANY A

Thomas Barnaby, West Chazy, N. Y.

Rev. Isaac O. Best, Broadalbin, N. Y.

H. S. Burnham, 507 Park Ave., Woonsocket, R. I.

J. W. Chapin, 1731 Columbia Road, Washington, D. C.

Albert H. Clark, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Lewis Dupee, East Beekmantown, N. Y.

Jeremiah Gratton, 190 Webster St., Malone, N. Y.

Lewis Gratton, West Constableville, N. Y.

W. H. Jones, 407 Ballinger St., Herkimer, N. Y.

Oliver King, Mooers, N. Y.

Rev. Eli P. LaCell, 1404 4th St., Santa Rosa, Cal.

George M. McCourt, London, Wis.

Smith Pine, Keeseville, N. Y.

Warren P. Smith, West Cocksackie, N. Y.

Georga A. Vossler, 39 Harrington St., Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

A. Walrath, Atkinson, Neb.  
John H. Warmouth, Box 83, Oneida, N. Y.

#### COMPANY B

Col. Clinton Beckwith, 108 Mary St., Herkimer,  
N. Y.  
C. C. Catlin, Melvin, Kan.  
Mydret W. Gardner, 1614 W. 19th St., Sioux City,  
Iowa.  
Philip Goodman, Soldiers' Home, Hampton Roads,  
Va.  
R. A. Jackson, Boonville, N. Y.  
Josiah King, Soldiers' Home, Bath, N. Y.  
Ira D. Warren, Zumbrota, Minn.  
Leonard Ward, R. F. D. No. 3, Oncontia, N. Y.  
Damon O. Yates, R. F. D. No. 33, South Dayton,  
N. Y.  
W. W. Young, R. F. D. No. 1, Ilion, N. Y.  
Thomas H. Yoemans, Soldiers' Home, Bath, N. Y.

#### COMPANY C

O. B. Austin, Norwood, N. Y.  
M. H. Doland, Milburn, N. J.  
William Joyce, County Hospital, Astoria, Ore.  
Timothy Kavenaugh, Middleville, N. Y.  
Edward Mabey, R. F. D. No. 1, Johnstown, N. Y.  
William Myers, 86 John St., Little Falls, N. Y.  
A. T. Orvis, Cold Brook, N. Y.  
James H. Smith, Philadelphia, N. Y.  
James B. Schaffner, 213 Mohawk St., Herkimer,  
N. Y.  
Thomas Topper, Avonlea, Saskatchewan, Canada.

#### COMPANY D

Fred Bryce, Ilion, N. Y.  
H. W. Cadwell, Jordanville, N. Y.  
William Dubois, Atwood, N. Y.  
M. D. Elwood, 1109 City St., Utica, N. Y.



A. A. Gillespie, Duke Center, Penn.  
George H. Gilbert, Reed City, Mich.  
Levi Helmer, Dodgeville, N. Y.  
J. W. Hartley, Waterville, N. Y.  
J. H. Leonardson, R. F. D. No 7, Canastota, N. Y.  
Charles Rice, 36 Winter St., West End Station, Me.  
Burrell Rice, Salisbury Center, N. Y.  
C. Thurston, Belfast, Me.  
Milo B. Tanner, 1046 Emerson St., Sheldon, Wyo.

#### COMPANY E

James T. Clark, 37 Robinson St., Schenectady, N. Y.  
C. A. Farr, Osborn, Mo.  
E. M. Irons, Hartwick, N. Y.  
E. C. Irons, Crandall's Hotel, Binghamton, N. Y.  
George M. Lemon, 1202 6th Ave., Watervleit, N. Y.  
Joseph Lockwood, R. F. D. No. 1, Alleghany, N. Y.  
W. G. Palmer, Lisle, N. Y.  
J. H. Smythe, VanHornsville, N. Y.  
Orville O. Seeger, 14 Beech St., Cooperstown, N. Y.  
Lorenzo Smith, 425 E. Lincoln Way, Kearney, Neb.  
Hiram Vanaram, Ausable Chasm, N. Y.  
J. H. Walrath, Johnstown, N. Y.  
W. H. Waffle, Kendall, Wis.  
Abram Woodruff, Springville, N. Y.  
Rev. Henry Wood, 215 E. 25th St., Kearney, Neb.

#### COMPANY F

Fred Albright, Unadilla, N. Y.  
Otis B. Flanders, R. F. D., Woodstock, Ill.  
S. D. French, Nashua, Iowa.  
David R. Harris, Delhi, N. Y.  
W. A. Johnson, Schuyler Lake, N. Y.  
Hiram Krill, 19 Austin St., Rochester, N. Y.  
W. G. Lobdell, Unadilla, N. Y.  
H. E. Morgan, Clarkton, Mich.  
Adelbert J. Reed, Oviedo, Fla.  
Edward Tillinghast, Box 686, Camden, N. Y.

## COMPANY G

G. M. Boorn, Richmondville, N. Y.  
C. M. Butterfield, St. Charles, Mich.  
J. H. Brandon, Prairie Depot, Ohio.  
Perry F. Cole, Afton, N. Y.  
Henry M. Delong, Soldiers' Home, Milwaukee, Wis.  
Harrison Hadsell, South Valley, N. Y.  
E. M. Hunt, Roseboom, N. Y.  
J. E. Hoover, 1514 Sunset Ave., Utica, N. Y.  
Joseph D. Lamb, Santa Rosa, Cal.  
John W. Manzer, Bellevue, Mich.  
H. W. Martin, Bedford, P. Q., Canada.  
J. L. Merrit, Cattaraugus, N. Y.  
Henry V. Redington, Sidney, Neb.  
David H. Randolph, 325 E. Seneca St., Ithaca, N. Y.  
S. H. Sherman, Millford, N. Y.  
Peter Simmons, Cherry Valley, N. Y.  
David Wright, 56 Third St., Ilion, N. Y.

## COMPANY H

Warren E. Dockman, Lytle, Colo.  
Henry O. Eason, Schuyler Lake, N. Y.  
Willard P. Foote, Fremont, Neb.  
C. I. Haines, R. F. D. No. 2, Box 15, Ossining, N. Y.  
Joseph Lumbra, Montgomery, Vt.  
Wilson VanAuken, Bushkill, Pa.  
Charles VanHousen, Soldiers' Home, Bath, N. Y.

## COMPANY I

James Baker, 54 Upson Ave., Winstead, Conn.  
Robert Brundage, North Wolcott, N. Y.  
Edwin Butler, Box 168, Springfield, Vt.  
William H. Cole, Hobart, N. Y.  
H. J. Goodrich, Worcester, N. Y.  
G. W. Hubbard, Tustin, Cal.  
Ransome C. Luther, 2002 Madison St., Madison,  
Wis.

C. N. Merrill, East Worcester, N. Y.  
Charles Nichols, Morris, N. Y.  
Gilbert Olds, R. F. D., S. New Berlin, N. Y.  
Peter Russlo, Gatineau Point, P. Q., Canada.  
A. S. Tanner, Groton, N. Y.  
Austin Tiel, 147 Buena Vista Ave., Yonkers, N. Y.  
C. J. Westcott, 40 Elm St. Oneonta, N. Y.  
Charles Wilsey, Worcester, N. Y.

#### COMPANY K

Hugh M. Brown, Bethel, N. Y.  
John Brucher, Bethel, N. Y.  
G. W. Wallace, Clay Center, Kan.

The secretary reports thirty-nine others whose residences and condition are not known to him.

The invitation given to all surviving members of the regiment to send the story of their lives since the war, so that a sketch of events that would be of interest to all might be given in the Appendix to the history, has not been responded to as fully as was hoped and expected. The author has not been acquainted with the political and economic history of the 20th Senatorial District, and so has no personal information to give of those who have risen to distinction, as private citizens. Therefore this feature of the history will be of meager interest.

Sergeant Robert Chatterton responded to the request by sending a very interesting article about Robert E. Lee, and giving a fine picture of him as he appeared when a young man and an officer in the U. S. Army.

An interesting letter from Mrs. Lillian Waterman Brady gives the record of her father's service, Perrin Waterman, and of his standing in the G. A. R. Post, of which he held all the offices in its gift. But the special item of interest in the story

is that he drove the ambulance in which the body of General Russell was taken from Winchester to Harper's Ferry. The wound in his hand received at Spottsylvania, disabled him from handling a gun, and he served in the Ambulance Corps to the end of the war. Colonel Solomon W. Russell was in command of the party, under orders to take the body of General Russell to his home at Salem, New York, for burial. A cavalry escort accompanied the ambulance.

W. W. Young wrote from the National Soldiers' Home, Virginia, that his health is very much shattered. Since the close of the war he has been Justice of the Peace, Post Commander, President of the Regimental Association, Delegate to the National Encampment in 1901, Delegate to the State Encampment three times, five times A. D. C. on the Department Staff, is a member of the National Association of Ex-prisoners of War and has a medal of honor given by the State of New York.

It will be a pleasure to the readers of this history to learn of the after-war history of Colonel Beckwith whose narrative constitutes so large a part of the compilation made by the author. Politically, Comrade Beckwith is a Democrat, and in 1894 was appointed by Governor Flower, Assistant State Engineer with the rank of Colonel, his commission being dated November 12, 1894. He was also appointed by Governor Flower, a member of the New York Monument Commission on which he has served ever since. He "has had charge of the erection of a number of monuments and has designed several, among which are General Webb's of the 'Bloody Angle' at Gettysburg, and General Wadsworth at Gettysburg and Generals Doubleday's and Robinson's at Gettysburg, one at Knoxville, Tennessee, one at Vicksburg, one at Antietam, Maryland and a number of monuments



at other points on the battle fields of Gettysburg, Antietam, Lookout Mountain, Chicamaugua and in the vicinity of Richmond, all of which are an honor and credit to the State of New York." Comrade Beckwith was also a member of the National Democratic Conventions which nominated for President Grover Cleveland, W. J. Bryan and Alton B. Parker. He was a member of the State Democratic Committee for twenty-five years and when he retired he was the oldest by service of any member of it. He has been by occupation a contractor, and been engaged in some important works, as for instance, the Washington Aquaduct Tunnel and the New York Aquaduct Tunnel from Croton to shaft 12 B on the Jay Gould estate near Tarrytown, Westchester County and in many other places, where with partner, John V. Quackenbush, were engaged in the construction of the four-tracking of the N. Y. C. & H. R. R. R. and in the construction of the West Shore, or N. Y. & Buffalo R. R. and many other contracts for the State of New York and the city of Boston. In civil life he has been Supervisor, President of the village of Herkimer and recently has been busy in public works. "Now, having reached the allotted age of man and being tired, I have retired from active service, having done my share, I think. But as long as there is anything for me to do of service to my country and people, and I am able, I will undertake it."

Captain Davidson, after serving in the U. S. C. T., 30th Regiment and earning a medal of honor, became editor of the Otsego Republican and afterwards was made Commander of the Soldiers' Home at Bath, N. Y.

Dennis A. Dewey in the spring of 1864 went before General Casey's board and was examined for a commission in the U. S. C. T. He passed

with the grade of "Captain of the First Class," but when the order came to report to his regiment, the 108th U. S. C. T. in Tennessee, he was a prisoner, having been captured in the battle of the Wilderness. Being paroled and in precarious health, he made application for the commission earned and it was granted. He was commissioned as Captain by special order of the War Department, and mustered in as Captain of the 108th U. S. C. T. and immediately resigned, and was honorably discharged from that regiment. He had been previously commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the 121st, but not mustered. The act of Congress afterwards passed, declared all such commissioned men to be mustered into the service and entitled to pay from the date of their commission.

The other transfers from the 121st to the colored troops were:

Delevan Bates to the 30th Regiment. This regiment under the command of Colonel Bates distinguished itself at the "Battle of the Crater" in front of Petersburg and Comrade Bates was awarded a medal of honor. Some of us remember his description of that fight, given at a recent reunion of the Association.

Major A. E. Mather was transferred to the 20th Regiment, U. S. C. T., as Lieutenant Colonel. He had served in the 121st as first lieutenant, captain and major.

First Lieut. J. D. Gray was transferred to the 23d Regiment, U. S. C. T., as Captain. He had served in the 121st as private, sergeant, second and first lieutenant.

Elias C. Mather was transferred to the 20th Regiment, U. S. C. T., as Captain. He had served in the 121st as sergeant and second lieutenant.

Cleveland Campbell, Adjutant of the 152d In-

fantry, was transferred as Captain to the 121st April 22, 1863 and on March 20, 1864, was transferred as Colonel to the 23d Regiment, U. S. C. T. His examination was so excellent that he was invited to sit on the board of examiners.

Lieutenant James H. Smith was mustered out with the regiment at Hall's Hill and with his sons, is now located at 3541 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, Illinois, manufacturing Victor Photographic Specialties. He, at this writing, is commander of the Loyal Legion of Illinois, also of the Geo. H. Thomas Post of the G. A. R., the largest in the state. At the last reunion of the regiment he gave a very interesting lantern slide exhibition of the National Parks of the United States, of views, many of which he had himself taken, and therefore was enabled to vividly describe. The collection and reproduction of the illustrations of this history are his work, and the author wishes to express his appreciation of the help and encouragement he has received so generously from Comrade Smith.

Lieutenant Philip R. Woodcock was mustered out with the regiment at Hall's Hill and became a successful business man in Rochester. As long as he was able he was a faithful attendant at the reunions of the 121st, and it became his recognized duty on each Memorial Day to place a wreath of flowers upon the grave of General Upton, in the name and at the expense of the Association.

There are no doubt many other comrades of the regiment whose records would be interesting, and would add to the completeness of the History, but the compiler does not know them personally, nor can he divine the prominent positions they have held, or the noble work they have done; but he is confident that the men who met so bravely and unflinchingly the exigencies of war, have not failed to meet the demands of peace, with like fortitude and success.

In 1876 an Association of the Veterans of the 121st New York Volunteer Infantry was organized and last year at its forty-fourth reunion at Ilion, the action was taken which assigned to the author the duty of compiling a history of the regiment, to be reported upon at the next meeting of the Association. The task has not been an easy one, nor has the time been sufficient to gather all the information that might be considered important, but the work has been intensely interesting to the writer and he hopes that it will be received with kindly tolerance by the veterans and their friends. In order to distribute the responsibility, he has requested Comrades Clinton Beckwith, C. J. Westcott and James H. Smith to act as a committee to examine and criticize the manuscript, ascertain the cost of publication and report to the association at its next meeting.





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