



IN CAMP.

CHAPTER XXX.

MEADE'S CAMPAIGN IN VIRGINIA.

The Armies.—Meade's Advance into Virginia.—Lee's Retreat.—The Armies on the Rappahannock.—Both Armies reduced.—Cessation of Operations.—Appeals of Davis and Lee.—Lee advances and Meade retreats.—Fight at Bristoe.—Meade falls back to Centreville.—Lee returns to the Rappahannock.—Meade slowly follows.—Stuart in Peril.—Imboden's Dash upon Charlestown.—Cavalry Fight near Warrenton.—Meade proposes to go to Fredericksburg.—Capture of Rappahannock Station.—The Mine Run Attempt.—Butler's Movement toward Richmond.—Kilpatrick and Dahlgren's Raid.—The Army in Winter-quarters.

IN a year and a week, from the beginning of the Seven Days before Richmond to the close of the battle at Gettysburg, the Union Army of the Potomac and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia had encountered in six desperate struggles, each lasting for days. In four—on the Peninsula, at Groveton, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville—the Confederates won the honors and advantages of victory; in two—at Antietam and Gettysburg—they had been defeated. Besides these great conflicts, there had been many minor engagements. The losses upon each side had been singularly alike. In killed, wounded, and prisoners, each had lost about 110,000. If to these are added the scores of thousands who died from disease in pestilential camps, and upon the long and weary marches, each army lost more than its muster-rolls embraced when at the fullest.¹ During nine months they were to confront each other, neither striking or hardly attempting a blow; and then to enter upon that terrible campaign of eleven months, which resulted in the annihilation of the Confederate army, and the overthrow of the cause which it had so long and valiantly upheld. Of that nine months' indecisive campaign in Virginia I am now to write.

When Lee, after Gettysburg, had succeeded in making good his escape

¹ In the following table an attempt is made to give as nearly as possible in round numbers the losses in the two armies during the period of a year and a week, commencing with the battle of Mechanicsville, June 26, 1862, and ending with that of Gettysburg, July 3, 1863. The number of killed and wounded can be very closely ascertained. The errors in one case will be about balanced by contrary ones in another. The number of prisoners is much less certain. Very many prisoners claimed on both sides were also wounded, and entered on the lists as such. I have endeavored to distinguish between the wounded and unwounded prisoners, giving as "prisoners" only those not left wounded on the field. In the list of prisoners taken by the Confederates I have not included the 11,000 captured by Jackson at Harper's Ferry, for they were paroled at once, and were never actually in the hands of the enemy. I have, however, included the 2500 captured from Milroy at Winchester, for they were actually held. The "prisoners'" column is therefore to be taken merely as a rough estimate. Only the losses in the great actions have been given. Some thousands besides these fell or were captured in minor engagements, bringing the numbers fully up to those given in the text. Of the losses from disease no even approximate estimate can be formed. Fifty thousand upon each side would certainly be a moderate estimate.

Battles.	UNION.		CONFEDERATE.	
	Killed and Wounded.	Prisoners.	Killed and Wounded.	Prisoners.
The Seven Days on the Peninsula	10,000	5,000	18,000	1,000
Pope's Campaign	14,000	7,000	11,000	1,000
Antietam, etc.	14,000	1,000	12,000	5,000
Fredericksburg	10,000	1,000	4,500	500
Chancellorsville	12,000	5,000	10,000	2,500
Gettysburg	16,500	5,000	28,000	8,000
Total	76,500	25,000	83,500	18,000

across the Potomac, he took up the same position which he had, after Antietam, assumed ten months before.¹ To Meade was presented the same question which had been offered to McClellan after Antietam. In what manner should he, with his superior force, assail the enemy? The decision was promptly made. It was the same to which McClellan came after long hesitation and delay. Instead of following directly upon Lee's rear, on the west side of the Blue Ridge, he would threaten his flank and menace his communications by advancing along the east side of this mountain chain. This decision was based upon the admitted impossibility of supplying his great army by the single line of railroad which traversed the Valley of the Shenandoah. Lee would be compelled, as he had before been compelled, to retreat up the valley. Meade moreover hoped, having the shorter line, to be able to throw a heavy column through some gap of the Blue Ridge, and assail the flank of Lee's long line as it passed in its retreat.² On the 17th and 18th the Potomac was crossed, and the army commenced its march. Some slight changes were made in the commands. Butterfield had been hurt at Gettysburg, and Humphreys was appointed chief of staff, a position which Meade had urged upon him when he took command. Sickles and Hancock had been severely wounded. French's division, from Harper's Ferry, had been added to Sickles's corps, which had suffered so terribly, and French was put at its head. Warren, who had long been chief engineer of the army, was a little after placed in command of Hancock's corps. As soon as he discovered the Federal advance, Lee broke up his camps near Winchester, and commenced a rapid retreat up the Valley of the Shenandoah, hoping to pass from it into the Valley of the Rappahannock, and so reach the railroad leading to Richmond in advance of Meade. Thus the two armies were moving rapidly in parallel lines, but with the Blue Ridge between, shutting each from all information as to the movements and positions of the other, except such as could be gained by scouts posted at some commanding point of observation.

On the 22d, when the Union army had reached Manassas Gap, Meade learned that the enemy were marching right opposite to him. This seemed the desired opportunity to throw a column through the gap, and fall upon the centre of his line. French pushed his corps through, meeting with slight opposition, and next morning saw the Confederates drawn up at

¹ Lee seems to have had in mind some offensive operation when he crossed the Potomac. In his report he says: "Owing to the swollen condition of the Shenandoah River, the plan of operations which had been contemplated when we recrossed the Potomac could not be put in execution, and before the waters had subsided the movements of the enemy induced me to cross the Blue Ridge, and take position south of the Rappahannock."—We can only conjecture that this contemplated plan was to march down the south side of the Potomac, and strike a blow at Washington. If this was the plan, it must have been based on the supposition that Meade would loiter upon the north bank of the Potomac, as McClellan had done after Antietam.

² "It was impracticable to pursue the enemy in the Valley of Virginia, because of the difficulty of supplying an army in that valley with a single-track railroad in very bad order. I therefore determined to adopt the same plan of movement as that adopted the preceding year, which was to move upon the enemy's flank through Loudon Valley."—Meade, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 339.



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Front Royal in what seemed to be a strong line of battle. Meade now made dispositions for a fight the next day, for he believed that he had interrupted Lee's retreat, and that he would be compelled to fight in order to secure his trains. But when morning dawned the enemy had vanished. The seeming strong line of battle was but a rear-guard; the main army had been all the time swiftly marching by roads farther to the west. Lee, having thus eluded the threatened attack, pressed on, passed through a lower gap out of the Valley of the Shenandoah into that of the Rappahannock, and at length halted at Culpepper, the goal of the retreat, the point where he had six weeks before reviewed the great army with which he had set out for the invasion of the North. Meade, having missed his blow, withdrew his forces from the Manassas Gap, and marched leisurely on toward the Rappahannock.¹

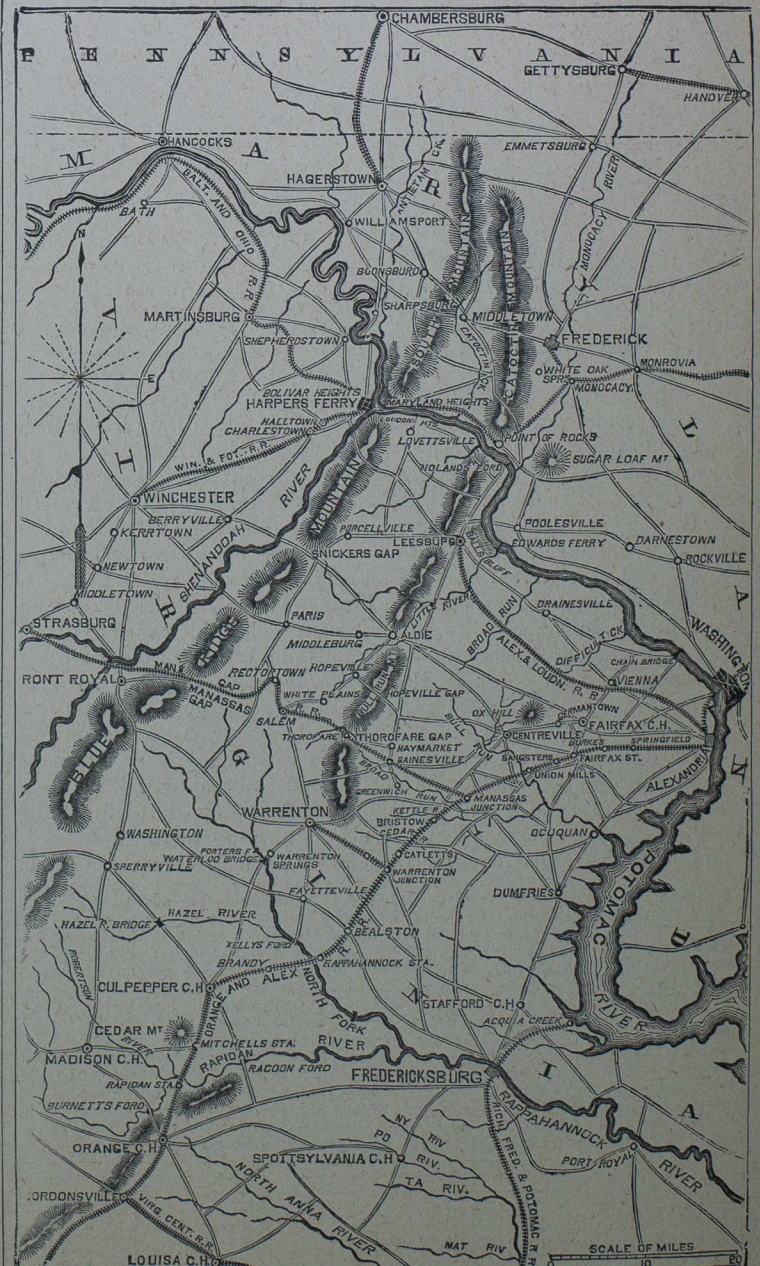
On the last day of July the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia numbered only 41,000 men "present for duty." Besides these there were 12,500 "present," a few more than the wounded whom they had brought away from Gettysburg. Through all the week during which Lee had been detained by the swollen Potomac, he had been sending his wounded across in boats, so that he had gained a full fortnight in which to transport them to Culpepper and beyond without molestation. The Union army could not have numbered less than 75,000, probably more. Meade knew that he was greatly superior, how greatly he most likely did not suspect. He wisely resolved to advance upon Lee, but unwisely consulted the authorities at Washington. The movement was forbidden. He might only "take up a threatening attitude upon the Rappahannock."² What any attitude upon the Rappahannock which did not involve the passage of that stream could threaten, is hard to see. Certainly not the Confederate army which lay beyond; not its communications or sources of supply; not Richmond, or any one of its connections with any part of the Confederacy.

Lee's army was strengthened from day to day. On the 31st of August it numbered 56,000 present for duty. This increase was the first, and, indeed, the only fruit of Jefferson Davis's earnest appeal, issued on the 15th of July, to those "now absent from the army without leave," in which he promised amnesty and pardon to all who should "with the least possible delay return to their posts of duty;" but this period of grace was limited to twenty days.³ Meade's army was in the mean while considerably dimin-

ished. A division was sent to South Carolina to aid in the siege of Charleston. The draft riots in New York, which broke out the very day upon which Lee recrossed the Potomac, had indeed been suppressed, but the opposition to the draft was still so strenuous that military aid was deemed necessary to enforce it, and a large body of troops were taken from the Army of the Potomac and sent to New York for that purpose. During the first days of September Lee's force was fully equal to that of Meade. But, in the mean time, Bragg, in Tennessee, was hardly pressed by Rosecrans, and Longstreet, with his corps, was sent to his aid. Meade was soon aware of this diminution of the force opposed to him, and this time, without waiting for instructions, moved his army across the Rappahannock, and established himself at Culpepper, while Lee fell back beyond the Rapidan, and took a position strong by nature and strongly fortified.

Meade was now in a region of which he knew nothing, and could learn nothing except by sending his cavalry in every direction to reconnoitre. This took time, and he had just decided upon a plan of operations when he was told that his army must be reduced. Things had gone badly at the West. Rosecrans had been defeated at Chickamauga, and Meade must spare a quarter of his army to restore the balance in Tennessee. The corps of Slocum and Howard were chosen. Thereafter these corps ceased to form a part of the Army of the Potomac, and belong to that of the West. The command of these two corps was given to Hooker, who had never lost the confidence of the President and the Secretary of War. He had, indeed,

soldiers to return to their respective regiments at once. To remain at home in this, the hour of our country's need, is unworthy of the manhood of a Southern soldier. . . . The commanding general appeals to the people of the states to send forth every man able to bear arms to aid the brave soldiers who have so often beaten back our foes."—The following are passages from the address of Jefferson Davis: "You know too well what the enemy mean by success. Their malignant rage aims at nothing less than the extermination of yourselves, your wives, and children. They propose, as the spoils of success, that your homes shall be partitioned among the wretches whose atrocious cruelties have stamped infamy on their government. . . . No alternative is left you but victory or subjugation, slavery, and the utter ruin of yourselves, your families, and your country. The victory is within your reach. The men now absent from their posts would, if present in the field, suffice to create numerical equality between our force and that of the invader. . . . I call upon you, then, to hasten to your camps, in obedience to the dictates of honor and of duty, and summon those who have absented themselves without leave to repair without delay to their respective commands; and I do hereby declare that I grant a general pardon and amnesty to all officers and men within the Confederacy, now absent without leave, who shall, with the least possible delay, return to their posts of duty; but no excuse will be received for any delay beyond twenty days after the first publication of this proclamation in any state in which the absentee may be at the date of the publication. This amnesty shall extend to all who have been accused, or who are undergoing sentence for absence without leave or desertion, except only those who have been twice convicted of desertion."

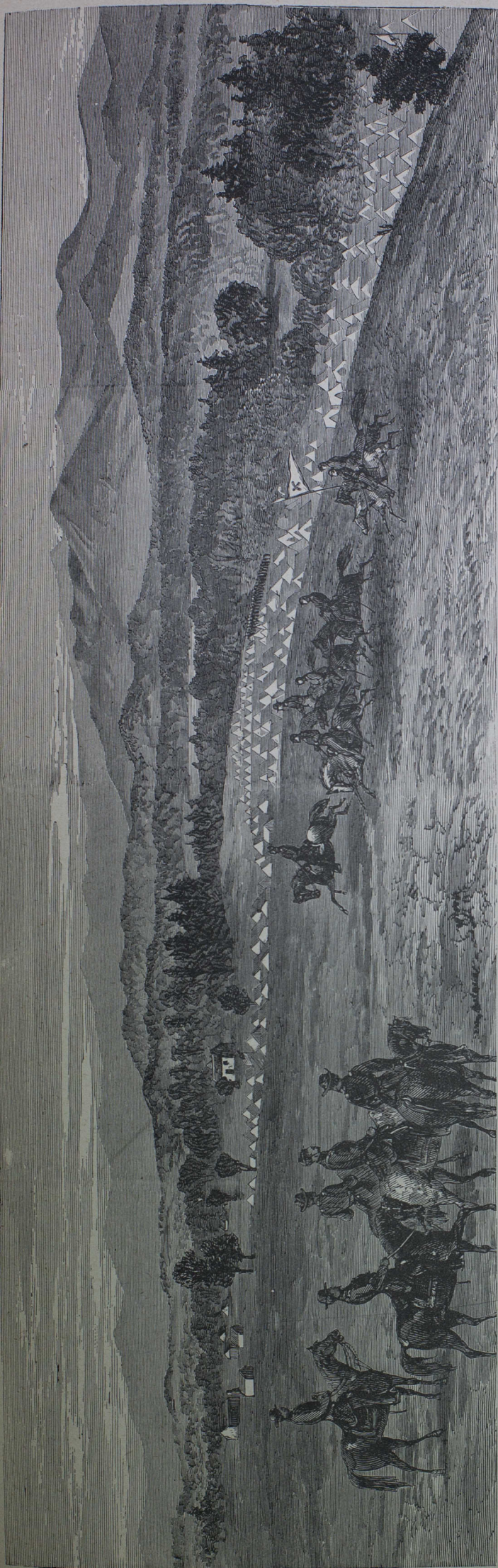


MAP OF CAMPAIGN, JULY—NOVEMBER, 1863.

¹ Meade, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 339.—Lee (*MS. Rep.*) thus describes these operations: "As the Federals continued to advance along the eastern slope of the mountains, apparently with the purpose of cutting us off from the railroad, Longstreet was ordered, on the 19th of July, to proceed to Culpepper Court-house by way of Front Royal. He succeeded in passing part of his command over the Shenandoah in time to prevent the occupation of Manassas and Chester Gaps by the enemy. As soon as a pontoon bridge could be laid down, the rest of his corps crossed, and marched through Chester Gap to Culpepper, where they arrived on the 24th. He was followed by Hill's corps. Ewell reached Front Royal the 23d, and encamped near Madison Court-house on the 29th."

² "Upon my arrival at the Rappahannock, which was toward the close of July, I communicated my views to the government, in which I expressed the opinion that the farther pursuit of General Lee should be continued at that time, inasmuch as I believed that our relative forces were more favorable at that time than they would be at any subsequent time, if we gave him time to recuperate. It was thought proper, however, by the general-in-chief to direct me to take up a threatening attitude upon the Rappahannock, but not to advance."—Meade, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 340.

³ July 26. Lee issued the following General Order to the Army of Northern Virginia: "All officers and soldiers now absent from this army, who are able to do duty, and are not detached on special service, are ordered to return immediately. The commanding general calls upon all



CAMP AT THE FOOT OF THE BLUE RIDGE.

wished to receive the command of a corps under Meade, but one can easily understand that this proposition could not be acceptable to that general.¹ Whatever honor Hooker lost at Chancellorsville was abundantly regained at Lookout Mountain.

The armies in Virginia, thus again brought to an equality, remained inactive until early in October. By that time the troops sent to New York had returned, diminished in number by a third; the draft also furnished some accessions, but of a character which added little real strength. Still, according to his own estimate, Meade had well-nigh 70,000 effective men. The force of the enemy he thought to be considerably less.² Now occurred Meade's retreat to Centreville, which, with McClellan's flight to Malvern Hill, Hooker's abandonment of Chancellorsville, and Butler's "bottling up" at Bermuda Hundreds, yet to take place, must stand as the inexplicable incidents of the war.

Early in October there appeared a very evident diminution of the Confederate forces along the Rapidan, while cavalry and some infantry were seen moving toward Meade's right flank. These operations were susceptible of two interpretations. Lee might be falling back still farther, in which case the movements observed on the Union right were simply a demonstration to throw the enemy off the track while the Confederate army was withdrawing; or it might be the purpose of Lee to gain the rear of the Union army, and fall upon its communications, which were kept up mainly by the single line of railroad from Alexandria southward. Meade, coming to the front, was satisfied that the former was the design of his opponent,³ and made preparations to throw his cavalry and two of his five infantry corps across the Rapidan. But before this was done he became satisfied that the enemy, instead of retreating, was in full advance. He could not believe that with his inferior force Lee would venture to assail him at Culpepper, and therefore the movement must be to turn his right flank and assume a position in his rear which would compel him to attack at disadvantage. He thereupon, on the morning of the 11th, withdrew his whole army across the Rappahannock. Hardly had this been done, when he learned that the Confederate force had actually moved upon Culpepper, as if with the design of offering battle in the very position which he himself had chosen. Now Meade had no desire to avoid a battle, if he could fight upon his own terms, and so he directed three of his corps to recross the Rappahannock and move toward Culpepper. Hardly had this been done, when Gregg, whose cavalry had been thrown out to the right, came in with reports that he had been attacked and driven back by a heavy force of all arms, and that the whole Confederate army, after the delay of a day at Culpepper, was on the march to gain the Union rear.

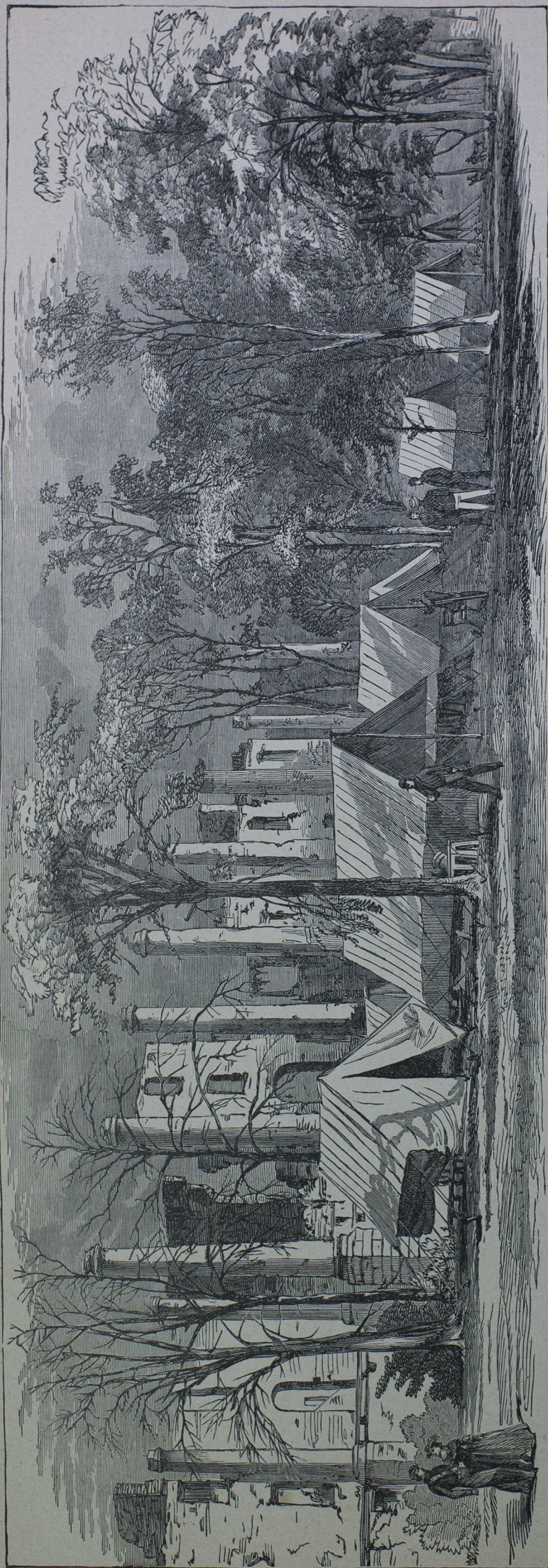
The information proved true in the main. Lee, knowing how greatly the Union army had been depleted a few weeks before, but ignorant of the strong accessions which it had received within a few days, meditated a repetition of the movement by which he had a year before defeated Pope; only instead of, as Meade supposed, marching west of the Bull Run Mountains, and crossing them at Thoroughfare Gap, he designed to skirt the southern extremity of this range, and gain a position just in the Union rear, upon the railroad. Meade's communications being thus interrupted, he would be forced to attack upon the ground which the enemy should select. Lee reasoned that Meade, forced to withdraw from the Rappahannock, would not be able to resume offensive operations that season. Meade presumed that Lee's design was to occupy the strong position at Centreville, and saw nothing to be done but to retreat with all speed upon that point, hoping to reach it in advance of the enemy. But, as it happened, Lee, instead of aiming at Centreville, directed his march upon Bristoe. He moved also with much less than his wonted celerity, delaying, indeed, for a whole day, the 13th, at Warrenton, in order to supply his troops with provisions. Thus it happened that when the head of Lee's columns, moving eastward, came on the 14th near Bristoe, Meade's whole army, moving northward, had passed that point, with the exception of Warren's corps, which was bringing up the rear. Had Meade known that the army were behind instead of before him, he would, as he avers, have paused and given battle;⁴ but, misinformed of the true position, he continued his retreat, crossed Bull Run, and took position at Centreville.

¹ "When I came to Washington, the Secretary of War informed me that he very much regretted the step that I had taken [in resigning the command of the Army of the Potomac]; that it was the intention of the President to give me the command of all the troops I had asked for; but that fact had never been communicated to me, nor had I any intimation of it before. I inquired of the President why he had not given me a corps in that army after he had relieved me, and he said it was for the reason that he thought it would not be agreeable to me or to General Meade. Subsequently he communicated his desire to this effect to General Meade, which was acceded to by the latter first, and afterward objected to by General Meade."—Hooker, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 178.

² Meade (*Com. Rep.*, ii., 343) testified: "As near as I can judge, my army contained of efficient men, equipped and armed such as I could bring into battle, between 60,000 and 70,000 men. I think the enemy had about 60,000. I thought I was probably from 8000 to 10,000 his superior."—General Howe (*Ibid.*, 318) relates a conversation which he had with Meade at this very time. He says: "General Meade remarked that our strength was 74,000 men, and of that number he said that 68,000 were armed and in a condition to fight. Then he spoke of the strength of Lee's army. He ran over the data that he had obtained from divers and sundry sources, and made out that Lee could not have over 45,000 men. He referred to the different corps and divisions of the rebel army; to the movements that had been made, with which he seemed to be familiar; and, as I remember, he stated that Lee's army could not be over 45,000 men, showing that we had such a preponderance of force that with any thing like a fair ordinary chance we could have our own way. That was on Friday" [October 9].—This estimate of 45,000 was singularly accurate, for on the last day of September Lee's muster-rolls showed 44,367, and on the last day of October 45,614, present for duty.

³ "I said to General Meade, 'I do not see but one thing that Lee can do with advantage with his army, and that is to throw himself suddenly upon our rear.' General Meade replied, 'Oh, he can not do that; he would not think of doing such a thing as that.'"—Howe, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 318.—General Meade, in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War (*Report*, ii., 340-342), gives a very full account of his movements at this time, and of the reasons which governed them.

⁴ "Notwithstanding my losing a day, I had moved with more celerity than the enemy, and was a little in his advance. If I had known this at the time, I would have given the enemy battle the next day in the position that I had occupied at Auburn and Greenwich."—*Com. Rep.*, ii., 341.



IN CAMP AT WASHINGTON BIRMINGHAM.

Warren had in the mean while been delayed at Auburn by a rencounter with a portion of Ewell's corps. This, after some skirmishing, drew off, and Warren followed on after the rest of the army, between which and him there was now a considerable interval. When the head of Lee's army came in the afternoon to Bristoe, they saw Sykes's corps marching out. Hill made some dispositions to assail the rear of Sykes, when he became aware of the approach of Warren from the opposite direction. Hill turned to assail Warren, while Sykes, strangely enough, kept on his retreat for a space.¹ Warren's position was perilous. His single corps was isolated from the remainder of the army, while the whole force of the enemy was coming up right upon his flank. Only a part of it was actually up, and on the next few minutes every thing depended. With quick decision, Warren sent his two leading divisions, which were a mile in advance of the other, to seize upon a deep cutting in the railroad. They dashed forward at a run, and were just in time to gain the position when Hill's advancing line of battle came up. They were received with so hot a fire that they fell back with considerable loss. Heth's division—the same which, under Pettigrew, who had been mortally wounded at Williamsport, had suffered so severely at Gettysburg—made a feeble attack upon the right flank, when it encountered Webb's division, the same which it had met on Cemetery Ridge; they again retreated in confusion. In all, the Confederates lost 400 killed and wounded and 450 prisoners—the entire Union loss being about 200. Hill had been checked, but Warren was far from being free from peril, for Ewell's corps and the remainder of Hill's were rapidly approaching, while the other Union corps, apparently ignorant of what was going on, had kept up the retreat, and were now miles away. Warren could not hope, with his single corps, long to withstand the whole Confederate army, nor while daylight lasted could he safely abandon his strong position and pursue his march. But night was approaching, and before Lee could make the necessary dispositions for attack, darkness closed in, and under its thrice welcome cover Warren marched on, and rejoined the main army at Centreville.

Had Meade on that day known the position of the enemy, he would certainly never have crossed Bull Run. He would most likely have marched back to Bristoe, before it had been abandoned by Warren, where there can be little doubt that a battle would have taken place, under such advantages that victory would have been certain.² But so erroneous was Meade's information that even on the next day Birney's division was ordered to march on to Fairfax Station, half way between Centreville and Washington, to hold that point against an expected attack. Had Lee really purposed to throw his army through Thoroughfare Gap, Meade should have welcomed such a movement. The Confederate army, wholly cut off from its sources of supply, would have been hemmed in between Meade's superior forces and the defenses of Washington. It could have neither food nor ammunition except what it bore with it. It could neither hold its position, nor advance nor retreat without winning a battle, against greatly superior forces. The case was widely different from what existed a year before, when Lee, fully twice as strong, had made the same flank march against Pope's disjointed and dispirited army.

After a couple of days' repose at Centreville, Meade perceived that Lee was not minded to follow him any farther, and he resolved to retrace his steps. But now a storm set in and swelled the little stream of Bull Run into a foaming torrent, which could be crossed only by pontoons. These had been left ten miles behind, and so for two days the army could not move a mile. Lee pushed a few troops as far as Bull Run, and on the 18th commenced his retreat toward the Rappahannock, marching along the railroad, which he thoroughly destroyed behind him. The next day, the Run having fallen, Meade began his advance. He moved slowly, for there was nothing to be gained by haste. More than a week was occupied in the twenty miles' march back to Warrenton, and ten more days were lost in repairing the road so that supplies could be kept up.

Besides Warren's stand at Auburn and his fight at Bristoe, there had been no fighting except by the cavalry, who were flung out from either army. On the 13th Stuart was near coming to grief hard by Catlett's Station, where he had last year performed good though accidental service by the capture of Pope's dispatch-book. He had pushed forward quite in advance of the infantry, and, coming upon the head of the leading Federal column, had fallen back toward Catlett's, where he bivouacked in a low spot among a dense pine thicket. Meantime the other Federal column had moved by a parallel road, and Stuart was hemmed in between the two, not two miles from Meade's head-quarters, and within less than a quarter of a mile from a ridge whereon Warren had pitched his camp. Stuart was hidden from observation by the thicket and by the heavy night mist, while the enemy on the hill-tops was in plain view. His destruction was inevitable should he be discovered. Sending two or three soldiers disguised in Federal uniforms to creep through the hostile lines and notify Lee of his peril, he waited till morning was beginning to dawn, and then opened a sudden artillery fire upon Warren. So unexpected was the attack that the troops upon whom

¹ "When I began the fight, the last of General Sykes's corps was moving off. I do not suppose that he got more than three or four miles away, and a part of his corps did come back just before dark. I think the orders were to concentrate at Centreville that night; but when I was engaged in battle, it seemed to me plain enough that he ought to have helped me without solicitation or orders."—Warren, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 384.

² "Under the conviction that the enemy was moving on, and had moved on, I that night [of the 13th] gave orders for a further retrograde movement, until I occupied the line of Centreville and Bull Run. In performing this movement the next day, I ascertained, when too late to take advantage of it, that the enemy had not moved on the pike [leading through Thoroughfare Gap to Centreville], but that he had moved across, with the expectation of falling upon my flank and rear, and that his advance had encountered my rear-guard, under the command of General Warren, and had been severely handled."—(Meade, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 341.)—Warren says (*Ibid.*, 387): "We lost another opportunity when the enemy attacked me at Bristoe; perhaps not at that point exactly, but during that movement we missed an opportunity that we should be very glad to have again."



DÉPÔT OF SUPPLIES ON THE RAILROAD.

it fell were thrown into momentary confusion, and moved across the crest to escape the cannonade. Stuart sprang to horse, and passing safely with all his men, rode clear around the Union rear. The scouts whom he had sent out had in the mean time succeeded in reaching Ewell, who set his column in motion, and it was the head of this which encountered Warren at Auburn.

While Meade was resting at Centreville, Imboden, with a division of Confederate cavalry, was stationed in the Valley of the Shenandoah. From Winchester, on the 16th, he made a sudden dash down to Charlestown, close by Harper's Ferry, where he captured more than 400 prisoners, and secured a large quantity of supplies, and then, upon the approach of a superior force from the Ferry, he fell back, preserving all his spoils. On the 19th Kilpatrick, with his cavalry division, having crossed Bull Run, pressed on toward Warrenton. When within a few miles of that place he encountered Hampton's troopers, who were covering the Confederate rear. Hampton fell back for a space until joined by Stuart and Fitz Lee. Kilpatrick was in turn driven back, not without confusion, losing 200 prisoners. What with Imboden's captures at Charlestown, the Confederates had made, during these five days, about 2500 prisoners, and had lost not more than a quarter as many. In killed and wounded the losses were about equal, not far from 500 on each side. Lee had, however, succeeded in his chief purpose, that of securing himself against any probable attack during the few remaining weeks of the autumn.

While, however, Meade was waiting at Warrenton for the repair of the railroad, he meditated an indirect offensive movement, being nothing other than a repetition of Burnside's, entered upon just a year before. He proposed to march rapidly to Fredericksburg, cross there and seize the heights, and thus transfer his base of operations from the Orange and Alexandria to the Fredericksburg Railroad. He argued that this movement would be a complete surprise to the enemy; that the heights of Fredericksburg could be seized before Lee could get down there; and then, he says, "if Lee followed me down there, it would be just what I wanted; if he did not, then I could take up my position there, open my communications, and then advance upon him or threaten Richmond." But Halleck refused his consent to this plan; he was opposed to any change of base—a phrase which indeed had come to have an ominous sound. If Meade chose to make any movement against Lee, he was at liberty to do so, but there must be no change of base.¹ Why, in November, Halleck should sanction the very operation which he had positively forbidden in July, is inconceivable. Lee's army was somewhat stronger now than then;² Meade's was considerably weaker. Then there were four months of favorable weather; now there was no likelihood of as many weeks. Then the Union army was flushed by the great victory, and the Confederate dispirited by the great defeat of Gettysburg;

now the Confederates were inspired, and the Federals dispirited by the result of the subsequent operations.

The Confederate army lay meanwhile behind the Rappahannock, widely scattered. Two brigades were on the north bank, occupying intrenchments at Rappahannock Station which had been thrown up by the Federals. On the 7th of November Meade put his army in motion. It was formed into two columns—the First, Second, and Third Corps under French; the Fifth and Sixth under Sedgwick. In the early morning Birney's division of French's corps waded across the river at Kelly's Ford, captured 500 prisoners, and prevented any supports from coming up to Rappahannock Station, where Sedgwick's corps was to cross. Sedgwick was delayed until afternoon before the works on the north bank. Russell, who led the first division, just at sunset reported that he would with his 3000 men undertake to storm the intrenchments. He charged upon them with fixed bayonets without firing a shot. He met a fire so fierce that in ten minutes his leading regiment, the Fifth Maine, lost 16 out of its 23 officers, and 123 out of 350 men; but the works were carried. At the same moment the One Hundred and Twenty-first New York and the Fifth Maine, firing but a single volley, swept through the rifle-pits and gained the pontoon bridge, cutting off the retreat of the garrison. A few escaped by swimming, but 1600 out of 2000 surrendered. This brilliant achievement redressed the balance of losses in this campaign.

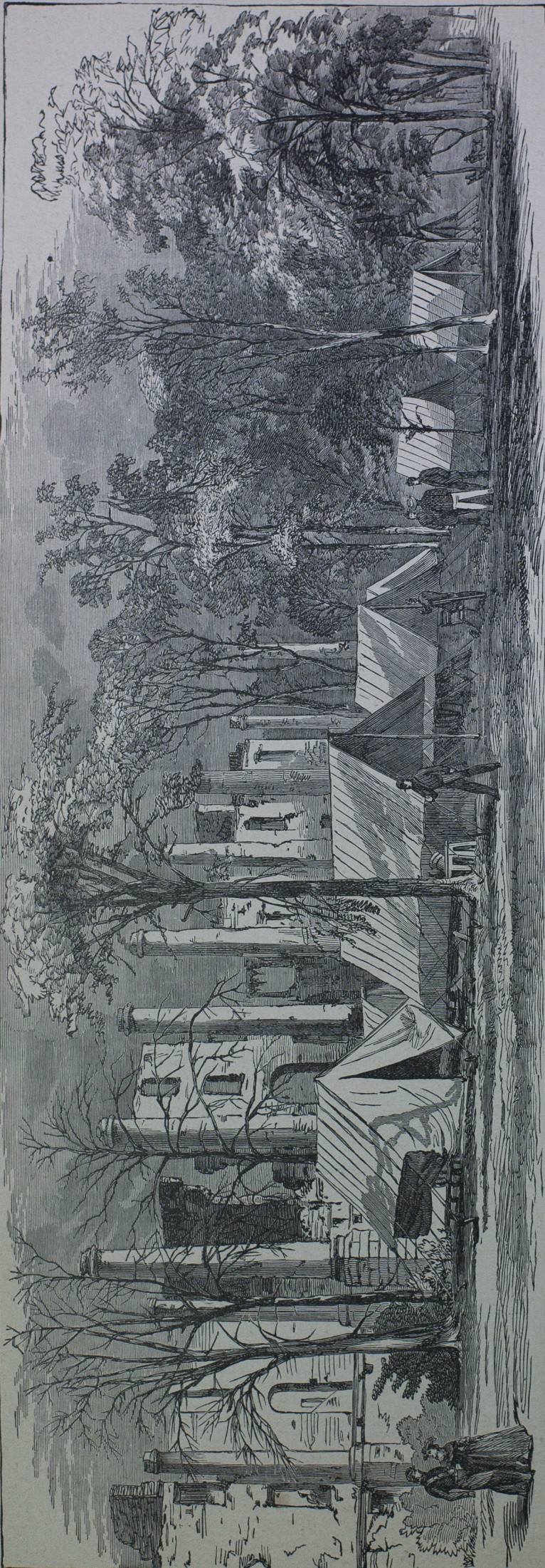
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IN CAMP AT WASHINGTON SPRINGS.

Warren had in the mean while been delayed at Auburn by a rencounter with a portion of Ewell's corps. This, after some skirmishing, drew off, and Warren followed on after the rest of the army, between which and him there was now a considerable interval. When the head of Lee's army came in the afternoon to Bristoe, they saw Sykes's corps marching out. Hill made some dispositions to assail the rear of Sykes, when he became aware of the approach of Warren from the opposite direction. Hill turned to assail Warren, while Sykes, strangely enough, kept on his retreat for a space.¹ Warren's position was perilous. His single corps was isolated from the remainder of the army, while the whole force of the enemy was coming up right upon his flank. Only a part of it was actually up, and on the next few minutes every thing depended. With quick decision, Warren sent his two leading divisions, which were a mile in advance of the other, to seize upon a deep cutting in the railroad. They dashed forward at a run, and were just in time to gain the position when Hill's advancing line of battle came up. They were received with so hot a fire that they fell back with considerable loss. Heth's division—the same which, under Pettigrew, who had been mortally wounded at Williamsport, had suffered so severely at Gettysburg—made a feeble attack upon the right flank, when it encountered Webb's division, the same which it had met on Cemetery Ridge; they again retreated in confusion. In all, the Confederates lost 400 killed and wounded and 450 prisoners—the entire Union loss being about 200. Hill had been checked, but Warren was far from being free from peril, for Ewell's corps and the remainder of Hill's were rapidly approaching, while the other Union corps, apparently ignorant of what was going on, had kept up the retreat, and were now miles away. Warren could not hope, with his single corps, long to withstand the whole Confederate army, nor while daylight lasted could he safely abandon his strong position and pursue his march. But night was approaching, and before Lee could make the necessary dispositions for attack, darkness closed in, and under its thrice welcome cover Warren marched on, and rejoined the main army at Centreville.

Had Meade on that day known the position of the enemy, he would certainly never have crossed Bull Run. He would most likely have marched back to Bristoe, before it had been abandoned by Warren, where there can be little doubt that a battle would have taken place, under such advantages that victory would have been certain.² But so erroneous was Meade's information that even on the next day Birney's division was ordered to march on to Fairfax Station, half way between Centreville and Washington, to hold that point against an expected attack. Had Lee really purposed to throw his army through Thoroughfare Gap, Meade should have welcomed such a movement. The Confederate army, wholly cut off from its sources of supply, would have been hemmed in between Meade's superior forces and the defenses of Washington. It could have neither food nor ammunition except what it bore with it. It could neither hold its position, nor advance nor retreat without winning a battle, against greatly superior forces. The case was widely different from what existed a year before, when Lee, fully twice as strong, had made the same flank march against Pope's disjointed and dispirited army.

After a couple of days' repose at Centreville, Meade perceived that Lee was not minded to follow him any farther, and he resolved to retrace his steps. But now a storm set in and swelled the little stream of Bull Run into a foaming torrent, which could be crossed only by pontoons. These had been left ten miles behind, and so for two days the army could not move a mile. Lee pushed a few troops as far as Bull Run, and on the 18th commenced his retreat toward the Rappahannock, marching along the railroad, which he thoroughly destroyed behind him. The next day, the Run having fallen, Meade began his advance. He moved slowly, for there was nothing to be gained by haste. More than a week was occupied in the twenty miles' march back to Warrenton, and ten more days were lost in repairing the road so that supplies could be kept up.

Besides Warren's stand at Auburn and his fight at Bristoe, there had been no fighting except by the cavalry, who were flung out from either army. On the 13th Stuart was near coming to grief hard by Catlett's Station, where he had last year performed good though accidental service by the capture of Pope's dispatch-book. He had pushed forward quite in advance of the infantry, and, coming upon the head of the leading Federal column, had fallen back toward Catlett's, where he bivouacked in a low spot among a dense pine thicket. Meantime the other Federal column had moved by a parallel road, and Stuart was hemmed in between the two, not two miles from Meade's head-quarters, and within less than a quarter of a mile from a ridge whereon Warren had pitched his camp. Stuart was hidden from observation by the thicket and by the heavy night mist, while the enemy on the hill-tops was in plain view. His destruction was inevitable should he be discovered. Sending two or three soldiers disguised in Federal uniforms to creep through the hostile lines and notify Lee of his peril, he waited till morning was beginning to dawn, and then opened a sudden artillery fire upon Warren. So unexpected was the attack that the troops upon whom

¹ "When I began the fight, the last of General Sykes's corps was moving off. I do not suppose that he got more than three or four miles away, and a part of his corps did come back just before dark. I think the orders were to concentrate at Centreville that night; but when I was engaged in battle, it seemed to me plain enough that he ought to have helped me without solicitation or orders."—Warren, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 384.

² "Under the conviction that the enemy was moving on, and had moved on, I that night [of the 13th] gave orders for a further retrograde movement, until I occupied the line of Centreville and Bull Run. In performing this movement the next day, I ascertained, when too late to take advantage of it, that the enemy had not moved on the pike [leading through Thoroughfare Gap to Centreville], but that he had moved across, with the expectation of falling upon my flank and rear, and that his advance had encountered my rear-guard, under the command of General Warren, and had been severely handled."—(Meade, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 341.)—Warren says (*Ibid.*, 387): "We lost another opportunity when the enemy attacked me at Bristoe; perhaps not at that point exactly, but during that movement we missed an opportunity that we should be very glad to have again."



DÉPÔT OF SUPPLIES ON THE RAILROAD.

it fell were thrown into momentary confusion, and moved across the crest to escape the cannonade. Stuart sprang to horse, and passing safely with all his men, rode clear around the Union rear. The scouts whom he had sent out had in the mean time succeeded in reaching Ewell, who set his column in motion, and it was the head of this which encountered Warren at Auburn.

While Meade was resting at Centreville, Imboden, with a division of Confederate cavalry, was stationed in the Valley of the Shenandoah. From Winchester, on the 16th, he made a sudden dash down to Charlestown, close by Harper's Ferry, where he captured more than 400 prisoners, and secured a large quantity of supplies, and then, upon the approach of a superior force from the Ferry, he fell back, preserving all his spoils. On the 19th Kilpatrick, with his cavalry division, having crossed Bull Run, pressed on toward Warrenton. When within a few miles of that place he encountered Hampton's troopers, who were covering the Confederate rear. Hampton fell back for a space until joined by Stuart and Fitz Lee. Kilpatrick was in turn driven back, not without confusion, losing 200 prisoners. What with Imboden's captures at Charlestown, the Confederates had made, during these five days, about 2500 prisoners, and had lost not more than a quarter as many. In killed and wounded the losses were about equal, not far from 500 on each side. Lee had, however, succeeded in his chief purpose, that of securing himself against any probable attack during the few remaining weeks of the autumn.

While, however, Meade was waiting at Warrenton for the repair of the railroad, he meditated an indirect offensive movement, being nothing other than a repetition of Burnside's, entered upon just a year before. He proposed to march rapidly to Fredericksburg, cross there and seize the heights, and thus transfer his base of operations from the Orange and Alexandria to the Fredericksburg Railroad. He argued that this movement would be a complete surprise to the enemy; that the heights of Fredericksburg could be seized before Lee could get down there; and then, he says, "if Lee followed me down there, it would be just what I wanted; if he did not, then I could take up my position there, open my communications, and then advance upon him or threaten Richmond." But Halleck refused his consent to this plan; he was opposed to any change of base—a phrase which indeed had come to have an ominous sound. If Meade chose to make any movement against Lee, he was at liberty to do so, but there must be no change of base.¹ Why, in November, Halleck should sanction the very operation which he had positively forbidden in July, is inconceivable. Lee's army was somewhat stronger now than then;² Meade's was considerably weaker. Then there were four months of favorable weather; now there was no likelihood of as many weeks. Then the Union army was flushed by the great victory, and the Confederate dispirited by the great defeat of Gettysburg;

now the Confederates were inspired, and the Federals dispirited by the result of the subsequent operations.

The Confederate army lay meanwhile behind the Rappahannock, widely scattered. Two brigades were on the north bank, occupying intrenchments at Rappahannock Station which had been thrown up by the Federals. On the 7th of November Meade put his army in motion. It was formed into two columns—the First, Second, and Third Corps under French; the Fifth and Sixth under Sedgwick. In the early morning Birney's division of French's corps waded across the river at Kelly's Ford, captured 500 prisoners, and prevented any supports from coming up to Rappahannock Station, where Sedgwick's corps was to cross. Sedgwick was delayed until afternoon before the works on the north bank. Russell, who led the first division, just at sunset reported that he would with his 3000 men undertake to storm the intrenchments. He charged upon them with fixed bayonets without firing a shot. He met a fire so fierce that in ten minutes his leading regiment, the Fifth Maine, lost 16 out of its 23 officers, and 123 out of 350 men; but the works were carried. At the same moment the One Hundred and Twenty-first New York and the Fifth Maine, firing but a single volley, swept through the rifle-pits and gained the pontoon bridge, cutting off the retreat of the garrison. A few escaped by swimming, but 1600 out of 2000 surrendered. This brilliant achievement redressed the balance of losses in this campaign.

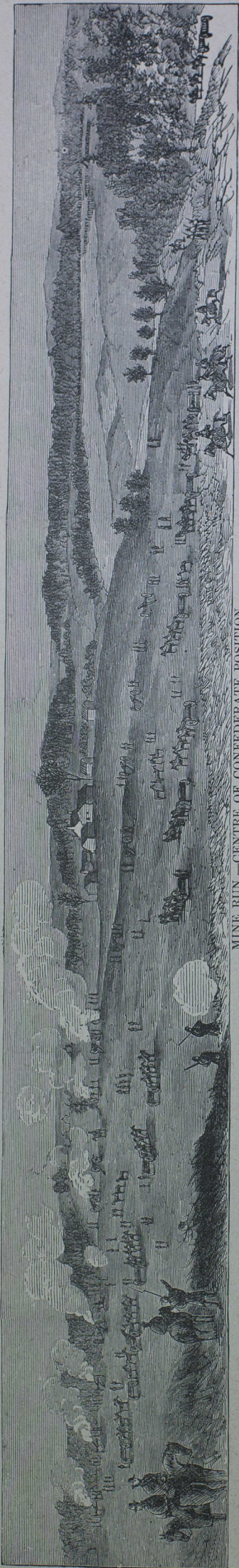
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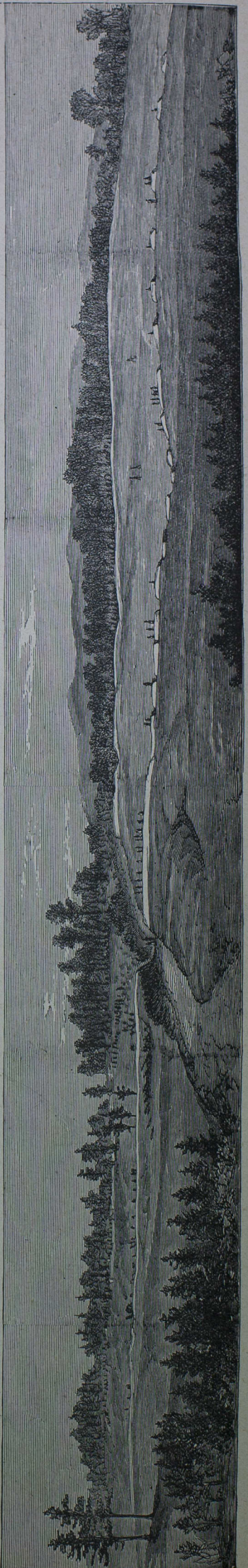
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MINE RUN.—CENTRE OF CONFEDERATE POSITION.



MINE RUN.—RE-CROSSING AT GERMANIA FORD.



MINE RUN.—WARREN'S LAST POSITION.

As November drew near a close, Lee evidently supposed that active operations for the season were over. He therefore scattered his troops in winter quarters over a wide extent of country. Ewell's corps, on the right, rested upon Mine Run, a mere brook, with a depth of water of from a few inches to two feet, creeping through swamps and dense undergrowth. It runs along the western margin of the Wilderness, and empties into the Rapidan a dozen miles west of Chancellorsville. Along this stream intrenchments had been formed and abatis constructed. These were not very strongly held; and all the lower fords of the Rapidan were left wholly unguarded. The Confederate army was somewhat stronger than at any period since Longstreet's departure for the West. The returns of November 20 showed 56,000 men, of whom 48,000 were present for duty; but it was widely scattered. Ewell's corps was posted along Mine Run, thence stretching southward as far as Orange Court-house, a distance of fully fifteen miles. Still farther lay Hill's corps, its extremity being at Charlottesville, thirty miles farther. The distance from the extreme right to the extreme left was forty-five miles, and there was an interval of some miles between Ewell and Hill. Meade had in all about 70,000 men, closely concentrated within a few miles of Lee's right at Mine Run; of these, about 60,000 were brought forward in aid of the operation which was now to be undertaken.¹

It seemed to Meade that by suddenly crossing the Rapidan at the fords where Hooker had before crossed, then striking the plank road and turnpike leading westward toward Orange Court-house, he would, by a rapid march of barely twenty miles, fall upon Ewell's corps, crush that before Hill could come up, and then turn upon that corps, drive it back, and thus gain an effective lodgment at Orange Court-house and Gordonsville. The movement was undoubtedly a feasible one, provided no mischance occurred, and every part of it was conducted precisely as planned; but its success depended upon the contingencies of time, space, and weather.

The 24th of November was the time set for the movement; but, as if by way of premonition, a furious storm arose, which delayed every thing for two days. On the 26th the march was begun. The several corps marched in two separate columns, by several different roads. It was supposed that all would reach their points of concentration beyond what had been ascertained to be the extremity of the Confederate intrenchments on Mine Run by noon of the 27th. Warren reached the Rapidan at Germania Ford at the time appointed; but French, who was to cross hard by, was three hours behind time, and thus the passage was delayed, for Meade would not send one corps over alone. Then, again, somebody had blundered in measuring the width of the stream; every pontoon bridge was just one boat too short, and the difficulty had to be supplied by bridging. Thus almost a day was lost in taking the first step, the passage of the Rapidan, which was not effected until the 27th. Warren then pushed on rapidly. He had, indeed, a good road from the Rapidan southward, and within an hour of the appointed time was at the point where he was to be joined by the Third Corps. But French got entangled in the labyrinth of paths, and halted four miles short of the place for junction, where he was held in check by a body of the enemy who had been pushed forward in advance of their line of intrenchments. These two corps, with the First, which was to follow, formed the left column; the right—the First and Fifth Corps—had not got within communicating distance, and till this was effected Meade would not venture an advance. Next morning this was made, but the enemy had fallen back to his intrenched position, and all that day and the next were spent in reconnoitring the position and fixing upon some point for attack. As Sunday, the 29th, drew to a close, Sedgwick, on the right, and Warren, on the left, reported that an attack was feasible on their fronts. Warren indeed, at 9 o'clock, assured Meade that he was confident that the enemy would not be found before him in the morning.² French was opposed to attacking on his own front, in the centre, so it was resolved to attack on the left and right, Warren being strengthened by two of French's divisions, giving him a force of 26,000. Sedgwick opened fire with his artillery, and was just about advancing to the assault, when an aid came from Warren with a dispatch stating that he had suspended his assault, finding that the enemy was in great force on his front. There had been ample time to bring up the bulk of the Confederate army, and Warren had the day before demonstrated so ostentatiously that Lee's attention was strongly directed to that part of his line, which he had strengthened by weakening the others.³ Meade rode over to Warren's position, and was reluctantly obliged to acknowledge that he had done wisely in not making the attack. Sedgwick now reported that the enemy had strengthened himself also in his front; so the order to attack was reversed, and Birney, who had actually begun a strong demonstration upon the centre, was surprised by being ordered to fall back again. Meade was indeed half-minded to accede to Warren's suggestion—to keep on until he had passed beyond the extremity of the Confederate works, and assail them

in some position where they would not have time to intrench themselves before the attack could be made. But it was now winter, and favorable weather could not be anticipated from day to day; any sudden storm would prevent the bringing forward of supplies, and of those which had been brought half were exhausted.¹ So Meade concluded that, under the circumstances, nothing more—and nothing more was equivalent to nothing at all—could be done. He withdrew his army to its former position.

With the Mine Run attempt—an enterprise which could have been successful only in case that out of a score of untoward circumstances, all of which were probable, and some of which were almost certain—the closing campaign of 1863 in Virginia came to an end, and both armies retired to winter quarters to await the opening spring.

That during the autumn and winter Richmond had been left almost wholly without troops, was ascertained from sure sources. Between October, 1863, and March, 1864, there were there at no time more than 7000 effective troops, while fully 10,000 Union prisoners were known to be confined in the military prisons. Several plans were formed of making a sudden dash upon the Confederate capital, and at all events liberating these prisoners. Early in February, General Butler, now in command at Fortress Monroe, sent a considerable body of cavalry, supported by infantry, from Yorktown toward Richmond. The cavalry reached Bottom's Bridge, on the Chickahominy, on the 7th; but tidings of the expedition had somehow preceded them, and the roads were so thoroughly obstructed as to be impassable for cavalry, and the expedition returned, having effected nothing.

At the close of the month a more formidable expedition was fitted out from the Army of the Potomac for the same purpose. Kilpatrick, with 4000 cavalry, crossed the Rapidan, and passed Spotsylvania Court-house, and pushed rapidly on toward Richmond. On the first of March he had reached within less than four miles of the city, penetrating the two outer lines of defenses; but, being stopped at the third, he fell back, and the next day, concluding that the enterprise was not feasible, retreated to Yorktown. Meanwhile, at Spotsylvania Court-house, Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, with a picked body of 400 cavalry, had been detached to the right, with the view of skirting to the south, and assailing Richmond in that direction. His guide had led him out of the way. Dahlgren, believing that this was done treacherously, hung him on the spot, and rode on his way till he reached the inner line of defenses. Here he was repulsed, as Kilpatrick had been on the other side. Endeavoring to make his way eastward, he encountered a body of militia, and was shot dead, his command dispersing, a third of them being made prisoners. The Confederates assert that on his body were found an address to his men, and orders and instructions, declaring his object to be to "destroy and burn the hateful city, and not to allow the rebel leader Davis and his traitorous crew to escape. . . . Once in the city, it must be destroyed, and Davis and his cabinet killed." The genuineness of these papers has been strenuously denied; and, apart from the intrinsic improbability, the account given of the transaction is so suspicious as to leave little doubt that these papers were either absolute forgeries or grossly interpolated. Dahlgren's body, after having been interred, was dug up and buried again secretly, and with every indignity, as that of an outlaw.

With this unfortunate enterprise closed Meade's campaign in Virginia. On the day when Kilpatrick came within sight of Richmond, Ulysses S. Grant was commissioned Lieutenant General of the Armies of the United States. The campaign soon to be opened, lasting a year lacking a month, was conducted by Grant.

¹ Meade, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 345.

¹ Meade mentions incidentally that in the course of these operations Warren had about 25,000 or 26,000 men, and that this was "nearly half" of his whole army.—See *Com. Rep.*, ii., 345, 6.

² So Meade testifies (*Com. Rep.*, ii., 345, 6), and that Warren the next day wrote that he had suspended the attack which he had been directed to make, because the order had been based upon his judgment, and he found the enemy had been largely re-enforced. But Warren affirms (*Ibid.*, 386, 7): "I wish it to be distinctly understood that it was no scheme of mine at all to attack at this place. . . . My idea was that, as we had plenty of provisions, we should keep on until we had passed their left and their intrenchments there, and attack the enemy where he had not any thing. . . . That the plan of the fight did not depend upon any thing that I said that night is apparent from the fact that the troops on the right were already in position for the attack before I got to General Meade. I put the best face that I could on it then."

³ "My movement had been apparent to the enemy, for I had made all the fires I could, my object being to make a demonstration as of a heavy force. The enemy saw also other troops moving, and during the night concentrated a large force there also. . . . In one space, where there was not a gun before, we could then count seventeen guns in a commanding position." (Warren, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 386, 7.)—Birney says (*Ibid.*, 373): "I think Warren's plan failed because it was attended with too much reconnoitring, fire-building, and delay, all of which fully advertised the movement to the watchful enemy, and prevented a surprise. When Warren was ready to attack he found the enemy ready to receive him. I think that in extending their right they had weakened their centre."



ULRIC DAHLGREN.



WINTER QUARTERS.—ON PICKET.