



WORKSHOPS—ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## THE CAMPAIGN IN VIRGINIA.—FROM THE RAPIDAN TO THE JAMES.

Result of Meade's Campaign.—Action of the Committee on the Conduct of the War.—Grant appointed Lieutenant General.—Retirement of Halleck.—Arrangements for the Campaign of 1864.—The Union Forces.—Changes in Organization and Command.—Hancock, Warren, Sedgwick, Burnside.—Sykes, French, Newton.—Kilpatrick, Pleasanton, Sheridan, Sherman.—Meade retained in command of the Army of the Potomac.—Grant's Plans of Campaign.—Position and Strength of Lee's Army.—Lee's Right Flank to be turned.—Opening of the Campaign.—How conducted by Lee and Grant.—*The Battles in the Wilderness: Passage of the Rapidan.*—Positions in the Wilderness.—Military Features of the Region.—Lee moves to the Wilderness.—Grant's proposed Line of March.—Ewell encounters Warren.—Forces him down the Turnpike.—Hill checks him on the Plank Road.—Hancock ordered up.—Getty holds the Brock Road.—Sedgwick attacks on the Right.—Hancock arrives, and attacks Hill.—The Wadsworth Movement.—Hancock repulsed.—Close of the Action of May 5.—Its Results.—Preparations for the Battle of the 6th.—Simultaneous Attack by both Armies.—Slight Engagement between Ewell and Hancock.—Hancock attacks Hill, and forces him back.—Lee on the Field.—Hancock checked.—Longstreet arrives.—Hancock forced back.—Wadsworth Killed.—Longstreet moves toward Hancock's Rear.—Is Wounded.—Burnside's Movements.—Lee assails Hancock's Intrenchments.—Close of the Action on the Left.—Night Assault upon Sedgwick.—Seymour's Division captured.—Results of the Battle.—Losses.—Grant and Lee move toward Spottsylvania.—Lee arrives First.—The whole of both Armies come up.—Fighting on the 7th.—The Action of the 9th.—Death of Sedgwick.—Fighting on the 10th.—Grant's Dispatch.—Washington Bulletins.—Losses in these Actions.—The Battle of the 12th.—Hancock carries Works, and captures Johnson's Division.—The Confederates rally.—Hancock repelled.—Other Operations.—Close of the Battle.—Results and Losses.—Grant moves for the North Anna.—Lee assails and is repulsed.—Lee's Plan of defending Rivers.—Grant crosses the North Anna.—Recrosses.—Both Armies re-enforced.—Sigel defeated at New Market.—He is superseded by Hunter.—Crook's fruitless Expedition.—Hunter advances.—Defeats Jones at Piedmont, and moves upon Lynchburg.—Retreats northwestward.—Loses his Trains.—Butler moves up the James.—Intrenches at Bermuda Hundred.—Kautz cuts the Weldon Railroad.—Beauregard in Virginia.—Grant's Plan for Butler.—Butler attacks Fort Darling.—He is assailed by Beauregard, and retreats to his Intrenchments.—Beauregard's Plans.—The "Bottling-up" at Bermuda Hundred.—Grant moves toward the Chickahominy.—Lee's corresponding Movement.—Positions assumed.—Sheridan occupies Cold Harbor.—Is assailed.—Smith brought from Bermuda Hundred.—Action of June 1.—Value of Intrenched Positions.—Grant's Purposes.—Battle of Cold Harbor, June 3.—Hancock, Wright, and Smith attack and are repulsed.—Burnside's Movement.—Defeat of the Federal Army.—Losses.—Results of the Battle.—Both armies intrench.—Skirmishing.—Grant moves to the James River.—Lee falls back to Richmond.

THE result of the ineffective campaigns at the East brought with it the conviction that the command of the armies in Virginia must be committed to other and stronger hands. The Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War had hardly begun their investigations into the operations conducted by General Meade when the two members by whom it had been mainly conducted<sup>1</sup> repaired to the President and Secretary of War, and "demanded the removal of General Meade, and the appointment of some one more competent to command." They suggested the reinstatement of Hooker, but would acquiesce in that of any other general whom the Presi-

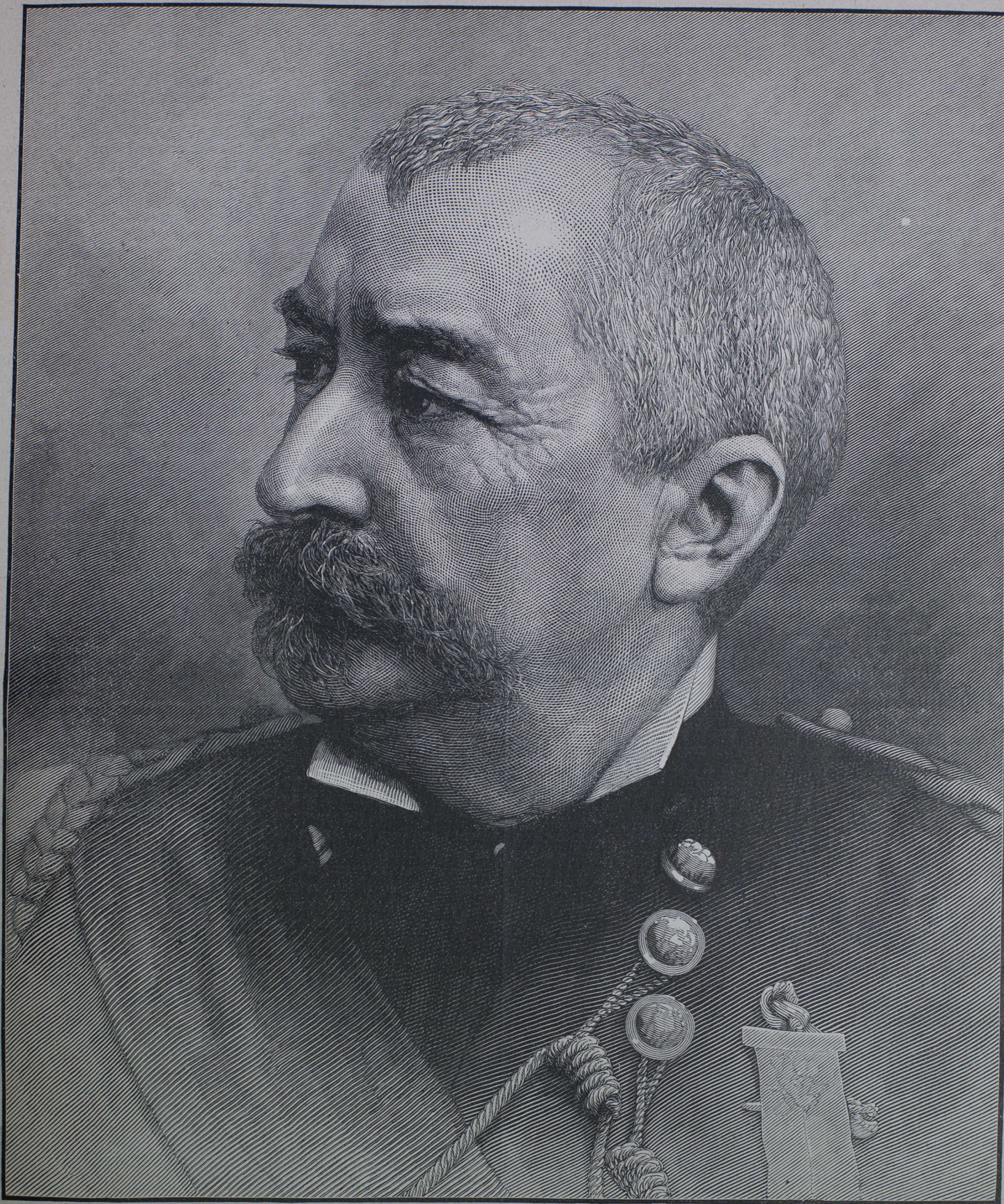
dent might think better fitted for the place, but declared emphatically that unless some change was made "it would become their duty to make the testimony public which they had taken, with such comments as the circumstances of the case seemed to require." But events had been so shaping themselves as to obviate the necessity of farther action. Congress, after much deliberation, had passed a bill reviving the grade of lieutenant general, which had never been held except by Washington, for Scott was such only by brevet. Congress also recommended that this appointment should be conferred upon General Grant, and that he should be placed in actual command of all the armies of the United States. The bill was passed, and approved on the 2d of March, and on the 9th Grant was formally presented with his commission. "The nation's appreciation of what you have done," said the President, "and its reliance upon you for what remains to be done in the existing great struggle, are now presented with this commission constituting you lieutenant general in the armies of the United States. With this high honor devolves upon you a corresponding responsibility. As the country herein trusts you, so, under God, it will sustain you. I need scarcely add that with what I here speak for the nation goes my own hearty personal concurrence."

No man was ever more heartily rejoiced at being relieved from an onerous task than was the President when thus enabled virtually to resign his position as commander-in-chief of the army. He had at length found a man into whose hands that trust might be confided. Halleck's occupation as general-in-chief was gone. He was relieved from active duty, and made chief of staff of the army, under the direction of the President, the Secretary of War, and the Lieutenant General. He was to remain at Washington, while Grant's headquarters were to be with the Army of the Potomac in the field, whence the operations of all the Union armies were to be directed. Henceforth the war was to be carried on by a soldier uncontrolled by civilian direction. Even the strong-willed Secretary of War ceased from interfering with operations in the field.<sup>1</sup>

The arrangements for the spring campaign of 1864 were made for a force of a million of men. On the first of May all the armies nominally counted within 30,000 of that number; but of these 109,000 were on detached service, 117,000 were in hospitals or unfit for duty, 66,000 were absent on furlough or prisoners of war, 15,000 were absent without leave. The entire force "available and present for duty" was 662,345. Nothing was left undone to put this immense force into a condition of the utmost efficiency. Congress made appropriations with unsparing hand. Vast amounts of arms,

<sup>1</sup> "So far as the Secretary of War and myself are concerned, he has never interfered with my duties, never thrown any obstacles in the way of any supplies I have called for. He has never dictated a course of campaign to me, and never inquired what I was going to do. He has always seemed satisfied with what I did, and has heartily co-operated with me."—Grant's Testimony, May 18, 1865, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 524.

<sup>1</sup> Senators Wade and Chandler; see *Com. Rep.*, ii., xvii.—xix.



LIEUTENANT-GENERAL PHILIP HENRY SHERIDAN. NOVEMBER 1, 1863.

ammunition, stores, clothing, and medical supplies were provided and distributed in dépôts. The means of transportation, by land and water, were multiplied. Of this great army 310,000 men were in Virginia and upon its borders, and in the Carolinas. The Army of the Potomac numbered 140,000, including the Ninth Corps, which acted with it from the first, and was soon formally incorporated with it. In and around Washington were 42,000. In Western Virginia were 31,000. In the Department of Virginia and North Carolina were 59,000; of these, fully 25,000, known as the Army of the James, were available for active service in the field. In South Carolina and Georgia, the Department of the South, were 18,000. In the various minor departments were 20,000. To oppose these, the Confederates had in the field not more than 125,000, in Virginia and the Carolinas. The immediate struggle was to be between the Union Army of the Potomac, 140,000 strong, and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, of less than half that number, probably not much exceeding 60,000.<sup>1</sup>

Considerable changes were made in the organization of the Army of the

<sup>1</sup> My estimates of the Confederate forces differ considerably from those generally given. I shall hereafter give the data upon which mine are based.

Potomac. The five corps of which it had consisted were concentrated into three,<sup>1</sup> to be known as the Second, Fifth, and Sixth. The former First and Third Corps were broken up, the troops being distributed among the Second and Fifth. There was little room for hesitation as to the choice of corps commanders. Hancock, having recovered from his wound at Gettysburg, resumed the command of the Second. Warren, who had manifested great military capacity, was placed at the head of the Fifth. There was no question as to continuing Sedgwick in command of the Sixth. Hooker had indeed sharply censured his operations near Chancellorsville,<sup>2</sup> but when we came to learn the history of the disastrous operations at that place, they

<sup>1</sup> This change was suggested by Warren on the day following Grant's formal investiture. He said: "I would consolidate the army into three corps. Then I would get the best man to command the army; then I would allow him to have the choice of his corps commanders; then I would allow these corps commanders to choose their own subordinate commanders, and hold them to a strict accountability for what they did—let them understand that their position depended upon their doing well; not merely excusing themselves, but doing something."—*Com. Rep.*, ii., 384.

<sup>2</sup> "By his movements [after carrying the heights at Fredericksburg] I think that no one would infer that he was confident in himself, and the enemy took advantage of it. He was a perfectly brave man, and a good one; but when it came to manœuvring troops, or judging of positions, then in my judgment, he was not able or expert."—Hooker, in *Com. Rep.*, ii., 146.



GOUVERNEUR K. WARREN.

could not fail to perceive that, wherever lay the blame for that inexplicable disaster, it did not rest upon Sedgwick. Had Hooker shown half the promptitude and energy displayed by Sedgwick, the result would have been far other than what it was. The command of the Army of the Potomac had been more than once urged upon Sedgwick, and as often declined by him. Besides these three corps, there was the Ninth, under Burnside, which had just returned from Tennessee, having lately been recruited, notably by a division of colored troops. The original intention was to send it to North Carolina, and it was not until within a week of the opening of the campaign that it was decided to retain it in Virginia. Then it was proposed to hold it in reserve, but the exigencies of the campaign rendered it necessary to bring it forward. It really formed, from the first, a part of the Army of the Potomac, although for three weeks it was not under the command of Meade, but received its orders directly from Grant. Burnside was superior in rank to Meade, and could not, in military etiquette, be called upon to serve under him, but, with characteristic unselfishness, he waived his priority in rank, and served under his former subordinate.

The change in organization involved many changes in officers of high rank. Generals Sykes, French, and Newton, who had commanded corps, were relieved from services in this army, and sent to other departments. Kilpatrick was sent to Sherman to act as his chief of cavalry. Pleasonton, who had led the cavalry with great vigor, was sent to Missouri; for Grant had already fixed upon a leader for his cavalry. This was Philip Sheridan, a young man of barely thirty, who, in command of an army division in the West, had manifested a dashing bravery and a genius for command which, to the keen eye of the lieutenant general, pointed him out as the man to lead his cavalry. The people had before—not altogether unreasonably—complained that the Federal cavalry had not performed service commensurate with that of the Confederates. The fault rested not upon the men, nor of late upon the leaders, but rather upon the commanding generals, who failed to appreciate the true work of this arm of the service. They had been mainly employed as scouts and in guarding trains. Sheridan "took up the idea that our cavalry ought to fight the enemy's cavalry, and our infantry his infantry," and he resolved to correct "the want of appreciation on the part of infantry commanders as to the power of a large and well-managed body of horse," which led to "the established custom of wasting cavalry for the protection of trains, and for the establishment of cordons around a sleeping infantry force."<sup>1</sup>

The general command of all the forces of the Union had been conferred upon and assumed by Grant. East of the Mississippi the bulk of these forces was concentrated into two great armies, confronting the two main armies of the Confederacy—that in Virginia under Lee, and that in Georgia under Johnston. It was evidently necessary that each of the main Union armies, so widely separated, should be under the immediate command of one general. There was no question that all the forces operating against Johnston should be confided to Sherman. No two men of great military capacity could well differ more widely in the type of their genius than did Grant and Sherman. But they had planned together for months during and after the wearisome Vicksburg campaign, and each had interpenetrated the other with his own ideas, so that it would be hard for either to say how much belonged to each other in the scheme of operations in the Southwest. They were in perfect accord; and Sherman was left in command of the

<sup>1</sup> Sheridan's Report.

great military division of the Mississippi. "I had," says Grant, "talked over with him the plans of the campaign, and was satisfied that he understood them, and would execute them to the fullest extent possible."

Grant having decided to take his position with the Army of the Potomac in the field, the choice of an immediate commander of that army involved very different considerations. By the necessity of the case, Grant must take upon himself the supreme direction of operations. What he here needed was an executive officer able and willing to carry out his designs. The choice fell upon Meade. The very defects which he had exhibited during his command—defects which showed him to be ill fitted for the actual leadership of a great army, proved him to be admirably fitted for any position short of the first. His patriotism and earnestness were beyond doubt; his bravery upon the field was unquestioned; his tactical abilities had been proved. His failures had all arisen from want of self-confidence. Instead of directing, he was ever in search of some one to direct him. In default of better authority, he was perpetually calling consultations and councils of war, and yielding to their decision instead of acting upon his own responsibility. A council of war, not the general in command, decided that the army should not abandon the heights of Gettysburg on the night before the last decisive day. A council of war decided by a bare majority that Lee should not be followed up when he retreated from that lost field. A council of war decided, against Meade's own judgment, that the Confederate army should not be assailed when brought to bay on the banks of the swollen Potomac. The lack of moral courage on the part of Meade caused the unaccountable retreat from Culpepper to Centreville. Fear of responsibility led him to abandon the Mine Run expedition. If Senators Wade and Chandler, of the Congressional Committee, had waited but two days more, until General Meade's own testimony had been given, they could have made out a much stronger case for demanding his removal. But if Meade lacked the faculty of command—the first requisite of a great general, he possessed the second requisite—the faculty of comprehending and executing the orders of another. As commander of the Army of the Potomac, under the immediate direction of a higher intelligence and a stronger will, he proved himself, in the long campaign which followed, to be "the right man in the right place."

Grant had, in the mean while, matured his plans for the campaign. His purpose was to attack simultaneously the two great armies of the Confederacy—"to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources, until by mere attrition, if in no other way," they should be destroyed. Sherman, in the West, was simply instructed to "move against Johnston's army, break it up, and go into the interior of the enemy's country as far as he could, inflicting all the damage he could upon their war resources." With what vigor and skill this order was executed will be shown hereafter. The Army of the Potomac, under Grant's own eye, was to be directed upon a principle altogether new to it. The instructions to Meade read like a covert censure upon all previous operations of the Army of the Potomac. "Lee's army is to be your objective point; wherever that goes you must go." There was to be no more of that indecisive manœuvring whereby had been lost the fruit so ripe and ready for plucking at Antietam and Gettysburg. The Army of the Potomac was to move, not from, nor merely toward the enemy, but upon him. Butler, with the Army of the James, was to co-operate, at first indirectly, in this movement upon Lee. With at least 20,000 men he was to go up the James River, lay siege to Richmond, if possible, or, at all events, take up a position so threatening to the Confederate capital as to insure that none of the force which it was foreseen would be brought up from the Carolinas would be pushed forward to Lee. Sigel's 30,000 men were actually confronted by not a third of their number; but he had a large frontier to defend against raids and partisan adventurers. Yet this defense could be better performed by pushing forward a large part of his force than by lying idly in garrison. He was therefore to organize two columns, one to march up the Valley of the Shenandoah, the other to move down the western flank of the Alleghenies, and then, crossing that ridge, to fall upon the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, one of the great avenues of supply for the Confederate army and capital, destroying also the salt-works whence was derived the main portion of the supply of this great necessary of life. All these movements were to commence simultaneously, as nearly as possible on the first of May.

The Confederate Army of Northern Virginia had lain in winter quarters along the bluffs which skirt the south bank of the Rapidan, the lines extending for a distance of twenty miles. The position, strong by nature, had been industriously fortified. Rifle-pits commanded every ford, and intrenchments crowned every hill-top. So little had an advance during the winter been apprehended, that after the demonstration at Mine Run a third of the soldiers had been allowed leave of absence upon furlough. In January and February the muster-rolls showed but 35,000 men present for duty. As spring opened the absentees were gradually recalled. On the 10th of March there were about 40,000; on the 10th of April, 53,000. The returns for May are wanting, but it may be assumed that on the first of the month, when the campaign opened, the numbers had increased to fully 60,000, probably somewhat more. Before these, at and around Culpepper, from ten to thirty miles distant, was the Union Army of the Potomac, 140,000 strong, Burnside's corps included.

An assault in front upon the Confederate lines was neither meditated by Grant nor apprehended by Lee. The attack would be made by turning,

<sup>1</sup> "Commanding, as I did, all the armies, I tried, as far as possible, to leave General Meade in independent command of the Army of the Potomac. My instructions for that army were all through him, and were general in their nature, leaving all the details and the execution to him. The campaigns that followed proved him to be the right man in the right place."—Grant's Report, July 22, 1865.

either upon the right or left. There were many advantages and many disadvantages in either case. If the lines were turned by the left, the Union army would still cover Washington; but if the enemy fell back, as it was assumed he would do, every step would carry the assailing force farther and farther from its base of supply. Practically it must do all that it did while the rations with which it started held out. If the turning was by the right, the distance to be marched, in case the enemy fell back to Richmond, would be much greater, and, moreover, Washington would be uncovered, and the way open for another invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania, should Lee dare to venture it. But, on the other hand, should the enemy fall back toward Richmond, the Union base of supply could be shifted as the army moved—from Brandy Station to Acquia Creek, thence down the Rappahannock to the York, or even, as it proved, to the James. Moreover, Grant seems not to have shared in the nervous apprehension for the safety of the capital which had for two years paralyzed every fresh movement; and he had good reason to be assured that Lee, taught by Antietam and Gettysburg, would not venture to renew the experiment of crossing the border. With 60,000 men he would not attempt to perform that in which he had twice failed to succeed with 100,000. So it was decided that the turning should be made on the Confederate right, that is, to the east, not by the left, to the west. But it so happened that Lee, bearing in mind the result which had followed the movement of Burnside, and reasoning from what he presumed to be the views of the authorities at Washington—not knowing that the military power had passed from their hands—assumed that the movement would be made upon his left. He therefore massed the bulk of his force in that direction. Of the three corps of which his army was composed, those of Ewell and Hill lay behind the defenses of the Rapidan, the mass being at Orange Court-house, near the centre, while Longstreet's corps, just returned from its disastrous expedition to Tennessee, was at Gordonsville, thirteen miles farther to the southwest.

The combined operations of all the Union armies was to take place in the early days of May. On the 1st Sigel began his movement up the Valley of the Shenandoah. On the 6th, Sherman, with the combined armies of the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Ohio, advanced from Chattanooga. On the 4th, Butler, with the Army of the James, moved up the James River. On the night of the 3d the Army of the Potomac broke up its camps around Culpepper, and marched for the Rapidan. With this movement began the closing campaign of the war. The campaign lasted for eleven months. On the part of Lee it soon resolved itself into a purely defensive scheme, and, as such, will stand among the great defensive campaigns of history. Two of the campaigns of Frederick of Prussia may be fairly set down as its equal. That of Napoleon in 1814, when, with not more than 110,000 men, he well-nigh foiled 600,000 which the Great Alliance poured into France, is its only superior. That the one, after a hundred days, closed with the exile to Elba, and the other, after more than three hundred, with the surrender at Appomattox Court-house, detracts nothing from their merits. All that skill on the part of the Confederate commander, all that bravery on the part of his troops could do, was done to win victory in the teeth of impossibilities.

I have had occasion more than once to take exceptions to the generalship

of Lee where he was successful, and where he avoided what should have been certain destruction. In this final campaign, which resulted in his total overthrow, I find little done which should have been left undone, nothing left undone which should have been done, to insure success. It has been the fashion to say that with the death of Jackson expired the dash and vigor of the Confederate Army of Virginia. Impartial history will record that its greatest achievements, whether of daring or endurance, were performed thereafter. Lee was indeed overcome, but he was overcome by forces greatly superior, wielded by generalship certainly not inferior to his own. It has sometimes been asked what would have been the result had the two commanders changed places. The careful military student will answer that the result would have been just what it was. Lee, in command of Grant's army, would have won; Grant, in command of Lee's army, would have failed. What would have been the result had each general had an equality of force and situation, no wise man will venture to say.

It has been alleged against Grant that the campaign at last assumed a shape wholly different from what he had proposed. This is only partly true. He indeed expected to fight and win a decisive battle north of Richmond; but, failing in this, he from the outset proposed to take his army to the south of the James.<sup>1</sup> It has also been said that after two months of marching and fighting, wherein he suffered losses far greater than he inflicted, he gained a position which he might have reached in a fortnight, without the loss of a man. But those who urge this overlook the cardinal point, that the army of Lee, not merely the geographical spot known as the capital of the Confederacy, was the thing aimed at. If that army were destroyed, the capital and all else was won. If that army remained, it mattered little where the capital of the Confederacy was placed. The army of Lee was, relatively to its opponent, far weaker when it fell back to Richmond and Petersburg than it would have been had not the great battles been fought in the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania, on the North Anna, and at Cold Harbor. War is a game in which there are two players, and it is the one who is upon the whole the stronger that wins. Looking forward, as Grant could only do, there could be little doubt as to the wisdom of his plans. Looking back, as we now can, we must still conclude that it was the wisest which could have been adopted, and brought the war to a more speedy and decisive close than any other which lay before him.

#### THE WILDERNESS.

Before daybreak on the morning of the 4th of May the Army of the Potomac broke up camps and commenced its march for the fords of the Rapidan. It moved in two columns—Warren's corps, followed by that of Sedgwick, on the right for Germania Ford; Hancock's, with the bulk of the trains, for Ely's Ford, six miles to the east. Burnside's corps was to remain in its position on the Alexandria Railroad, stretching as far back as Bull Run, until the passage of the Rapidan had been effected, when it was to ad-

<sup>1</sup> "My idea, from the start, had been to beat Lee's army north of Richmond, if possible. Then, after destroying his lines of communication north of the James River, to transfer the army to the south side, and besiege Lee in Richmond, or follow him south if he should retreat."—Grant's Report.



HANCOCK'S CORPS CROSSING THE RAPIDAN.

vance. The march of so great an army could not be effected without being perceived by a watchful enemy, and as the columns approached the fords the Confederate signal-fires were seen blazing from hill-top to hill-top, summoning the corps to concentrate. But the crossing was to be made ten miles below the extreme of the Confederate lines, at Raccoon Ford, held by Ewell, and as much farther from Orange Court-house, where Hill's corps was lying, while Longstreet was thirteen miles farther away. It was therefore impossible for Lee, had he been so inclined, to oppose the passage of the Rapidan. The vedettes at the fords were swept back by Sheridan's cavalry, and both columns, with their great train of 4000 wagons, crossed in the afternoon. Grant believed, as Hooker had done a twelvemonth before, that with the passage of the Rapidan the great danger was overpast. That evening Warren's corps, the advance of the right column, pressed on half a dozen miles, and encamped in the very heart of the Wilderness. Sedgwick halted near the bank of the river. Hancock moved to Chancellorsville, which he reached a little after noon.

On the evening of Wednesday, the 4th, the entire Army of the Potomac was thus encamped in the very heart of the Wilderness, the two columns being about five miles apart. Grant assumed that Lee, finding his position turned by a greatly superior force, would fall back toward Richmond, and his order for the next day was based upon that assumption. But Lee had resolved upon a wholly different movement—a movement apparently perilous and even desperate. With his 60,000 men, he resolved to fling himself upon the enemy, whom he knew to have twice that number. This determination was justified by the soundest military reasons. To set these forth, it is necessary to take a survey of the region.

We have before<sup>1</sup> described the general features of the "Wilderness," touching mainly upon that portion of it wherein were fought the battles of Chancellorsville. The Wilderness Tavern, where Grant and Meade established their headquarters on the evening of the 4th, is at the very centre of this wild region. Six miles northward is the Rapidan; as far southward begin the cleared fields of Spottsylvania; eight miles westward is Mine Run; just as far eastward is Chancellorsville. The Wilderness, stretching from a dozen to a score of miles in either direction, is traversed north and south, west and east, by two systems of roads, which, in conjunction with the jungles and chaparrals pierced by them, constitute its military features. From north to south, or more accurately from northwest to southeast, starting from Germania Ford, runs a tolerable plank road, continued after a few miles by the "Brock Road," over which Jackson in May, 1863, marched to the attack upon Hooker's weak right. Nearly parallel to this, some six miles away, starting from Ely's Ford, and passing by Chancellorsville, goes another road. These two, after many windings and turnings, come together near Spottsylvania Court-house, eight miles southeast of Chancellorsville. These are the main roads running southwardly by which Grant's two columns were to pass through the Wilderness. Running from west to east are two good roads, the northern known as the Old Turnpike, the southern as the Orange Plank Road. These, starting from Orange Court-house, run nearly parallel at a distance of about three miles, coming together again near Chancellorsville. They strike at a right angle those by which Grant would move, and the Confederates, pressing down these roads, would strike squarely upon the flank of the long Union columns slowly defiling through the tangled mazes of the Wilderness, with every probability of cutting them in two. In these labyrinths of forests, thickets, and swamps, which no eye could penetrate for more than a few yards, and where artillery could not be brought into action, Grant's preponderance of numbers would be neutralized; and indeed Lee, having two good parallel roads, might reasonably expect to be able to throw a superior force upon the decisive point. He had, moreover, the great advantage of a thorough knowledge of the country, which was wholly unknown to his opponent.

When, therefore, on the morning of the 4th, Lee learned that the Union army was heading for the Rapidan, he put his columns in motion to intercept it on its march through the Wilderness. Ewell moved by the turnpike, and the head of his column lay that night within three miles of the camp of Warren at the Wilderness Tavern. Hill moved by the plank road, but, having a longer march, was somewhat farther away. Longstreet, a day behind, was ordered up with all speed. Grant's plan for the ensuing day contemplated a leisurely march mainly for the purpose of concentrating his somewhat scattered corps. Warren was to march by a wood path south-westward till he struck the plank road, up which he was to proceed three miles to Parker's store; Sedgwick was to follow, joining upon Warren's right; Hancock was to move from Chancellorsville southward to Shady Grove Church, and stretch his right to unite with Warren's left. Meade's whole army, none of it having marched more than ten miles, would then have cleared the Wilderness, its movements being masked in front by Sheridan's cavalry. Burnside's corps would have reached Germania Ford, ready to cross and follow in the track of Meade. Grant would then be prepared for a rapid advance toward Gordonsville, whither it was taken for granted that Lee would retire.

Warren began to move at five o'clock on the morning of Thursday, the 5th. Wilson's division of cavalry had on the preceding afternoon scouted for some distance up the turnpike without encountering any enemy, for Ewell, who was coming down the road, was yet miles away. Warren, however, by way of precaution, threw Griffin's division westward up the turnpike. Ewell at the same time moved eastward down the road, and the head of the columns came unexpectedly in collision. Even now the Union commanders were wholly unaware that the enemy were approaching in force. "They have left a division here to fool us," said Meade, "while they con-

centrate and prepare a position toward the North Anna, and what I want is to prevent these fellows from getting back to Mine Run." Only a single division—that of Johnson, forming the van of Ewell's corps—had as yet come up. Griffin fell furiously upon this, and drove it back for a space. Strongly re-enforced, the Confederates turned at bay, held their ground, and soon advanced in turn, and forced Griffin back over all the space which he had won. Wadsworth, endeavoring to join Griffin, missed his way through the woods, and exposed his naked flank to a fierce fire, from which his division recoiled in confusion. In the mean time, Crawford, who had struck the plank road, and was moving up it toward Parker's store, encountered the cavalry scouts dashing back with tidings that a heavy force was pouring down that road. Crawford's movement was suspended, and his division withdrawn; one brigade, however, became isolated, and lost in prisoners nearly the whole of two regiments.

It was an hour past noon. Two hours before, Grant, perceiving that the enemy were in force and bent upon delivering battle in the Wilderness, had sent orders to Hancock to suspend his southward march, and, taking the Brock Road, to hurry to the scene of conflict. He had also sent Getty, with his division of Sedgwick's corps, to the junction of this road with the Orange Plank, with orders to hold the position, at all hazards, until Hancock, who was ten miles away, should come up. Thus far the brunt of the fight had been borne by Warren's corps, opposed to that of Ewell. Warren had been pressed back to the line whence he had started in the early morning, where he stood stoutly at bay. Ewell's on-coming brigades, spreading northward, threatened to turn Warren's right. Sedgwick's corps, or, rather, two of its three divisions, for the strongest, under Getty, had been sent elsewhere, was ordered to advance through the thick woods upon Warren's right. As they pressed on through the dense undergrowth, broken here and there by a slight clearing, they would encounter a body of Confederate skirmishers, hidden in the skirts of the chaparral. These would deliver a sharp fire, and disappear in the thickets. At length they came square in front of a strong line of battle. The Confederates charged fiercely and unavailingly upon the leading brigades, and then, with equal ill success, endeavored to turn their flank. At four o'clock they suspended their offensive movements, fell back, and began to fortify their position. The confronting lines now lay upon the opposite slopes of a swampy, wooded hollow. They were but a hundred or two yards apart, and though the ring of axes felling trees to form breastworks and abatis filled the air, not a man on either side could be discerned from the other.

At four o'clock the fight had lulled upon Warren's and Sedgwick's front. But in the mean while, and thereafter, it was raging on the plank road, barely three miles to the southward. Here Getty held grimly to the vital point at the junction of the Brock and Plank Roads, which he had been ordered to maintain, toward which Hancock was advancing. Hill's corps of the Confederates was pressing strongly down the Plank Road. Getty seemed on the point of being overwhelmed, when at three o'clock the welcome sound of Hancock's approach up the Brock Road was heard. Hancock drew up his force fronting that of Hill, and began to level the woods and throw up breastworks, designing simply to receive an assault. But Meade had ordered Getty to take the offensive, and drive Hill up the plank road. Getty had but three hundred paces to go to encounter the Confederate line. He found them in superior force, lying hidden in the woods bordering the road. Hancock backed up the attack by divisions from his own corps. The assaults were hot and furious—"repeated and desperate assaults," as Lee styles them; "a fierce fight, the lines being exceedingly close, the musketry continuous and deadly along the entire line," says Hancock. It was



<sup>1</sup> Ante, p. 488.



FIGHTING IN THE WILDERNESS.

all in vain. Hill could not be pushed back, and the hot volleys of musketry caused more than one of the assailing divisions to waver and break. In the effort to repair one such break, General Alexander Hays, who had won high renown at Gettysburg, was shot dead, while leading his command into the heart of the fight. So for four hours, until night closed in, the contest raged with no decisive advantage on either side.

Late in the afternoon, the fight in front of Warren and Sedgwick having been suspended, Wadsworth's division was ordered to press southward through the forest, and thus fall upon the flank and rear of Hill, who was holding his position against the hot assaults of Hancock. But, though the distance was hardly three miles, the appointed position was only reached at nightfall, when the conflict was over. Wadsworth rested on the field, in line of battle, in a position where he could strike when the fight should be opened the next morning. Hancock's and Hill's forces, who had been marching and fighting all day, lay upon their arms upon the opposite side of the Brock Road, awaiting what the next day should bring forth. But as darkness closed in, an irregular contest was opened in the woods on the extreme Union right, and the gloom of the forest was lighted up by volleys of musketry which rolled along the opposing lines. At two hours past midnight, and three hours before dawn, the noise sank away into silence.

The engagement of this day can hardly be styled a battle. It was rather a series of fierce encounters between portions of two armies, each ignorant of the position, strength, and force of the other. Neither commander had succeeded in effecting his purpose. Lee had hoped to fall upon the flank of Grant's columns while stretched out in a long, feeble line of march, cut them in two, and annihilate one portion while it was isolated from the other. If the collision had taken place two hours later, when the whole of Hill's and Ewell's divisions would have come up, while the Federals were fairly on the march, it could hardly have failed to succeed. But Grant had now been able to place his force in line of battle, opposing his front instead of his flank to the enemy. He had failed, however, to push the Confederates back upon the roads by which they had advanced. But the state of affairs was such as to warrant both in renewing the issue the next day. Grant, indeed, had no choice but to fight. He was still enmeshed in the Wilderness. He could not go southward without exposing himself to a disastrous flank assault. It would have been equally perilous to have attempted to recross the Rapidan, even had he been of a temper to give up his forward purpose. He might, indeed, have fallen back eastward toward Fredericksburg by way of the Brock Road, plank, and turnpike, and thus have got clear of the Wilderness, but there was nothing in the position of affairs to warrant such a resort. Moreover, neither general had used his whole force. Burnside's corps, 20,000 strong, had pushed on by forced marches, were crossing at Germania Ford, and could be brought into action the next day. Lee could not be aware of this accession to the numbers to be opposed to him. He also had fresh forces at hand. Longstreet's veteran corps was moving on from its cantonments forty miles away. During the afternoon he had reached a position ten miles from where the battle was raging, but in these close woods the noise of the musketry was unheard, and he was ignorant that a battle was being fought until midnight, when he received orders from Lee to advance. Two hours later he was on the march, and would come up. Anderson's division, moreover, one third of Hill's strong corps, had been left behind to watch the upper fords of the Rapidan. These were now close at hand. Longstreet and Anderson would add 20,000 fresh men to Lee's force on the field. With two thirds of his army he had gained some apparent advantage; with this addition it was not unreasonable to hope that he could win a decisive victory.

So both commanders resolved to fight; and, a rare occurrence in warfare, each proposed at daybreak to assault the lines of the other. Grant united his heretofore disjointed line by bringing forward Burnside and posting him between Warren and Hancock, so that the line from right to left ran thus: Sedgwick, as before, on the right; then Warren, who had been severely handled on the preceding day; then Burnside; then, on the left, Hancock, strengthened by detachments from Sedgwick and Warren. There was no room for the display of elaborate manoeuvres or skillful combinations. Grant's plan of battle was simply a simultaneous assault along the whole line of five miles, each division attacking whatever appeared in its front. Lee, however, had two good avenues of approach. His plan was more elaborate. The main attack was to be made by Longstreet and Hill upon the Union left, while Ewell was to make an assault, or, rather, demonstration upon the right. If Longstreet succeeded, Hancock would be forced back upon the centre, and the whole Union army flung together in inextricable confusion in the almost impenetrable forests, where it could not act as an army.

Five o'clock, the hour when the gray dawn was breaking into day, was the time fixed by Grant for attack. But Ewell anticipated him by fifteen minutes, moving out of his lines upon Sedgwick's extreme right. The attack was not seriously made, and probably not seriously intended. It was easily repelled. Sedgwick and Warren then advanced, pushing the enemy back for a space until he regained the strong position from which he had sallied. Upon this no impression could be made, and the contest ceased to be a battle at this point.

Hancock, in the mean while, deploying his skirmishers, pushed half of his force through the thickets on each side of the plank road, straight westward upon Hill's front. Wadsworth, who had slept the night before hard by, advanced southward upon the Confederate flank. The attack was wholly unexpected. Longstreet, who was just coming up, was to take the position in front, relieving Hill, whose front divisions, those of Heth and Wilcox, were just preparing to retire. These divisions broke and fled back in disorder



JAMES S. WADSWORTH.

der for a mile and a half, overrunning Lee's headquarters, which were in the way, and not halting until they touched the head of Longstreet's advancing column. But here they met three regiments of Kershaw's division, who briefly stayed the flight. Other troops were hurrying up; the whole line seemed wavering and on the point of again breaking. Lee, who had narrowly escaped being shot down, flung himself at the head of Gregg's Texans, and ordered them to follow him in a charge. First one soldier, and then the whole brigade, shouted out a remonstrance, and refused to advance until their commander had retired from the front. But in the fierce rush through the pathless woods the Federal troops had likewise lost all semblance of battle array—every thing which distinguishes an army from isolated groups of Indian fighters. Coming upon a line somewhat firm, it was necessary to halt and readjust their own broken formation. This, in a tangled wilderness; was a work of time. Two hours passed—from seven to nine—before the Union line was reformed. Those hours had wrought an entire change in the aspect of the field. Longstreet's whole corps had come up, Hill's entire corps was concentrated, and the Confederate line had gained such force that it was able not only to repel assault, but to give attack. The Union force was swept back over all the space which it had won, and reformed only upon the Brock Road, whence it had started. In a vain attempt to stay the retreat of his command, which had fallen into disorder, Wadsworth was mortally wounded, and his body remained in the enemy's hands. Few as noble men have ever fallen upon the field of battle. He was the largest landholder, and one of the wealthiest men of Western New York. Past the prime of life, verging closely upon threescore, his years had been devoted to peaceful pursuits. When the war broke out he offered his purse and his person to the government. At the battle of Bull Run he acted as aid-de-camp to McDowell. Appointed brigadier general, he for a time acted as Military Governor of the District of Columbia. In the dark year of 1862 he was the Republican candidate for Governor of New York, but was defeated by Horatio Seymour. Then assigned to the command of a division in the Army of the Potomac, he did good service at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. At Gettysburg the heaviest brunt of the first day's fighting, whereby the Confederates were prevented from occupying the heights, fell upon his division.

Hancock had sallied out from his intrenchments with only half the force under his command. The reason of this was that Longstreet was said to be coming up by a way which, passing south of the plank road, would bring him upon the left of his position on the Brock Road, and so, if that point was abandoned, by an advance the enemy would be upon his rear. Longstreet was, indeed, at six o'clock, making this very movement; but so urgent was the stress caused by the unlooked-for attack upon Hill, that Lee was obliged to change the direction of Longstreet, and bring him to the front. When now Hancock's advance had been stayed, Lee reverted to his original plan, the execution of which was committed to Longstreet, who was to send a portion of his corps to make a detour beyond the extreme Union left, gain the Brock Road, and thus fall upon its rear. Not until this force was well in position was the front assault to be made. This took until noon, by which time Hancock's advanced right had been forced back to its intrenchments. Longstreet then rode down the plank road to direct the turning column. He met General Jenkins, an old comrade whom he had not seen for months. Mahone's brigade, a portion of his own flanking force, lay hidden in the bushes. They mistook Longstreet and others for Federal officers, and fired upon them. Jenkins fell dead, and Longstreet received a ball in his throat, which passed out through the shoulder. He was borne away fatally wounded, as was thought. But he survived, and months afterward was able to take part in the closing scenes of the war, the only survivor of the three lieutenants of Lee who fought in the battles of the Army of Northern



THE WILDERNESS—SCENE OF WADSWORTH'S DEATH.

Virginia, for Hill fell almost a year later, and Jackson had a year before received his death-wound hardly six miles from the spot where Longstreet fell wounded.

The fall of Longstreet checked for a space the execution of the operation which had been committed to him. Lee assumed immediate command of this part of the field, and at length, as the afternoon was wearing away, urged the whole strength of the two corps of Longstreet and Hill against Hancock's lines, then resting behind their intrenchments, but also preparing for a renewed assault. Much had been hoped from an advance of Burnside's corps through the woods between Hancock and Warren. Two of his three white divisions—for the colored one had been left behind to guard the trains—touched the fight somewhat sharply, losing a thousand men; but they failed to attain a place wherein their action seriously affected the fortunes of the day. Now the woods wherein the battle of the morning had been fought were on fire, and a strong westerly wind blew the flames right down upon the Federal intrenchments, forcing the foremost lines to abandon the works. The Confederates, following the fire, swept down, the foremost troops crowning the parapet and planting their colors upon the blazing breastworks. But they were met by a rush from Carroll's brigade, which came up first by flank and then straight forward, and driven back in wild disorder. With this sharp assault ended the fighting upon the left. Each side had advanced upon the other, and each, after winning some success, had been repelled. Both, as night again fell, occupied substantially the same positions which they had held when morning broke.

The battle of the day was over on the left of the field, where Hancock was struggling against Longstreet and Hill. But on the right, where the contest had lulled for hours, there was at dusk one more stirring episode. The Confederate left overlapped the Union right, held by some brigades of raw troops of Sedgwick's corps. They had wearily kept their post for thirty hours in front of breastworks which had been thrown up, behind which they might retire in case of attack. None having been made, they at dusk began to retire to this sheltered line. The vigilant enemy, perceiving this movement, made a sudden rush upon their flank, and threw every thing into confusion. One of these brigades had on that very day been given to Seymour, just released from captivity, into which he had fallen at the battle of Olustee, in Florida; another was commanded by Shaler. These brigades, four thousand strong, were enveloped, and, with their commander, captured, almost to a man. For a space it seemed that the fatal rout of the Eleventh Corps at Chancellorsville was to be renewed. But the sudden assault was soon repelled, and the Confederates fell back to the lines from which they had so suddenly emerged. This brilliant feat, wherein they made three thousand prisoners, cost the Confederates, it is said, only twenty-seven men.<sup>1</sup>

The morning of Saturday found both armies in a mood different from that of the day before. Each, while quite willing to be assailed in its intrenchments, was indisposed to attack the other. The losses had been heavy.

Those of the Federals numbered fully 20,000 men, of whom about 5000 were prisoners. The Confederate loss was hardly 10,000, of whom few were captured. The two days' action had otherwise been a fairly drawn battle. Both commanders had failed in their purpose. Grant had turned the impregnable position of the Rapidan only to find himself confronted in the Wilderness by the enemy in a new position equally unassailable. In this first blow the hammer had suffered more than the anvil. According to all precedent in the Army of the Potomac, Grant should have abandoned the enterprise, and cast about for something new. But of this he had no thought. To strike and keep striking, as he had done at Vicksburg, was his fixed purpose.

The first thing to be done was to flank the enemy from the Wilderness. The movement was to be upon Spottsylvania Court-house, fifteen miles southwest of the battle-field. The direct route was by the Brock Road; a more indirect one was by a detour eastward to Chancellorsville, then southward to the point of destination. Warren's and Hancock's corps were to follow the first route; Sedgwick's and Burnside's, with all the trains, were to take the latter. The wounded were to be sent through Chancellorsville to Fredericksburg. Warren was to commence his march at half past eight in the evening. If he met no obstruction he would soon after daylight reach the Court-house, of which possession in the mean time was to be taken by Wilson's cavalry. The other corps would not be long behind. Then the whole army would be again upon Lee's flank, ready to fling itself between him and Richmond.

SPOTTSVYLVANIA.

But Warren, upon reaching Todd's Tavern, about half way, found the narrow road obstructed by Meade's cavalry escort, and it was an hour and a half before the way could be cleared. Two miles beyond that point the road was blocked by Stuart's Confederate cavalry, who had been posted there the day before, and which Merritt's troopers, who were in advance, had not succeeded in dislodging. It was now daylight. Warren, advancing, cleared the way and pressed on slowly, for barricades had been formed by felling trees, which could be removed only by the axe. Here and there, also, there was a slight show of opposition by dismounted troopers. At last, at half past eight, four hours behind time, the head of the column emerged from the woods into an open clearing, beyond which rose the wooded ridge whereon is the Court-house, still two miles away. Thus far there had been no intimation of any enemy except the few dismounted troopers. But when half way across the clearing the advancing column encountered a fierce musketry fire from infantry lying hidden in the opposite wood, and fell back across the plain. By one of those accidents which sometimes change the course of a whole campaign, the Confederates were first at Spottsylvania.

When Lee, on the afternoon and evening, saw the Federal trains moving due east toward Chancellorsville, he at once inferred that the enemy was heading for Fredericksburg—the Brock Road also at first trends in that direction; and when columns were perceived defiling down that road, the conclusion was confirmed. Lee was not undeceived until the next day; for on

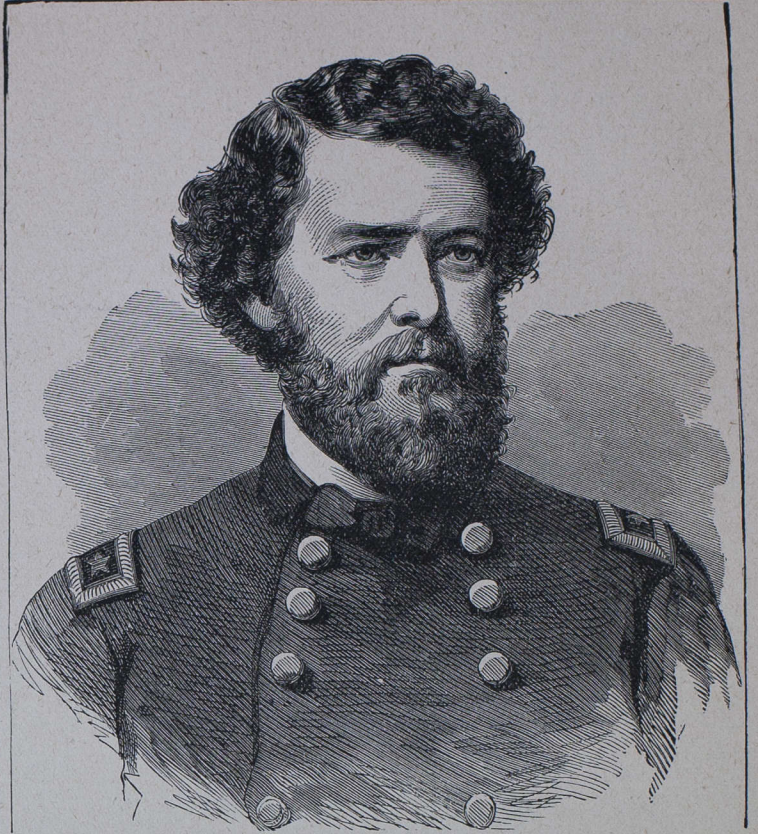
<sup>1</sup> So Pollard, doubtful authority, says: *Lost Cause*, p. 516. If one chooses to see a Federal account, describing a hot fight, with charges and countercharges, he is referred to Stevens's *Three Years in the Sixth Corps*, p. 311-313.





JOHN SEDGWICK.

the 8th he sent a dispatch to Richmond stating that "the enemy have abandoned their position, and are marching toward Fredericksburg. I am moving on their right flank"—that is, toward Spottsylvania. The march was at first leisurely, for it was not his purpose to overtake the Federal army, but simply to interpose between it and what was assumed to be its march down the Fredericksburg Railroad toward Richmond. It was, indeed, by accident that this march was commenced during the night of the 7th. At ten in the evening, Anderson, who now commanded Longstreet's corps, was ordered to withdraw his troops from the breastworks from before which the enemy had disappeared, and encamp in readiness to march next morning. Anderson, finding no good place to bivouac in the burning woods, kept on. Thus, during that night, Warren and Anderson were moving by roads nearly parallel upon Spottsylvania. Although Warren had the start by an hour or two, Anderson, meeting with no obstructions, as day broke was ahead. Then for the first time learning the approach of the enemy, he double-quickened his march and reached the Court-house some hours in advance. The Federal cavalry who held the place abandoned it, and Anderson drew up his men across the road by which Warren, ignorant of his presence, was advancing. He had time to throw up slight breastworks, behind which, and hidden in the woods, he awaited the approach of his enemy. Some sharp fighting here took place, continuing all the morning; and at last Warren began to intrench close in front of the Confederate line. Hancock's corps, which was following that of Warren, was delayed all day at Todd's Tavern in readiness to repel an attack upon the rear, which was apparently threatened by Lee, who, now perceiving the real aim of the Federal movement, was hurrying his whole force on toward Spottsylvania. Some time in the afternoon Sedgwick came up from Chancellorsville and took command of the field. Toward evening a slight attack was made upon the Confederate line, but nothing of



HORATIO G. WRIGHT.

importance was effected. Lee, with his whole force, was firmly posted upon Spottsylvania ridge, and every hour was strengthening his position, from which it was clear that he could be driven only by hard fighting. Grant, whose entire army was now well in hand, and notwithstanding its severe losses in the Wilderness, was in sound heart, resolved to try what could be effected by heavy blows.

Monday, the 9th, was mainly employed by Grant in making his dispositions, and by Lee in fortifying his lines, which mainly followed the course of a wooded ridge, from the Court-house on the east, sweeping in an irregular semicircle to the north and east. Artillery and musketry firing was kept up at points from the Confederate lines, especially upon points where batteries were being established. At one of these points Sedgwick was superintending the placing of a battery. The men seemed to wince at the fire poured in upon them. "Pooh!" said Sedgwick, drawing himself up to his full height, "they can't hit an elephant at that distance." At that moment a rifle-shot struck him fairly in the face, and he fell dead. The command of the Sixth Corps now devolved upon Wright.

The 10th was spent in tentatives upon the left of the Confederate lines. These, though fiercely made, were unsuccessful, though Grant at the close sent an encouraging dispatch to Washington, which was duly published, and, for the time, was held to announce a victory; at all events, it indicated a determination which, in view of his known superiority in numbers, was held to be a sure presage of speedy and decided success.<sup>1</sup> He "proposed to fight it out on that line, if it took all summer." If he had known it, he was to fight all summer, and autumn, and winter, and far into the next spring. The "indecisive actions of these three days had cost wellnigh 10,000 men, the very flower of the Army of the Potomac. The enemy, fighting almost wholly behind intrenchments, could have suffered hardly a third as much."<sup>2</sup>

Lee's left had been found, by bitter experience, to be impregnable. But it seemed that his centre presented a weak point through which an entrance might be forced. Here his lines were thrust forward in a sharp salient which might be carried by a sudden dash. All the day of the 11th was spent in arrangements. Toward night a heavy rain set in, and under the cover of this and the darkness, Hancock's corps was brought around from the left, and posted twelve hundred yards from this salient angle. This point seemed to be so difficult of approach that it was weakly held and carelessly guarded. In the gray dawn, and through a dense fog, Hancock's men moved softly and noiselessly, sweeping over the Confederate pickets without firing a shot; then, with a shout and a rush, they dashed through the abatis, and over the breastworks on every side. Johnson's division of



FIRE-PROOF WHERE SEDGWICK FELL.

<sup>1</sup> Grant's Dispatch, May 11th, 8 P. M. "We have now ended the sixth day of very hard fighting. The result to this time is very much in our favor. Our losses have been heavy, as well as those of the enemy. I think the loss of the enemy must be heavier. We have taken over 5000 prisoners, while he has taken from us but few except stragglers. I propose to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." In his report a year later, he says, "The 9th, 10th, and 11th were spent in manoeuvring and fighting, without decisive results." It is worth while to recall some of the official dispatches of this period put forth by the War Department. *Sunday, May 9th*: "Lee's army commenced falling back on Friday. Our army commenced the pursuit on Saturday. The rebels were in full retreat for Richmond by the direct road. Hancock passed through Spottsylvania Court-house at daylight yesterday." *Same day*: "Dispatches have just reached here direct from General Grant. They are not fully deciphered yet; but he is on to Richmond." The President appointed a day of thanksgiving for the victories of the last five days.

<sup>2</sup> No returns have been rendered of the separate losses during the seven days, from May 5 to 11. The entire number is given together as follows: *killed*, 3288; *wounded*, 19,278; *missing*, 6844; *total*, 29,410. Allowing, as we have done, 20,000 for the Wilderness, there remain fully 10,000 for these three days at Spottsylvania. The Confederate loss is wholly a matter of estimate. In placing it at 15,000 during this period, we can not very greatly err.



SPOTTSVYLVANIA COURT-HOUSE.

Ewell's corps, 4000 strong, were nearly all captured. Hancock sent back a hasty note to Grant, "I have finished up Johnson, and am now going into Early." But this salient was after all an outwork, adopted because the heights swelled out in that direction. Behind it, at the distance of half a mile, a second line had been laid out and partly completed. Here the Confederates rallied, Ewell in the centre, Hill rushing in from the right, and Longstreet from the left. The position was vital. If these works were carried the Confederate line would be cut in two, and their whole position forced. Hancock, struggling alone—for so rapid had been his rush that he had far outstripped Wright who was to support him—was speedily thrown back to the captured salient. The Sixth Corps now came up, and the Confederates could not gain another inch. Half of Warren's corps were sent to support Hancock and Wright, and the battle raged with hardly an interval during the whole day and far into the night. Five several assaults were made by the Confederates, and five times they were bloodily repelled. At midnight Lee withdrew to his interior line, which was still intact. During the day Burnside and Warren had demonstrated strongly upon their fronts. Burnside carried the rifle-pits, but could make no impression upon the intrenchments behind them. "The resistance," says Grant, "was so obstinate that the advantage gained did not prove decisive." The Union loss this day was probably 10,000, that of the Confederates quite as many.<sup>1</sup>

Grant had struck a heavy blow, but the enemy were by no means crushed. For six days longer he manoeuvred in the hope of turning the lines; but, in whatever direction he moved, he found himself confronted by intrenchments which forbade assault. He was, moreover, awaiting re-enforcements which were hurried on from Washington. On the 18th, orders were given to break up the position at Spottsylvania, and move southward to the North Anna. Lee, who now seemed to divine the purposes of his opponent, saw in the preparatory movements a chance for a blow. He launched Ewell through the woods upon Grant's right flank; but the attack was easily repelled, and Ewell, after heavy loss, fell back to his intrenchments. This demonstration delayed Grant's movement until the night of the 21st. Next morning Lee saw before him no trace of the great army by which he had been confronted. Breaking up his camps, he hastened once more to fling himself athwart the line of the enemy's advance.

#### THE NORTH ANNA.

When, after a two days' march through a fertile region as yet untrodden by armies, Grant reached the North Anna River, he found his vigilant adversary confronting him upon the opposite bank. Lee's settled policy was never strongly to oppose the passage of a river in his front. He had not seriously contested the passage of the Chickahominy, the Rappahannock, the Antietam, or the Rapidan. He chose rather to intrench himself a little distance back, allow his adversary to cross, hoping to fight him with a stream in his rear. Here, however, he made some show of opposition to the passage, though his main line of defense was some distance beyond the stream. The opposition was speedily brushed away. Hancock and Warren crossed at two points four miles apart. But now Lee thrust his army like a sharp wedge right between the two Union columns, repelled all attempts to unite them, and was in a position to strike either. The manoeuvre was a brilliant one. Grant, perceiving his peril, and the impossibility of assailing his opponent, after two days recrossed the river, and on the 26th resumed his old turning movement, which was to bring him within view of the Chickahominy.

While at Spottsylvania Grant had received re-enforcements fully equal

<sup>1</sup> The losses in the Army of the Potomac are grouped together for the period from the 12th to the 21st of May. They sum up 10,381; but after the 12th there were probably not more than 2000, leaving 8381 for the 12th. Of the Confederate losses we have no reliable statement. Polard says (*Lost Cause*, 520), "The enemy had taken twenty-five pieces of artillery and about 2000 men in Johnson's division; he had inflicted a loss of 6000 or 7000." Whether he means to include the 2000 prisoners in the "loss" is uncertain; but the prisoners certainly numbered 3000; and, considering the character of the fighting, it can not be doubted that, in the main action at the salient, the Confederates lost most heavily. On the other parts of the field it is probable that the Union loss was in excess. It may be safely assumed that in a persistent assault, which is repulsed, the assailants suffer most.

to all his losses. Here, upon the North Anna, Lee was joined by Pickett's division and Hoke's brigade from North Carolina, and Breckinridge's command from the Valley of the Shenandoah. All told, they numbered some 15,000 men, considerably less than his losses, so that Grant was relatively stronger than at the opening of the campaign. To understand how it was possible for these re-enforcements to be given to the Army of Northern Virginia requires a rapid survey of operations in other quarters.

#### OPERATIONS OF SIGEL, HUNTER, AND BUTLER.

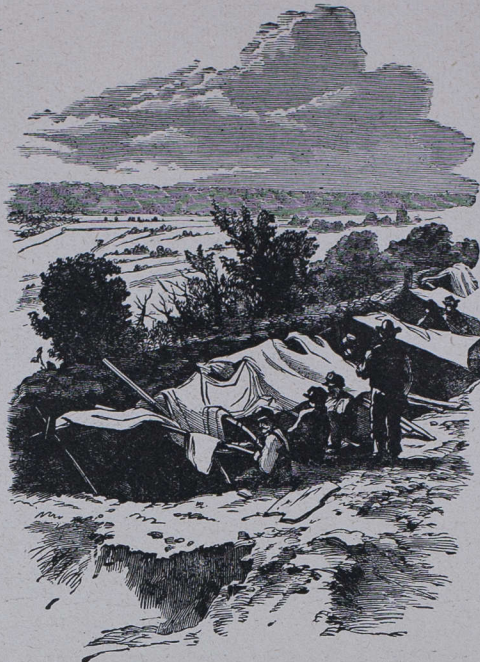
It had been a part of Grant's plan that Sigel, with 7000 men, should move up the Valley of the Shenandoah, and Crook, with 10,000, up the Kanawha. These two columns were designed to hold in check the scattered Confederate forces in that region, and destroy the salt-works in the Valley of the Kanawha, and threaten the communications between Richmond and the West by way of the Tennessee Railway. Sigel moved from Winchester on the 1st of May. On the 15th he reached Newmarket, a distance of fifty miles, having encountered no serious opposition. Here he encountered Breckinridge with a force somewhat superior.<sup>1</sup> Sigel suffered a severe and mortifying defeat, and fell back, leaving behind him his trains and 700 prisoners. At the instance of Grant he was superseded by Hunter. The column under Crook met with somewhat better fortune, inasmuch as it suffered no actual defeat, although Averill, who had been detached with 2000 men to destroy the lead-works at Wytheville, was foiled by Morgan; and Crook, having reached the railroad, destroyed the track for a short distance, and, on a slight encounter, defeated McCausland. But, finding the enemy gathering in his front, he retreated by the way he came. Breckinridge, thus relieved from immediate pressure, was free to join Lee with the whole of his movable force.<sup>2</sup> Hunter, a fortnight later, collected 20,000 men, and moved up the valley. He encountered W. E. Jones at Piedmont on the 5th of June, defeated him, took 1500 prisoners, and, crossing the mountains, advanced upon Lynchburg. So important was the possession of this place, as the key to one of his main avenues of supply, that Lee, although Grant's whole army was in his immediate front near Cold Harbor, detached Early with a quarter of the whole Army of Northern Virginia to oppose the advance of Hunter. They reached the vicinity of Lynchburg at about the same time with Hunter. Some skirmishing ensued; but Hunter was now quite destitute of ammunition, and, not daring to seek a battle, retreated. From some unaccountable reason, instead of falling back northward down the valley, he struck northwestward down the Kanawha. His supplies were nearly exhausted, but large quantities had been collected at a point a few marches on the way. These were guarded only by a few cavalry, two regiments of hundred-days' men. Gilmor, an active partisan, dashed upon the train, destroyed the whole, and disappeared. Hunter kept up his retreat by a long detour by way of the Kanawha and Ohio, through the mountains of Western Virginia, and it was several weeks before he was able to regain the Potomac. This absence of Hunter's force gave opportunity for the annoying invasion of Maryland by Early, whereby the safety of the Federal capital was seriously endangered.

Another simultaneous co-operative movement was to be made from Yorktown by Butler. His available force consisted of the Tenth Corps under W. F. Smith, and the Eighteenth under Gillmore, which had not long before been brought from before Charleston, numbering together about 25,000 men, besides 3000 cavalry under Kautz, who were posted at Suffolk. To this force was given the name of the Army of the James. The army lay at Yorktown, apparently threatening a movement upon Richmond across the peninsula, by the route followed by McClellan two years before. Butler, on the 4th of May, embarked his infantry on board transports, passed down the

<sup>1</sup> Breckinridge's returns for April show 6438 men; but, besides these, he collected many scattered bands, among them a company of 250 boys, cadets in the Military Academy at Lexington. These cadets were pushed to the front, and fought like veterans, losing a third of their number.  
<sup>2</sup> According to Early, Breckinridge brought only 2500 men. Little reliance, however, can be placed upon any statement of this officer. Thus he states that the force with which he was some months later defeated by Sheridan was only 8500 men, whereas Sheridan showed that he had taken more than that number of prisoners, and Early's losses in killed and wounded were very severe.



JERICHO MILLS, NORTH ANNA.



RIFLE-PITS, NORTH ANNA.



QUARLES'S MILLS, NORTH ANNA.

York River and up the James, and next day occupied City Point, at the junction of that river and the Appomattox, and Bermuda Hundred, a narrow-necked peninsula between those rivers. Here he intrenched himself in a position which he affirmed he "could hold against the whole of Lee's army." Kautz, at the same time, made a dash upon the Weldon Railroad, by which it was known that troops from South and North Carolina were approaching Richmond.

Beauregard, who had been conducting the defense of Charleston, had not long before been placed in command of the Department of South Virginia and North Carolina. The departure of Gillmore rendered it safe to withdraw nearly all the force from South Carolina. Hoke, also, had, about the middle of April, captured Plymouth, North Carolina, almost the only point yet held by the Federals in that state, and he had been able to bring to Richmond Pickett's division, then under his command. On the 21st of April Beauregard passed through Wilmington with a considerable force, and proceeded toward Richmond. Butler supposed that most of them were still on the way, and when he found that Kautz had cut the railroad he assumed that they could not advance.<sup>1</sup>

Having intrenched himself at Bermuda Hundred, Butler, on the 7th, made a demonstration against the railroad from Petersburg to Richmond, and succeeded in destroying a small portion of it. Had he pushed straight to Petersburg that city would have been easily taken, for the defenses which had been begun two years before were of little account, and there were there few or no troops. But the capture of Petersburg formed no part of the plan which had been agreed upon between him and Grant. The essential part of it was that, as soon as Grant should approach Richmond from the northeast, Butler should move up southeastwardly, and the two armies would then invest Richmond on the south, west, and north, thus avoiding the almost impregnable lines of works which protected the city on the east. On the 9th he resumed his attack upon the railroad in considerable force, and with favorable results, and proposed to follow up the success next day. But that night he received the glowing dispatches from Washington announcing that Lee was in full retreat for Richmond, with Grant close upon his heels. Pausing for two days to strengthen his lines at Bermuda Hundred, on the 13th he began an attempt to carry out his part of the programme. On the 13th a portion of the outer lines near Fort Darling, which formed the extreme southern point of the defenses of Richmond, were carried. But the

<sup>1</sup> On the 9th he telegraphed to the Secretary of War: "Beauregard, with a large portion of his force, was left South by the cutting of the railroad by Kautz. That portion which reached Petersburg under Hill I have whipped to-day, killing and wounding many, and taking many prisoners, after a severe and well-contested fight. General Grant will not be troubled with any farther reinforcements to Lee from Beauregard's army."

interior lines were strong, and their extent was unknown. Butler, after spending two days in examination and concentrating his force, determined to attack on the morning of the 16th.

But, in the mean while, Beauregard, with all the force which he could gather, had reached the scene. What with the former garrison of Richmond of some 7000 men, and these additions, there were there some 20,000 men. Beauregard, who had studied the position from the lines at Fort Darling, conceived a bold plan for the destruction of Butler. He proposed that 15,000 men from Lee's army should be brought by rail and temporarily added to his command; with these he would overwhelm Butler's army, which lay weakly stretched over a considerable space, and then, with the whole of his victorious force, march northward. Lee was to fall back toward Richmond, Grant, of course, following. Beauregard would then fall upon Grant's left flank when on the march, while Lee, turning, should assail him in front. But Davis, who kept in his own hands the direction of all military matters, saving that he rarely interfered with Lee's operations, refused his consent, and ordered Beauregard to attack with what force he had.

The evening of the 15th was somewhat overcast, but not dark, for the moon was up. There were no indications of any movement among the Confederates. About midnight a fog arose from the river so dense that nothing could be seen at a distance of ten yards. Under this dense pall Beauregard quietly assembled his whole force, and before dawn burst upon the sleeping Federal camps. Butler, not dreaming that he would be assailed, had made the worst possible disposition of his force to resist an attack. His front was widely extended, and his right was a mile and a half from the river. Through this gap, only watched by a few cavalry, Beauregard proposed to strike this flank, cutting it off from Bermuda Hundred: this was the main assault, to be conducted by Ransom. The left was to be more lightly assaulted by Hoke, while Colquitt, held in reserve, was to act as occasion should require. But the dense fog interfered with these plans. Ransom, after gaining some ground against Smith, suffered heavy loss, and his division fell into disorder, and even with the aid of Colquitt could hardly hold its own; Gillmore, on the left, pressed severely upon Hoke; Whiting, who, with 4000 men, was to have come up from Petersburg and fall upon Butler's rear, did not make his appearance. When the fog fairly cleared away it seemed as though Beauregard had utterly failed. His elaborate plan of assault had wholly miscarried, and there was nothing to replace it. But Smith, though he had foiled every effort against him, was apprehensive that he would be cut off by a turning movement from Bermuda Hundred, and fell back a little; Gillmore, instead of swinging around and taking Beauregard in reverse, fell back to the same line with Smith; and then Butler ordered a general retreat.

Beauregard began to follow, but a heavy rain came up, and he could do no more than open a distant artillery fire upon the retreating columns. And so, as night fell, Butler found himself unassailed behind his intrenchments. A more insignificant action, save for the loss which it involved, was never fought. Beauregard took 1400 prisoners. Apart from these, the Union loss was about 2500; that of the Confederates, in killed and wounded, somewhat greater; but they lost no prisoners. Butler now began to set about strengthening his intrenchments across the narrow neck of the peninsula to keep the Confederates out. Beauregard threw up parallel works, to keep



BATTERY ON THE NORTH ANNA.



CROSSING THE NY.

the Federals in. Either line could be held against double the force that could be brought against it. Butler found himself, as he phrased it, securely "bottled up"<sup>1</sup> at Bermuda Hundred. And thus it happened that Beauregard was enabled to send a large part of his force to the aid of Lee; but Grant was also able, as soon as he saw fit, to draw still larger re-enforcements from the Army of the James.

<sup>1</sup> This phrase of Butler's, repeated by Grant, who also speaks of Butler's being "hermetically sealed up," has really very little pertinence. Butler could not, indeed, get out toward Richmond; but he could at any time move his army down the James, as he had come, or cross the Appomattox toward Petersburg, or cross the James, having pontoons for these purposes. All three of these movements were actually made at different times without opposition, or, indeed, the possibility of any by the enemy. Grant, in fact, was as much "bottled up" at Spottsylvania and on the North Anna as was Butler at Bermuda Hundred. Neither could march straight upon Richmond, but either could move in any other direction.

COLD HARBOR.

Grant's turning movement from the North Anna brought him, by a wide detour, to the Pamunkey River, formed by the junction of the North and South Anna, and this, uniting with the Mattaponi, forms the York. At the head of this was the White House, where Grant's base of supplies was to be established. Hitherto his great army had to be supplied from an ever-shifting base by wagons, over narrow roads through a densely wooded country. Now they could be brought by water close to his lines, wherever they should be posted. The Pamunkey was crossed, after several sharp skirmishes, on the 28th of May, and after three days Lee was found in his new position. The Union losses at the North Anna, and in the actions from the 21st



CROSSING THE NORTH ANNA.



LANOVER FERRY.—CROSSING THE PAMUNKEY.

to the 31st, were 1607, of whom 327 were prisoners. The loss of the Confederates was much greater.

From the North Anna Lee had fallen back in a straight line, and assumed a position still covering Richmond. The two armies were now verging toward the scene where they had contended two years before. Since then, in anticipation of what was soon to happen, the ground had been thoroughly surveyed by the Confederates, lines of intrenchments and barricades laid out and partly constructed. The lines covered the upper fords and bridges of the Chickahominy. As finally developed, they formed a curve, the convex side turned toward the quarter from which Grant was advancing. The southern extremity, which was as yet only slightly held, was as far southward as Cold Harbor, a mere point where converge several roads from the fords of the Chickahominy to the Pamunkey and York. Here, in a quite isolated position, was a body of Confederate horse and foot, posted behind some slight breastworks. Torbert's and Custer's cavalry had scouted in this direction, and these generals had formed a plan to seize this point by a sudden dash. Sheridan, coming down, agreed to this. The attack was made on the 21st, and the place carried. Sheridan notified Meade of this, but said that he could not retain it, for the enemy was hard by in considerable force. He was directed to hold it at all hazards until relieved by infantry. Grant had some days before embarked two thirds of the Army of the James from Bermuda Hundred, and ordered them to join the Army of the Potomac; they were now on the march, but still some miles distant. On the morning of June 1st the enemy made efforts to drive out Sheridan; they were twice repulsed with severe loss. Meanwhile Wright's Sixth corps was sent by Grant, and Longstreet's corps by Lee, marching by roads almost parallel, to the point. Wright came up at 10 o'clock, arriving first, Longstreet halting behind intrenchments in a thick wood hard by. Smith came up soon after, and the two corps made an attack upon the Confederate position. An advanced line of rifle trenches was carried, and six hundred prisoners taken. But the second line was too strong to be forced. But the possession of Cold Harbor had been secured, though at a cost of two thousand men. Hancock's corps was now brought down and posted on the right of Wright's.

Grant had proposed to cross the Chickahominy here, having thus swung two thirds of his army around the Confederate left. Lee, anticipating this, moved Hill and Ewell in the same direction, so that now, on the 2d of June, he occupied almost the position which Fitz John Porter had occupied two years before, while Grant held that from which Lee and Jackson had advanced. The fords were then covered by Lee, as they had before been by Porter, and to cross without a battle was clearly impossible. These movements had not been effected without collision. Lee sallied out upon Burnside's corps, which was moving to take post behind Warren, who was to hold the extreme right. His skirmish line was driven through a swamp, and some hundreds of prisoners taken. But the movement had no real significance.

The Confederate position, as finally assumed, was exceedingly strong; breastworks had been thrown up, which could only be reached by passing through thickets and swamps. These thickets and swamps had, indeed, opposed Lee's advance two years before; but the breastworks and intrenchments had been wanting, for officers of that day were opposed to field-works. "It made men timid," they said. Had there been in Porter's army axes with which to have felled a few trees in his front, it is believed, by those who took part in his battle, that Lee would have suffered a disastrous repulse, and the whole issue of the seven days have been changed. Porter had that morning called for re-enforcements and axes, but the messenger, being somewhat deaf, heard only half of his order, and so the axes never came. Both armies had now grown wiser; they had learned that even a slight intrenchment will stop three fourths of the bullets which would otherwise have borne wounds or death, while an abatis that will detain an attacking force under direct fire for fifteen minutes, with the present improvements in fire-arms, more than doubles the defensive power of its defend



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ers. There is, indeed, hardly an instance in our war in which a line of works stoutly defended by half the assailing force has been carried.

Still, things had now come to such a pass that it seemed necessary to Grant to drive the enemy from his position. There was no longer room for any turning movement which should do more than cause Lee to retire within the defenses of Richmond, and then the campaign would resolve itself into a long siege of that city. It was his last chance to hammer against Lee in the field, and a blow sufficiently weighty might shatter to fragments the Confederate army. So he resolved to assault the enemy in his lines. If he could be forced from these he would be thrown back upon the Chickahominy, or at least be driven pell-mell up its bank, pressed in the rear by the victorious columns, while Sheridan's 10,000 horsemen, flushed by a long series of success, would assail his flank, and throw themselves in his front. The catastrophe which began at Five Forks, and ended at Appomattox Court-house, would have been antedated by ten weary months. If numbers could avail against position, Grant had good reason to hope for success. Now that he had been joined by Smith's corps, he had fully 150,000 men, while Lee had barely a third as many.

The 2d of June was spent in getting the troops into position for the battle. Hancock's corps was placed on the left, next Wright's, then Smith's, closely massed opposite the Confederate right. Then came Warren's, stretched in a long thin line, continued by Burnside's, with his right flung back. The plan of attack was simple. Hancock, Wright, and Smith, at daybreak, were to make a simultaneous assault upon the lines in their front.

In the gray dawn, under a drizzling rain, these corps, already formed into line, sprang forward from their rude parapets—for now neither army rested for a moment in front of the enemy without intrenching themselves as best they might, using, in default of better implements, the tin cups slung by their haversacks. Barlow's division, formed into two lines, was the left of Hancock's corps. The first line in a few minutes came upon a sunken road in front of the Confederate intrenchments, strongly held. This was cleared with a rush, the defenders flying to their works, the assailants hard on their heels, capturing, indeed, some hundreds of prisoners; but a solid mass of lead and flame was poured into the advancing line; for a few minutes—not fifteen, it is said, they held their ground—the second line fortunately, perhaps, lingering a little behind. It was the tragedy of Fredericksburg and Gettysburg re-enacted. The division, leaving a third of its numbers behind, recoiled, but not in rout, and only some twoscore yards, where a slight swell of ground sheltered them from the fierce fire. Gibbon's division, which had won the honors on the last day of Gettysburg, supported by Birney's, dashed on simultaneously. The story of their charge reads like that of Pickett against Cemetery Hill. They had to pass a swamp; skirting this on either side, they swept clear up to the very works, breasting the torrent of musketry. Some even mounted the parapets, crowning them with their colors. But it was all in vain; they could not pass the intrenchments, but clung to them for a space. Wright and Smith assaulted with equal and equally unavailing valor, though the contest was of longer endurance. But in an hour the contest was over. It had been virtually decided by the repulse of Barlow. Warren's division was not expected to do more than hold in check the force in its front; but Burnside, his left pivoting upon Warren's right, was to swing round and strike the Confederate left flank. The movement was made, but not till the main action had been decided. The Confederate outposts were driven in, and a little before noon Burnside was in position to make an assault upon the Confederate left. He was directed to attack at one o'clock. But just before that hour the order was countermanded, Meade judging that the failure on the right had rendered it useless. The skirmish line was drawn in, and the corps began to intrench itself in its position. The enemy made a rather feeble sortie upon this point, but was repulsed. With this closed the battle of Cold Harbor.<sup>1</sup> Grant's blow had utterly failed. His loss had been severe—not less than 7000, mostly in less than half an hour. That of the Confederates was far less—probably not half as many.<sup>2</sup>

The result of the battle of Cold Harbor decided conclusively that the campaign was to take the shape of a siege of Richmond. However Grant might manoeuvre, the result would be that Lee would fall back to the lines so elaborately fortified. Two courses lay open to the Union commander. He might move around Lee's left, and invest the city upon the north; or around his right, crossing the James River, and invest it from the south. Both plans had been considered by Grant in case he should fail, as he had done, to crush the enemy in the field. Then the former seemed most feasible; but, now that the Army of the James could not co-operate in it, he determined upon the latter, meanwhile sending Sheridan's cavalry to endeavor to cut the railway connections between Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley and Lynchburg, one of the main avenues of supply for the capital and the great army soon to hold it. Meanwhile, for a few days, the army was left essentially in its position, now intrenched, facing the Confederate intrenchments upon the Chickahominy. The lines lay so close together that the sharpshooters on either side were able to pick off many men when

<sup>1</sup> Swinton (*Army of the Potomac*, 487) says, "Some hours after the failure of the first assault, General Meade sent instructions to each corps commander to renew the attack without reference to the troops on his right or left. The order was issued through these officers to their subordinate commanders, and from them descended through the wonted channels; but no man stirred, and the immobile lines pronounced a verdict silent, yet emphatic, against further slaughter." This statement is accepted by subsequent writers; but it is so utterly at variance with the whole conduct of the army, before and after, that I do not admit it into the text, even upon the authority of Mr. Swinton, whose statements of facts I rarely find occasion to question.

<sup>2</sup> "The loss on the Union side," says Mr. Swinton, p. 487, "in this sanguinary action was over 13,000, while on the part of the Confederates it is doubtful whether it reached as many hundreds." This is a singular *lapsus* of the author, for the very tables which he cites as authority give the entire loss, killed, wounded, and missing, during the ten days from June 1 to 10, at 13,153. Nearly every day during this period was marked by severe fighting.



MAP SHOWING OPERATIONS IN VIRGINIA, MAY, 1864—APRIL, 1865.