



CUTTING THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL.

## CHAPTER L.

## THE CAMPAIGN IN VIRGINIA.—EARLY AND SHERIDAN.

Hunter's Advance upon Lynchburg.—His Retreat through Western Virginia.—Early sent to the Valley of the Shenandoah.—Sigel driven from Martinsburg.—Early crosses the Potomac into Maryland.—Defeats Wallace on the Monocacy.—Threatens Washington.—Troops arrive for its Defense.—Early repulsed at Fort Stevens.—Recrosses the Potomac.—Is followed by Crook, who is defeated at Kernstown.—Early's Raid into Pennsylvania.—The Burning of Chambersburg.—Sheridan appointed to the command of the Middle Department.—His Instructions.—Opening Movements.—Position in September.—Sheridan to go in.—The Battle of the Opequan, or Winchester.—Early defeated.—Battle of Fisher's Hill.—Early routed.—The Pursuit.—Sheridan Returns.—Devastation of the Valley of the Shenandoah.—Early advances.—Battle of Middletown, or Cedar Creek.—The Federals surprised and driven back.—Sheridan comes upon the Field.—He attacks and routs Early.—Early's Address to his Troops.—Results of the Campaign.

**E**ARLY in June, while, as has been narrated, Grant, after the battle of Cold Harbor, lay upon the Chickahominy, Hunter was successfully pressing down the great Valley of Virginia. Crossing the Blue Ridge, he emerged into the tide-water region, and on the 16th appeared before Lynchburg, whither Lee had already sent the small command of Breckinridge. This, joined to the few troops scattered in that region, was altogether insufficient to oppose the threatening movement of Hunter, and Early was hurried thither by railroad, reaching Lynchburg just in advance of the Union force. Hunter had expended most of his ordnance stores in the long march through a hostile country. On the 17th and 18th, while the first battles were waged before Petersburg, Hunter made some demonstrations, but, finding the enemy strong in his front, and with constantly increasing force, he hastily recrossed the Blue Mountains; then, apprehending that his return would be intercepted, and thinking himself in no condition to risk a battle, he continued his retreat westward, crossing the Alleghanies into the mountain region of West Virginia, whence he could regain his position on the Potomac only by a wide detour. This retreat left Washington and the whole northern frontier almost bare of troops, for every effective regiment had been sent to re-enforce Grant. The operations before Petersburg had convinced Lee that he could still hold his lines with a portion of the force which he had; and he reasoned, also, that the threat of a renewed invasion of the North would compel his opponent to detach largely from the force at Petersburg, and most likely compel him to raise the siege.

In the latter days of June, Early was therefore ordered to move down the Valley of the Shenandoah. The force with which this movement was made compared ill with the great armies which had twice before marched along this beaten track. Instead of the 100,000 men with which Lee had moved on the campaigns which closed at Antietam and Gettysburg, Early had not more than 20,000 men of all arms. But the force for the defense was still weaker in proportion, and it was within the limits of possibility that even the Federal capital might be seized by a sudden dash. Early moved with

the rapidity which had always characterized the Confederate marches. In spite of the fierce summer heat, the troops made twenty miles a day, and on the 2d of July he was close upon Martinsburg. Sigel, who was there with a small force guarding a large quantity of stores, fell back toward Harper's Ferry, abandoning every thing which he could not carry off. Taught by the experience of the past, he was not entrapped into halting at Harper's Ferry, but, crossing the Potomac, took post upon Maryland Heights. Here he was safe from attack, but useless for obstructing the passage of the river, had his force been five times as great. Hunter was far away, making his toilsome circuit through the mountain wilds of Western Virginia. There was nothing to hinder Early from making a raid into Maryland and Pennsylvania. Crossing the Potomac, he sent scouting-parties in every direction. One destroyed the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad for miles, and cut the embankments of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in various places; another pushed on to Hagerstown, where they levied a heavy contribution and went off. The main body pushed on toward Frederick City by the same route over which Lee had marched two years before, threatening both Baltimore and Washington. Wallace was at Baltimore in the command of a few disjointed fragments of troops, but he knew that the veteran Sixth Corps was coming to his aid from the James. He therefore advanced and took position on the Monocacy River, where he covered the roads to both Baltimore and Washington, and hoped to hold the enemy in check until the arrival of Wright with the Sixth Corps, and Emory with the Nineteenth. This latter had been brought from Louisiana, had opportunely arrived at Fortress Monroe, and, without disembarking there, was sent up the Potomac to Washington. Rickett's division of the Sixth Corps had joined him at Baltimore, and the other divisions were on the point of embarking at City Point; two days would bring them up.

On the morning of the 9th of July, Early, after some skirmishing, came upon Wallace at the Monocacy. The Confederates were more than two to one. Their first and second assaults were repelled; but the third, made in greater force, was successful. The Federals retreated, some in good order, toward Baltimore, but the greater part fled in utter confusion in every direction. The Union loss was 1959; of them, 1282 were "missing," of whom fully half were stragglers. The Confederate loss was vaguely reported at 600. It was apparently somewhat greater, since two days after 400 of those too severely wounded to be removed were found in the hospitals at Frederick.

The approach to Washington was now fairly opened, and Early moved the next day in that direction. He had with him about ten thousand men, for detachments had been sent in every direction to gather supplies and plunder. Had he pushed straight on with even this small force, he might, in all likelihood, have entered the capital, and, after doing what damage he pleased,



PILLAGING AT HAGERSTOWN.

have retired by the way he came. A delay of a single day forfeited an opportunity for striking a blow which might have changed the current of history. On the evening of the 10th Early's whole force was within half a dozen miles of Washington. Between him and the Federal capital there were only a few isolated forts manned by militia, invalids, and convalescents from the hospitals. For one day it was not Richmond, but Washington that was in peril. Few men in the Federal capital believed that it could be saved from capture. On the afternoon of the 12th Early made demonstrations looking toward an assault. He advanced his line close up to Fort Stevens, an isolated work half a dozen miles north of the city, covering one of the roads. But during the previous night the whole aspect of things had been changed. The Nineteenth Corps, and the two remaining divisions of the Sixth, had steamed up the Potomac, and were disembarked. A great weight was lifted from the heart of the man upon whose calm courage rested more than even upon any general in the field the destiny of the nation. As the tried veterans stepped ashore, they saw upon the wharf the gaunt figure of Abraham Lincoln. He greeted them with kindly words and the winning smile which was wont to light up his homely features, munching at intervals a bit of army bread. No wonder that he had that day missed his dinner. As the foremost men filed swiftly through the streets, they were greeted with acclamation. "It is the old Sixth Corps, the men who took Marye's Heights; the danger is over." That night it was felt that the peril was overpast. Toward evening of the 12th a brigade of the Sixth Corps moved out to dislodge the Confederates, who had all day kept up annoying demonstrations in front of Fort Stevens. A hot conflict ensued, for the combatants were veterans who had encountered each other on more than one stricken field. Each side lost heavily in proportion to the numbers engaged. The Union brigade, a thousand strong, lost a quarter of its numbers. The Confederates lost more, and were driven from the field.

Early saw that his opportunity was past. The Federal capital was held by a force too strong in number and quality to be encountered by his little army. Under the cover of night he withdrew, recrossing the Potomac, and thus closing the last invasion of the North. This attempt, however, had not been an entire failure. He had won one considerable battle, and swept back with him no inconsiderable booty, not the least valuable part of which was 5000 horses and 2500 cattle.

Having placed the Potomac between himself and the enemy, Early moved leisurely up the Valley of the Shenandoah. Wright, who was now placed at the head of the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps, followed by the same route and with the same undecided steps wherewith McClellan and Meade had before gone after Lee. Passing through Snicker's Gap, he came up on the 19th of July with the retreating Confederate column at the crossing of the Shenandoah. When half way over, Early turned, repelled him, and then fell back leisurely to Winchester; while Wright, under orders from Grant, returned to Washington.

It was supposed that Early's command was returning to join Lee at Pe-



SACKING A FLOUR MILL.

tersburg, and the Federal commander proposed to recall the Sixth Corps to the Army of the Potomac. But Lee, who was aware of the importance of maintaining a force in the Valley of the Shenandoah, and thus keeping up a constant menace of raids across the Potomac, had no thought of withdrawing Early. The Federals soon had reason to find to their cost that Early was yet close at hand. On the 23d of July, Crook, who was in command at Harper's Ferry, pushed up the Valley, which he supposed had been abandoned by the enemy. At Kernstown, four miles beyond Winchester, hard by where Jackson had suffered his only defeat in the Valley, his small force encountered Early, was defeated, and driven back in rout to Martinsburg, losing 1200 men. It then recrossed the Potomac, leaving the way open for a raid across the river. Early took prompt advantage of the opportunity. His cavalry, 3000 strong, under McCausland, passed the Potomac, and, making a wide sweep so as to conceal their real destination, reached Chambersburg on the 30th. The purpose of this raid was destruction. McCausland demanded \$200,000 in gold as a ransom for the town. Compliance was out of the question, and orders were at once given to burn the town. The execution of this was committed to Gilmer, a Marylander, who had joined the Confederates, and in an hour two thirds of that flourishing town of 4000 inhabitants was in flames. This is the only instance during the war in which a town was wantonly, and by express order, destroyed, without any pretense of military advantage; for the destruction of Atlanta by Sherman was ordered as a military necessity, and the burning of Columbia was not by any order from the Union commander. The raiding party now made their way back across the Potomac, after several skirmishes, in which the losses were about equal upon either side.

These annoying occurrences upon the frontier were owing quite as much to defective military arrangements on the Federal side as to skill on the part of the Confederates. It seemed as though this region was looked upon as a hospital for incapable commanders. The departments were so divided and subdivided that no commander had any real authority or responsibility. Thus Washington, Baltimore, and the adjacent region formed one department; parts of Pennsylvania and Maryland another; West Virginia another; the region of the Shenandoah another. Grant saw clearly that the first thing to be done was to form all these into one military department. This was done, and Hunter, who had now got back from his long wandering, was placed in command. But Grant had fixed his eye upon another man for the position. Hunter intimated his willingness to be relieved. The intimation was promptly acted upon, and Sheridan, who had just been sent to Washington in anticipation of such a contingency, was placed in the command of these departments, which were constituted the Middle Military Division, the forces there being designated as the Army of the Shenandoah.

Sheridan assumed command on the 7th of August. The Army of the Shenandoah consisted of the Sixth Corps, one division of the Nineteenth, two small divisions under Crook, known as the Eighth Corps, with Averill's and Torbert's divisions of cavalry, the latter having just come up from the



EARLY RECROSSING THE POTOMAC.



RUINS OF CHAMBERSBURG.—THE MAIN STREET.

James. In all it numbered 18,000 infantry and 3500 cavalry disposable for active operations. As many more were required for garrisons and to guard the railroad. The Confederates, with the addition of Anderson's command, were in about equal force. To Sheridan were turned over the instructions just given to Hunter. He was to concentrate all his available force near Harper's Ferry, whence he was to operate against Early: pursue and fight him if he crossed the Potomac; follow him if he retreated south; first or last he would have to pursue the enemy up the Valley of the Shenandoah, where he must leave nothing which could invite the return of the Confederates. Dwellings were to be spared, but such provisions, forage, and stock as could not be used were to be destroyed. The people must be made to understand that, so long as a Confederate army could subsist among them, raids would be of continual occurrence, and these it was determined to stop at all hazards. This stern order was soon to be sternly executed.

Sheridan at once moved up the Valley toward Winchester, where he expected to find the enemy; but they had fallen back. Then, being notified from Grant that re-enforcements had been sent to Early, raising his force to 40,000 men, he drew back and took up a strong defensive position near Harper's Ferry, to await the development of the intentions of his opponent. For a month the outposts and cavalry parties of the armies were in almost daily collision, with no important results. Early having been re-enforced by Anderson, in command of Kershaw's division of infantry and Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry, and Sheridan by Grover's division of the Nineteenth Corps and Wilson's cavalry, the respective forces were not greatly disproportionate—the Confederates numbering about 22,000, and the Federals about 27,000. There was some question as to the command between Early and Anderson. Both had been made lieutenant generals on the same day; but Anderson's commission as major general was prior to that of Early, which gave him the military seniority; but he had been sent to Early's de-

partment. There was thus a question of rank, and the two commanders never cordially co-operated.

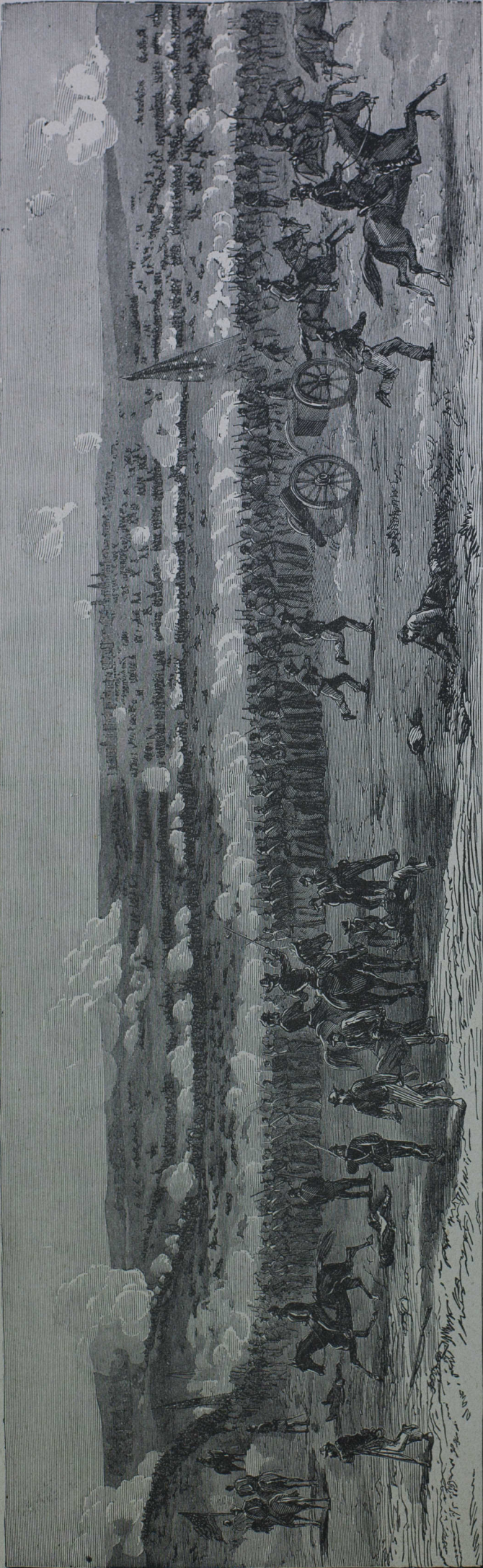
At the middle of September the Confederates were concentrated around Winchester, and the Federals near Berryville, ten miles to the east, the Opequan running between. The armies were so posted that either could bring on an action; but neither commander was disposed to attack the other in a position of his choosing. Grant indeed for a while held Sheridan in check, for defeat would lay Maryland and Pennsylvania open to a renewed invasion. At length he left the James, and came to the Potomac to confer with Sheridan. At the very time of his arrival, Sheridan had learned that Kershaw's division had been recalled. Lee was meditating an offensive operation at Petersburg, and wished Kershaw to be at hand in case it should be undertaken. He was therefore directed to fall back as far as Culpepper, whence he could reach Richmond by rail in a few hours. This left Early with from 15,000 to 18,000.<sup>1</sup> Sheridan had resolved to attack Early, and, on submitting his plans to Grant, received the emphatic order to "go in."

Sheridan proposed to march upon Newtown, above Winchester, and thus throw himself upon the Confederate rear; but on the 18th of September, just as the movement was to have commenced, he learned that Early had sent two of his four divisions to Martinsburg, twenty-two miles from Winchester, with the purpose of destroying the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at that point. He therefore changed his plan, and resolved to catch the two divisions left near Winchester, and, having routed them, to fall upon those sent to Martinsburg. Thus ensued the action called by him the Battle of

<sup>1</sup> Early indeed asserts that his effective force was only 8500 muskets—say 9000 infantry, and less than 3000 cavalry, with three battalions of artillery: not more than 13,000 men in all. But, as will be seen hereafter, this is evidently an under-statement; for, taking into account his statement of all the re-enforcements which he at any time received, Sheridan captured during this campaign nearly as many prisoners as the whole of Early's alleged force. His losses in killed and wounded were also very heavy, and a considerable remnant of his army rejoined Lee at Petersburg. Pollard (*Lost Cause*, p. 593) adopts Early's statement; but Pollard's own accounts elsewhere show that this must be erroneous.



RUINS OF CHAMBERSBURG.—THE TOWN HALL.



THE CONFEDERATE BOUT AT WINCHESTER.

the Opequan, by the Confederates that of Winchester. As it happened, however, Early marched only half way to Martinsburg, and was able to bring his whole force upon the field. Before dawn of the 19th Sheridan was in motion. Torbert's cavalry, in front, was to cross the Opequan, and clear the passage of the stream in one direction. Wilson, supported by the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps, was to move rapidly down the defile through which ran the direct road from Berryville, and thus fall upon the portion of the enemy lying directly in front of Winchester, Crook's corps being held in reserve. Wilson charged into the deep gorge, drove back the enemy's pickets, and captured the earthworks at its mouth. Wright and Emory defiled through the narrow gorge, and emerged, under a heavy artillery fire, into an irregular undulating valley, dotted over with ledges of rock and patches of wood, sloping gradually up to the semicircular heights of Winchester. Time was lost in making these movements, and it was nine o'clock before the order to advance was given. The attack and defense were alike obstinate, and, neither being sheltered except by the natural cover afforded by the formation of the ground, the loss on both sides was heavy. Ramseur, upon whom the attack first fell, held his ground stoutly for two hours. But the whole of Wright's and Emory's corps having at length passed through the gorge, he began to give way. At this moment Rodes came back from the direction of Martinsburg and joined in the fight. Rodes was shot dead, the centre of Early's first line was broken, and the Federals rushed on. They now encountered Gordon, who had followed hard after Wharton. The advance was checked, and then Gordon made a counter-charge, which, striking Sheridan's centre, where the Sixth and Nineteenth Corps joined, forced it back in confusion, which threatened to become a total rout. Gordon pushed on in pursuit so fiercely that his flank was exposed to Russell's brigade, of the Sixth, which was on the left. He was in turn driven back, and Sheridan's line was soon re-established, most of the two or three thousand men who had gone to the rear being brought back.

Still the battle hung in even scales. Breckinridge, with the last of the cavalry, the last of Early's absent men, now came up from the rear, and took position on the Confederate left. Now ensued the fiercest fighting of the day. Early sought to extend his left so as to outflank Sheridan's right; then, sweeping round, to seize the mouth of the narrow gorge and cut off the retreat. Sheridan's quick eye perceived that his opportunity had now come. Crook's corps had not yet been brought into action. He had kept them in reserve upon his right, intending also to turn the enemy's left and cut off his retreat. Crook was now directed to the left, turn the Confederate right, strike it in flank and rear, and, as soon as it was broken, the Federal left should swing round and strike on the other flank. Both movements were made with the utmost precision. On what was now the decisive point the Federals were in great preponderance. They fairly overlapped the Confederates, who were powerless to prevent the turning of their flank. Crook's line swept steadily on over the open fields in the face of a fierce musketry fire, under which 900 men went down in a few minutes. Emory's corps now sprung from the ground where they had been lying to shelter themselves from the artillery, by which they had for three hours been sorely pelted, poured in a fire so rapid that in five minutes their ammunition was exhausted, and then dashed straight upon a patch of woodland where was the extreme left of the Confederate line, into the other side of which Crook was already pouring. The enemy rushed out in utter rout, many of them in their flight throwing away their guns and accoutrements.

The battle was irretrievably lost. To hold this wood Early had brought in his last two divisions, those of Breckinridge. These divisions had all the morning, and until far in the afternoon, held in check Merritt's and Torbert's cavalry. These magnificent horsemen had then pressed up, sweeping before them the Confederate cavalry, and circling round to the Confederate flank and rear. They charged fiercely upon the disorganized mass, which broke and fled in confusion back to Winchester. The fragments of the routed army entered the town as night was falling. But here was no rest. In the darkness they kept on their fight, only halting until they reached Fisher's Hill, a strong position eight miles south of Winchester, and twelve from the battle-field. It had been a well-fought action, and decisive, won indeed by superior force, but with equal bravery. Sheridan's losses summed up 4990, of whom 653 were killed, 3719 wounded, and 618 missing. The heaviest loss, 1956, fell upon Emory's corps, among whom were 450 missing, captured when they were repulsed early in the day. In Wright's corps there were 1637 killed and wounded, and 48 missing. In Crook's corps, which struck the final decisive blow, out of a total loss of 953, there were but 8 missing. The cavalry lost 441, of whom 109 were missing. The Confederate loss is not stated, but in all it could not have been less than 6000. Upon the field and in the pursuit 2500 prisoners were taken; 2000 wounded were found in the hospitals at Winchester.

On the next morning Sheridan set out in pursuit, and soon came in front of the position which Early had taken up at Fisher's Hill. Here the valley is split by an intervening ridge, the main branch contracting to the breadth of three and a half miles, overhung on each side by precipitous bluffs. Early had availed himself of the brief respite to throw up breastworks across the valley. Here he thought himself secure, for it was a position which could be held against a direct assault from a fivefold force. So safe did Early think himself that his ammunition-boxes were taken from the caissons and placed behind the breastworks. Sheridan determined to drive him out of his position by turning his left. To do this, the turning force must gain the summit of the North Mountain, and, marching for a space along the crest, plunge down into the valley. The movement must be made by night, for from a signal station the enemy could observe every movement made by daylight.



GEORGE CROOK.

Crook's corps was at night placed in a mass of wood, where they lay hidden all through the 21st, while Wright's and Emory's corps were drawn up in front of the Confederate centre, ready to join in the assault. Crook made his movement without being perceived. Noon had passed before he was in position. Sheridan then, posting Ricketts in front of the Confederate left, sent Averill, with his cavalry, to drive in the enemy's skirmish line. The movement succeeded beyond expectation. It was reported from the Confederate signal station that a turning column was moving against their left front. Early massed his force to check this. At that moment Crook burst in upon his rear. The Confederates broke and fled after some show of resistance in front, and Wright's corps, swinging round, joined with Crook's.

The victory was complete, and won at little cost—not 300 in all, of whom 237 were in Wright's corps, and 60 in Emory's. Crook, whose mere presence in position won the fight, appears not to have lost a man. The Confederate loss in killed and wounded was not much greater; but they left behind them 1100 prisoners. Complete as was the success, Sheridan had expected to render it still more decisive. He had hoped to capture Early's whole army. For this purpose he had sent Torbert down the parallel Luray Valley, whence it was to cross over into that of the Shenandoah, and intercept the enemy's retreat. But Torbert was held in check at a narrow gorge by the Confederate cavalry and a small body of infantry until the fugitives had passed the point.

It was almost dark when the fight at Fisher's Hill was begun. The remnants of Early's broken divisions fled rapidly down the Valley, hardly a company preserving its organization. Sheridan pushed on the pursuit for a day and night as rapidly as possible, but the fugitives were too fleet for the infantry, and there was present of cavalry only Devins's small division, for Torbert was in Luray Valley, on the opposite side of the dividing range, and Averill had unaccountably gone into camp immediately after the fight. On the morning of the 23d Devins came up with the enemy's rear at Mount Jackson, twenty-five miles from Fisher's Hill. Here, not in sufficient force to attack, he waited for Averill, who arrived late in the afternoon, and then fell back again. Averill was here superseded by Powell. Early's divisions kept on their flight by different routes until they reached New Market, where several roads converge. Here the shattered force got itself partly reorganized, but kept on its retreat, now presenting a line of battle too strong for the cavalry to assail. The Federal infantry pushed on in columns, but were unable to bring on an action. Torbert, in the mean time, had beaten the enemy in Luray Valley; and on the 25th Wright's and Emory's corps had reached Harrisburg, Crook's having been left a little behind until the movements of Early were ascertained. Kershaw, with his fresh division, now rejoined Early, and the Confederates, nearly as strong as they had been at the Opequan, made a show of advancing.

Sheridan was now in doubt what course to pursue—whether to again assault or to fall back. He finally decided on the latter course. He was little, if any, superior to the enemy; his transportation would not keep him in supplies for a much farther advance; and, moreover, it was by no means sure that Grant would be able to hold the entire Confederate force in the lines at Petersburg. Lee might secretly detach a sufficient number, which, moving rapidly by rail, could overwhelm him, and then return before their absence should be perceived. He had, moreover, in a week, accomplished more than he had dared to count upon. He had destroyed or captured half

of Early's army, and driven the remainder so far to the south that it no longer threatened Maryland and Pennsylvania. He therefore determined to terminate the active campaign and return northward. But on the way back he was to carry out his original instructions to devastate the valley which had so long served as a granary for the Confederate army and an avenue for an invading force. This done, he could give back to Grant at Petersburg the bulk of the infantry which had been sent to check the diversion made by Lee. The plan was carried out, but not for three weeks, and after Early had once more staked all in a desperate venture and lost.

On the 6th of October Sheridan commenced his return march. The cavalry swept across the whole breadth of the Valley of the Shenandoah from the Blue Ridge to the eastern slope of the Alleghanies. The order to transform the Valley into a barren waste, with nothing which should tempt the enemy to return, was carried out with unsparing severity. Before the army was a fertile region filled with the stores of an abundant harvest just gathered in; behind was a desert and devastated region. Sheridan himself shall describe his work of destruction: "In moving back to Woodstock, the whole country from the Blue Ridge to the North Mountain has been rendered untenable for a rebel army. I have destroyed over two thousand barns filled with wheat, and hay, and farming implements; over seventy mills filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over four thousand head of stock, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than three thousand sheep. This destruction embraces the Luray Valley and the Little Fort Valley, as well as the main Valley; a large number of horses has also been obtained." This was the work of but two days. Dwelling-houses were indeed spared save in a single retributive case. One of the Union engineer officers was murdered, and for this act all the houses within an area of five miles were burned.

It is hard, in the midst of peace, to decide where the military right of destruction and retribution begins and ends. Early, in retreating from Maryland, had seized more cattle and horses than Sheridan took in the Valley. The numerous guerrilla parties who had made the Valley their lair plundered at will. "Since I came in the Valley," continues Sheridan, "every train, every small party has been bushwhacked by the people, many of whom have protection papers from commanders who have hitherto been in the Valley." Sheridan spared dwellings, although the ruins of Chambersburg, fired without pretense of military necessity, had hardly ceased to smoke. But this devastation only partly accomplished its purpose. The Valley was not rendered untenable to a Confederate force until a fortnight later, when the army there ceased to exist.

The Confederate cavalry followed Sheridan's return at a distance, and at length came into conflict with Torbert's division, by whom they were defeated; and when, four days after the commencement of the return march, Sheridan, passing Fisher's Mountain, took up his post four miles beyond, Early, strengthened by Kershaw, was close behind. Here he suffered the final crushing defeat which put an end to the war in the Valley of the Shenandoah.

On the 15th of October, Sheridan, having posted his army at Cedar Creek, set out for Washington to consult with the Secretary of War as to the route by which Wright's corps should be sent back to Petersburg. He had just started on the journey when he received a message from Wright, who was left in command, inclosing a dispatch deciphered from the enemy's signal-flag. It purported to be from Longstreet to Early, and read, "Be ready to move as soon as my forces join you, and we will crush Sheridan." Suspecting it to be, as it undoubtedly was, a ruse, Sheridan sent back word to Wright, "If Longstreet's dispatch be true, he is under the impression that we have largely detached. If the enemy should make an advance, I know that you will defeat him. Look well to your ground, and be well prepared."

On the night of the 18th of October the Federal army lay encamped in a position apparently unassailable. It was disposed upon three parallel ridges of no great height, facing southward. To the west, four miles away, lay Early in unknown force at the wooded base of Fisher's Hill. The left of the Union army—the corps farthest from the Confederate position—was occupied by Crook. At the foot of this crest ran a deep valley. Next, and half a mile in the rear, across the turnpike, and to the right, was Emory. Then, somewhat farther to the right, and considerably in the rear of all, was Wright. From the extreme right to the extreme left was a space of three miles, and still farther to the right was Torbert's cavalry. The fronts and flanks of Crook and Wright were protected by breastworks and batteries. The position, unless turned by surprise and taken in the rear, was impregnable to any force which the enemy could by any possibility have. Early resolved to turn both flanks by surprise. The march toward Emory upon the right flank presented no great natural difficulty; but to reach the left flank the assailants had to descend a rugged gorge so steep that a man must here and there support himself by holding fast upon the bushes, then wade the Shenandoah, recross it again, enter the Valley, skirting Crook's front, and go up it for three miles, moving scarcely four hundred yards from the picket line. If we may credit Early's express avowal, he had an effective force of less than 10,000 men of all arms. This was hardly half the number that was to be opposed to him; of this, however, he was not aware; for he supposed that a considerable portion of Sheridan's army was miles away, at Front Royal, where he knew them to have been a few days before, or still farther away on the way to Washington.

Early commenced his march at midnight. His left column, with the artillery and cavalry, moved over easy ground, and at dawn began to demonstrate against Emory. Meanwhile the other column, consisting of the divisions of Gordon, Ramseur, Pegram, Kershaw, and Wharton, the remnants of those who had just a month before fled in rout from the Opequan and Fish-



ALFRED TORBERT.

er's Hill, moved silently down the mountain slope, forded the Rappahannock, and crept stealthily along Crook's front. So imperative was the necessity for silence that they had left their canteens behind, lest their rattling should betray them. Before dawn they had pursued their dark-long march of seven miles. These three divisions passed beyond Crook's left flank, and turned it without having been perceived, and were fairly within striking distance of its rear, while the other two crouched in his front. Once, indeed, the pickets reported that they had heard a suspicious rustling, and a part of the front line was sent into the trenches; but, so little was danger apprehended, that many went in with unloaded muskets. The gaps left in the line were not filled, and no reconnoissance was made. There was just then a slight stir in Emory's camp, for he was to send out a reconnoissance at daybreak toward Fisher's Hill. His aid was in the saddle, ready to report the exact time when the troops moved. The gray dawn was just breaking through a dense mist which shrouded mountain and valley when this impatient aid heard far to the left a sudden sharp rattle of musketry, and the fierce yell which denoted a Confederate charge.<sup>1</sup> The five divisions had broken on front, flank, and rear, through the lines of the sleeping Eighth Corps. In fifteen minutes it was perfectly routed and streaming back in confusion upon the Nineteenth, its guns being captured and turned upon the fugitives. Simultaneously a brisk artillery fire, with demonstrations of cavalry, was opened upon Emory's right; while his front and left flank were assailed as Crook's had been, and the enemy were already sweeping around his rear. The Nineteenth Corps was now fighting the whole Confederate force. Desperate, but brief and unavailing efforts were made to hold their lines until the Sixth Corps could come up; but from point to point they were driven back before the furious rush of Kershaw in front, while Gordon and Ramseur poured in a fire upon their left flank. The camps of the Eighth and Nineteenth Corps were now in possession of the Confederates, and what remained of these corps were pushed back upon the Sixth, which alone maintained the fight. This also fell back, but slowly and in order, from one position to another, until at length, after three miles of retreat, it had fairly outstripped Gordon, and stood with its left flank free from his pertinacious assault. Here at last they held fast, and awaited the attack. The assailants had now exhausted their impulse. Most of them, weary and hungry, scattered through the captured camps, eager for food and plunder; only a distant artillery fire was kept up. Wright fell back undisturbed a little farther to a position where he could cover the high road to Winchester, and began, at nine o'clock, to form his broken lines. He had been beaten, but was not routed, and now stood prepared to repel any farther attack.

Sheridan, in the mean while, was on his way back from Washington. He had slept that night at Winchester. At seven in the morning a picket there reported that he had heard artillery firing; but Sheridan, supposing that it proceeded from the reconnoissance which he had ordered that morning, gave little heed. He rode leisurely on until nine o'clock, when, a mile and a half beyond the town, the head of the foremost fugitives appeared in sight—men and trains rushing to the rear with a rapidity which betokened

a great disaster. There happened to be a brigade at Winchester. Stopping briefly to halt the trains and draw out this brigade to stem the flight, Sheridan pushed rapidly on, and soon approached the front. His very presence stayed the flight of the fugitives, who were running from them they knew not what. "Face about!" he shouted; "we're going back to our camps! We're going to lick them out of their boots!" Hundreds turned and followed his black steed. He found Getty—the same who had held the road in the Wilderness—far in front of the remainder of the line of the Sixth Corps, confronting the enemy, and momentarily expecting an attack. The other divisions of Wright and Emory were brought forward, and soon were ready for the enemy.

Two hours and more passed. Then Early pushed a column toward Emory. No sooner was it within range than a single volley sent it whirling back, and Sheridan was about to order an advance, when word came to him from the cavalry far off to the left that a fresh infantry column of Confederates were pressing toward Winchester to gain his rear. The report was erroneous, but it delayed the order to advance. At four o'clock the order came. Early had now thrown up breastworks and taken strong positions under cover of stone fences. For a space he fought bravely, and gave way slowly and sullenly, but surely. Once, indeed, by a flank movement, he wheeled Gordon's division around Emory's right, and threw it into some confusion; but the movement was a fatal one. McMillan's brigade dashed into the angle thus formed in the Confederate line, pressed through, and cut off the turning column, upon which Custer's cavalry charged. At the same moment the whole Union line rushed forward, and swept the enemy before them. Gordon first broke, then Kershaw, then Ramseur, and all rushed in wild tumult down the turnpike which led to their position at Fisher's Hill, charged by cavalry on both flanks, and pressed by infantry in the centre. The fugitives outran their foot-pursuers, who, weary and thirsty, toiled after them. But the swift cavalry were on their heels. At the crossing of Cedar Creek Custer and Devin charged the train without provoking a shot. A little farther on was another bridge; this broke down, and the whole train, guns and wagons, was abandoned. At length, once more behind the lines at Fisher's Hill, which cavalry could not pass, Early had a brief respite; but in the darkness the whole crowd rushed on, never halting for thirty miles. There was no need for pursuit the next day. So utterly destroyed was Early's army that there was nothing worth chasing.

With this battle ended the fighting in the Valley of the Shenandoah. The remnant of Early's force rejoined Lee, by swift marches, at Petersburg, only enough of his own three divisions being left in the Valley to form one small division. Early put forth a bitter address to his troops. After recounting the brilliant success of the morning, he added: "I have the mortification of announcing to you that, by your subsequent misconduct, all the benefits of that victory were lost, and a serious disaster incurred. Many of you, including some commissioned officers, yielding to a disgraceful propensity to plunder, deserted your colors to appropriate the abandoned property of the enemy; and subsequently those who had previously remained at their posts, seeing their ranks thinned by the absence of the plunderers, when the enemy, late in the afternoon, with his shattered columns, made but a feeble effort to retrieve the failures of the day, yielded to a needless panic, and fled the field in confusion."

The defeat was indeed as total as "Lee's bad old man" represented it; but the reproach was undeserved. The troops had fought themselves out in the morning. The victory was won by surprise against superior numbers. The surprise was over in the afternoon, and the numbers were still largely against them,<sup>1</sup> while the advantage of position was not great. Early appears once more for a moment in the history of the war, when, four months after, a little band of 1500 men whom he had gathered was rode over and captured almost to a man by a single division of Sheridan's cavalry.

The Federal victory was complete and absolute, but it was purchased at a heavy cost. The losses numbered 5990, of whom 1890 were missing, mostly prisoners, more than a third of them from Crook's corps, captured in the surprise. This corps lost but 65 killed, while it had 654 missing. Early's loss was barely half as great. There were 1500 prisoners, and probably about as many killed and wounded, nearly all in the final fight in the afternoon. He lost also 30 guns, all that he brought into action, besides 16 which he had captured in the morning.

Sheridan's decisive campaign in the Valley was comprised within just a month, counting from the time when he commenced direct offensive operations. In that month he completely annihilated his opponent, capturing fully 13,000 prisoners, and killing and wounding quite 10,000. His own losses in killed and wounded indeed were greater. Including the three great battles and about thirty skirmishes, which mainly took place in the six weeks while he was watching the enemy, preparatory to striking, they amounted to 13,831; the missing 3121—a total loss of 16,952; of whom 11,827 were in the great battles, and 5625 in minor engagements.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I accept Early's statement of his force as an approximation to the truth. I do not think it possible that his force exceeded 12,000 infantry, although many endeavor to make it twice as great. To do this, they speak of a re-enforcement of 12,000 or 16,000 of Longstreet's corps, received the day before the battle. Of these I can find no credible information. I find with Early only that half of his army which had escaped from the Opequan and Fisher's Hill—say not more than 8000 men, and Kershaw's one division of probably 4000. Pollard says definitely 2750 muskets—say 3000 men.

<sup>2</sup> The following is a summary of the losses of Sheridan during his whole campaign in the Shenandoah Valley, from August 7 to October 19:

Battle of the Opequan.....	5,035	Battle of Cedar Creek.....	5,995
Battle of Fisher's Hill.....	297	Minor Engagements.....	5,625
			16,952

The Confederate loss in prisoners is officially given. Of the killed and wounded we can only conjecture.

<sup>1</sup> A graphic account of this battle, by Captain De Forest, the aid in question, is given in *Harper's Magazine* for February, 1865.