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CHAPTER XIII.
THE FIRST BRIGADE—CONTINUED

The situation, September 1, 1862—The part of the Sixth Corps in Pope's Campaign—The march into Maryland—Storming of Crampton's Gap—Brilliant action of the Fourth Vermont—The battle of Antietam—Part taken by the Vermont Brigade—A quiet time at Hagerstown—Stuart's second raid—Accession of the Twenty-Sixth New Jersey to the brigade—Retirement of General Brooks from the command—Return to Virginia—Changes of army, corps, division and brigade commanders—McClellan's farewell review—March to the Rappahannock—Burnside's bloody failure—Howe's division and the Vermont brigade at the First Fredericksburg—Casualties of the brigade—Winter quarters at White Oak Church—Burnside's mud campaign and retirement from command.

A glance at the general situation throughout the field of war, as affairs stood on the 1st of September, 1862, will show that important changes had taken place in the past three months, and that the outlook for the Union cause was not satisfactory.

At the west the siege of Vicksburg had been abandoned, and the Confederates were conducting an offensive campaign in Tennessee and Kentucky. At the east, the campaign against Richmond had failed; McClellan had lost the confidence of the administration and had been virtually reduced to a subordinate position. General Halleck had been brought from the west and made general in chief of the army to direct operations from his headquarters at Washington, generally to the obstruction and disgust of the generals in the field. The fragmentary commands of McDowell, Banks and Sigel had been consolidated into the "Army of Virginia." Of this, General Pope had assumed command, handicapped by his presumptuous announcements that he had come to

introduce the ways of the west, where they did not bother their heads about lines of retreat or bases of supply, and that his headquarters were to be in the saddle; and by the disaffection of many of his subordinate generals. He had, with commendable activity, made menacing demonstrations along the Rapidan, which had kept Lee from interfering with McClellan while he was withdrawing the Army of the Potomac from the Peninsula — if indeed the Confederate commander cared to prevent that withdrawal.

General Banks had fought the sanguinary, unnecessary and inconsequential battle of Cedar Mountain — achieving a technical victory, but failing to cripple Jackson or to prevent his joining Lee. Lee, all menace to Richmond from the south removed by the departure of McClellan, was arranging to strike and destroy Pope before he should be reinforced from McClellan's army. Pope, perceiving Lee's design, had withdrawn to the Rappahannock, defending the fords with his artillery for two days during which the force in his front was hourly increasing, and had then fallen back, with almost constant fighting and an infinite amount of marching and manoeuvring, to Gainesville. Here the battle known by that name was fought on the 29th; and the next day the second disastrous Battle of Bull Run, which finished Pope's campaign and career as an army commander, took place on the plains of Manassas. The questions, still mooted after constant discussion for twenty years, who was chiefly responsible for Pope's defeat; whether or not Fitz John Porter was to blame for rendering such tardy and ineffective assistance to General Pope; why the two corps of Franklin and Sumner, comprising 20,000 or 30,000 of the best fighting material in the Union army, were held within hearing of the battle of the 29th and 30th without rendering any effective assistance, and how much McClellan meant by his suggestion to the President to "leave Pope to get out of his scraps," need not be debated here.

It will be enough to remember that the commander of the Sixth Corps was a loyal lieutenant to McClellan; and that while he was perhaps in no more of a hurry to move than the latter was to have him, he would undoubtedly have gone, if he had been sent. That the corps had no part in the fighting and did nothing of importance to arrest the national disaster of the second Bull Run was certainly not the fault of the troops, so far at least as the Vermonters were concerned. They heard the booming of the cannon coming nearer day by day. They saw the stragglers coming in and heard their stories of terrible fighting beyond Manassas. They packed knapsacks and hourly expected to move, and they wondered sorely as time went on, why they were not ordered forward. On Wednesday, after General Halleck had telegraphed that Franklin must move out "at once by forced marches," the men of the corps were ordered to have three days rations in their haversacks; but they received no further order. On Thursday, again the order was to be ready with two days rations, and they were ready; but sunset came without any order to march. On Friday, while Pope was fighting at Gainesville, Franklin started; but halted and camped at Annandale, after a march of seven miles. On Saturday, while the desperate and bloody Second Bull Run was in progress within plain hearing, the corps moved on, making scarce a mile an hour, through Fairfax Court House to Centreville, and thence to Cub Run, meeting by the way toward nightfall, wounded men and stragglers and paroled prisoners streaming in by hundreds. General Pope's army was then in full, though not disorderly retreat; and his rear guard, of Sykes's division, was making the stout and final stand to cover the withdrawal of the main body across Bull Run, as Sykes with his battalion of regulars and the Second Vermont stood on Bald Hill, to cover McDowell's army, thirteen months before.

At nightfall the issue of the battle in front being known,

Franklin moved the Sixth Corps back to Centreville, where it lay through the next day, a rainy and gloomy Sunday. On Monday evening it retired to Fairfax Court House. Early the next morning it returned toward Centreville, and lay in line of battle on the heights till three P. M., expecting an attack, which did not come. It then started for Alexandria, near Fort Ellsworth and Fairfax Seminary, between nine and ten o'clock that evening, having covered in seven hours the distance which it used fifty hours in traversing when going, out. While on this march, a little before dark, the sound of the fight at Chantilly — a sequel of the Second Bull Run in which the gallant General Philip Kearney and General Israel Stevens, who commanded the Vermont troops in the first reconnoissance to Lewinsville, a year before, were killed — was heard a short distance to the rear; but it did not interrupt the march. The brigade remained in camp near Alexandria three days, and then started with the corps on the first campaign in Maryland.

The first week of September, 1862, was one of active reorganization in the army around Washington. Pope's luckless campaign had ended, and his army and the Army of the Potomac were united within the defenses of Washington. Pope had resigned and General McClellan had been reinstated in the command, to the relief and delight of the army. General Banks, with three army corps, was placed in command of the defences of Washington, and McClellan with five corps, of which the Sixth was one, marched slowly up the Potomac, disposing his army so as to cover both Washington and Baltimore. Lee had disappeared from the front of Washington, and, as it was soon discovered, was marching to the north on his first invasion of a northern State.

On Saturday, the 6th of September, the brigade broke camp and marched across Long Bridge, through Washington and Georgetown, to Tenallytown, three miles north of George-

town, where the Sixth Corps halted that night. Next day, the brigade lay in the woods all day till evening, when it marched three or four miles to the north towards Rockville, Md., where McClellan's headquarters were that night. In the next three days it moved through Rockville and Darnestown to Barnesville, Md. Here, at the foot of Sugar Loaf Mountain, on the 11th, distinct proof of the presence of the enemy in the vicinity was afforded by a skirmish in front with a reconnoitring force of Confederate cavalry and infantry, which retired before the Union advance. The brigade was ordered into line but was not engaged. Next day the brigade marched over the mountain and camped that night near the Baltimore & Ohio R. R. On the 13th, it moved to Adamstown, on the railroad, eight miles south of Frederick City.

That day a copy of an important order issued by General Lee, which had been by a piece of rare good fortune found in the abandoned camp of General D. H. Hill, near that city, was placed in McClellan's hands. This told the Federal commander that Lee had divided his army, and sent four divisions under Generals Jackson and McLaws, to surround and capture the Federal garrison of 11,000 men, under Colonel Miles, at Harper's Ferry.¹ McClellan thereupon despatched Franklin, whose corps was on the left of his army, with directions to pass over South Mountain through Crampton's Gap, cut off McLaws — who was marching down upon Harper's Ferry from the Maryland side, while Jackson, crossing the Potomac, approached it from the Virginia side — and relieve Miles. This was clearly the thing to be done. Unfortunately it was not done quickly enough. Had McClellan started Franklin (whose corps lay near Buckeyston)

¹ "The God of battles alone knows what would have occurred but for that singular accident. Certainly the loss of this battle-order constitutes one of the pivots on which turned the event of the war." — Colonel W. H. Taylor, C. S. A., in "Four years with General Lee."

that night, Franklin could have reached the mountain by midnight, moved through the pass the next morning, relieved Harper's Ferry, and made much trouble for McLaws. Two other corps, making a night march, such as Jackson was making, to Turner's Gap, six miles north of Crampton's that night, could the next day have placed themselves between the wings of Lee's army. If Lee had not learned to count on McClellan's tardiness, he would never have taken so perilous a risk. He took it, as the event proved, with impunity. McClellan, it is true, at once ordered General Franklin to move; but he did not order him to move at once. The order was "to move at day break next morning." He was directed to carry the pass of Crampton's Gap; move through it on to the Rohrersville road in Pleasant Valley, where he would be over against Maryland Heights, and within five miles of Harper's Ferry; cut off and destroy McLaws, relieve Miles, add Miles's disposable troops to the Sixth Corps, and then occupy a position to prevent the return of Jackson to Lee. "My general plan," said McClellan to Franklin, "is to cut the enemy in two and beat him in detail. I ask of you all your intellect and the utmost activity that a general can exercise." The plan was good, the injunction admirable; but the activity was to begin the next day, whereas Jackson and McLaws were active through that night. They thus gained the decisive hours which McClellan and Franklin lost. Franklin marched at daylight. Pushing ahead rapidly he reached Burkittsville, at the opening of the Gap, about noon, and during the afternoon stormed and carried the pass, in spite of the stout opposition of General Howell Cobb, who with three brigades — his own, Semmes's and Mahone's — had been detached by General McLaws to hold the pass. This engagement and that at Turner's Gap to the north, which was carried by the First and Ninth corps at the same time, having a common object and occurring on

the same day, though separated by five miles of mountain ridge, are known in history as the Battle of South Mountain.

In the storming of Crampton's Gap, the Vermont brigade had a prominent part, to be now related.

CRAMPTON'S GAP.

The village of Burkittsville, a thriving Maryland village of a single street half a mile long, lies at the eastern foot of the South Mountain range. This is there divided by a narrow defile, through which winds the main road across the Mountain, bearing to the north and rising sharply as soon as it leaves the village. A country road comes into the slope at the entrance of the defile. This road with its stone fences afforded an admirable line of defence. Cross roads, meeting in the throat of the defile, offered additional facilities for posting troops and artillery. The sides of the gorge were wooded, and the steep ascents and rocky ledges afforded remarkable advantages to the defenders of the pass. Of these, General Cobb had taken full advantage. Eight guns were posted by him in the roads and on the sides and rounded summit of the crest, commanding the approaches to the pass. Cobb's orders from his superior were to "hold the Gap if he lost his last man doing it."² But he did not hold it, though he lost almost a third of his command.

Franklin made his dispositions for the assault with excellent judgment. The attack was commenced about three o'clock in the afternoon by Slocum's division, while Ayres's and Wolcott's batteries replied to the Confederate guns. Slocum's first line, consisting of Bartlett's brigade, advanced through the village, driving out the enemy's skirmishers, and up the ascent on the right of the main road, till brought to a stand in front of the stone wall on the right, which was

² General McLaws's report.

lined with several Georgia regiments. These kept up a severe fire, while other Confederate troops opened a cross fire from the left, which threatened to compel Bartlett to retire. The other two brigades of Slocum's division (Newton's and Torbert's) were accordingly ordered forward to support Bartlett, while to the Vermont brigade was committed the important task of carrying the enemy's position on the left by direct assault, and dislodging him from the woods on Slocum's flank. Brooks sent forward the Fourth Vermont, Lieut. Colonel Stoughton, and the Second, Major Walbridge, in two lines, the ground not admitting a wider front than that of a regiment, and held the rest of his

brigade for support, in the edge of the village. Cheered on as they passed through the street by a number of loyal women who had not left their homes in the village, the two regiments deployed under a plunging artillery fire from the heights they were to scale. The Fourth moved steadily up the ascent in face of sharp musketry firing from behind a stone fence in front, and dashed squarely at this, driving the Confederates from it, and taking twenty prisoners who had sought shelter behind a haystack. It was followed closely by the Second, and both regiments pushed on up the rocky side of the mountain, climbing the ledges and struggling through the bushes, till they reached the crest. Here the Fourth was sent to the left, to attack the battery whose fire from the summit had been so annoying, while the Second kept on over the crest and down the opposite side of the mountain. The Sixth Virginia, Major Holliday, was cut off from the rest of Mahone's brigade by the promptness of the movement, and Major Holliday with five commissioned officers and 115 men surrendered to Colonel Stoughton on the crest. Leaving two companies to guard the prisoners, Stoughton went after the battery; but before he could reach it, it had limbered up and made its escape by a wood road leading down the mountain. The Second regiment pressed on after the flying enemy to the base of the mountain, as Slocum, relieved by Brook's movement from resistance on his flank, gallantly carried the position on the right of the road. Thus driven from his positions on right and left, the enemy fell back through the defile and down the mountain in great confusion. The way through the Gap being left clear by these operations, the Third, Fifth and Sixth regiments followed the other two regiments by the road, without opposition. Perceiving how things were going in the Gap, General Cobb sent forward his reserve on the double quick; but it arrived only in time to participate in the rout; and his entire command, less some 700 men killed, wounded and captured,

made a rapid retreat, till he was halted in the Valley, by General McLaws, who had been hurrying up the Wilcox's brigade from Maryland Heights but only arrived in time to cover Cobb's retreat.

At the base of the mountain the skirmishers of the Vermont brigade found a 12-lb. Howitzer, partially disabled, and brought it in, with the horses attached to it. McLaws rallied the retreating Confederates, and with what was left of Cobb, Semmes and Mahone, and other troops of his division, formed a defensive line across Pleasant Valley a mile and a half below the Gap; while Franklin halted at the western foot of it.

In this affair, which the Comte de Paris calls the "brilliant combat of Crampton's Gap", Franklin lost 110 officers and men killed, and 420 wounded, the severest loss being in Bartlett's brigade. The promptness and unexpected character of the movement of the Vermont regiments saved them from serious loss, and the Fourth Vermont had but one man killed and 14 wounded; the Second Vermont five men wounded; and the Sixth Vermont one officer, Captain Barney, and two men wounded; total, 23. General Franklin states the he buried 150 of the enemy and took charge of over 300 of their wounded left on the field; and that he captured in all 400 prisoners, from 17 different organizations, with one piece of artillery, 700 muskets and three stands of colors. General McLaws says in his report: "The loss in the brigades engaged was, in killed, wounded and missing, very large, and the remnant collected to make front across the valley, very small;" and a month later he speaks of Cobb's, Semmes's and Mahone's brigades as having been "badly crippled at Crampton's Gap."

The other results of this success were by no means what they might have been. It was perhaps too near dark when the Gap was carried, to have accomplished much more that night; but in the evening Franklin was joined by Couch's divi-

sion of the Fourth corps, giving him a force decidedly superior to that of McLaws; and had he attacked the latter at daylight he might even then have prevented the fall of Harper's Ferry, or if that were not possible could have offset the loss of Miles's command by the destruction or capture of McLaws's. But though McClellan had sent him distinct orders during the night to attack and destroy such of the enemy as he found before him in Pleasant Valley, and if possible to relieve Miles, Franklin did nothing on the 15th. At half-past eight o'clock that morning the white flag was raised by Miles at Harper's Ferry; but the surrender was not complete till an hour later. At nine o'clock, Colonel Stannard and the Ninth Vermont, of the garrison, were still seeking for a chance to cut their way out, while three strong Union divisions had been standing since daylight in Pleasant Valley, but six miles away, in full hearing of Jackson's artillery. The cessation of the cannonading, and the cheering of the Confederates on Maryland Heights, told these, about nine o'clock, that Harper's Ferry had surrendered.

Franklin did nothing that day but to move down the Valley a mile or two, and occupy the Brownsville Gap, a mile below Crampton's, to which the Sixth Maine and the left wing of the Fourth Vermont, under Major Foster, were sent in the morning. These drove back the enemy's pickets and guarded the lower pass for that day and night. During the day Franklin received directions from McClellan, after the latter had learned of Miles's surrender, to remain where he was and "watch the large force in front" of him. But the watch maintained by Franklin did not prevent McLaws from withdrawing his division across the Potomac River that day, or from marching the next night to join Lee on the battlefield of the Antietam.

ANTIETAM.

During the first day of this battle, a terribly hot day, the Vermont brigade lay, with the rest of Franklin's command, in Pleasant Valley, listening to the booming of artillery which came from the northwest, over the mountain ridge in front, beginning in the forenoon, and increasing heavily the latter part of the afternoon, as Hooker with the First corps moved across the Antietam and attacked the left of Lee's line in front of Sharpsburg.

The next day was the main day of the battle. The story of it has been admirably told by Colonel Palfrey of Massachusetts, and other historians; and only a few of the more important points of it need be noted here. The opposing armies numbered, in round numbers, 40,000 under Lee, and 80,000 under McClellan. Lee used every man he could bring into line.³ McClellan fought the battle with 50,000 men — two corps, numbering 30,000 being hardly used at all by him. Lee fought a defensive battle, greatly favored by the strength of his position, in which his flanks were protected by the bends of the Potomac and his front covered by the stream and valley of the Antietam. On McClellan's part, the fighting was not the simultaneous assault which he had planned, and which would probably have made his victory far more decisive; but a series of attacks bravely, often desperately, made, yet with such want of concert between the several corps that Lee, having the inner side of the curve, was able to reinforce in turn his hardly pressed lines at the points where they were assailed, and to prevent a serious break in them anywhere.

The battle was opened on the right, as soon as the early morning mists had risen, by Hooker, who had crossed the Antietam and had done some indecisive fighting the afternoon

³ "Every man was engaged — we had no reserve." — Colonel Walter H. Taylor, of Lee's staff.

before. He was now opposed by Jackson's two divisions — his own "Stonewall" division and Ewell's — with six batteries, aided later by several batteries and brigades of other divisions. It was Greek meeting Greek, and the carnage was terrible on each side. In the words of Colonel Palfrey, "the two lines almost tore each other to pieces." The contest raged most hotly around a certain cornfield on the east side of the Hagerstown pike, and the woods between it and the Dunker chapel. Over this part of the field the tides of battle swept to and fro in successive waves. Before nine o'clock, Hooker had been wounded and his corps cut pretty much to pieces, and it had been reinforced and its place substantially taken by the Twelfth corps, whose commander, General Mansfield, was killed as he was deploying his lines. In the course of an hour or two of bloody fighting the Twelfth corps, though it gained some ground, had been brought to a stand; and Sumner advanced to relieve it with the Second corps. Sedgwick's division led the assault, and swept forward over the cornfield. He was attacked in turn by Jackson and McLaws with ten Confederate brigades, and driven back with frightful loss. The other two divisions of the corps, French's and Richardson's, had meantime become engaged and suffered severely — the latter losing its gallant commander, General Israel B. Richardson—one of Vermont's bravest sons and one of the best soldiers in the army—mortally wounded. Three of the six corps of McClellan's army had thus in turn attacked on the right; but while inflicting tremendous losses upon the enemy they had failed to permanently dislodge Lee's left; and at noon were merely holding their own.

In the next and last stage of the battle on the right, Franklin's corps, and Smith's division, and the Vermont brigade, took part.

To go back to the morning and to Pleasant Valley, General Franklin, first sending Couch's division to Harper's Ferry

to lock the stable door after the horse had been stolen, started at half past five A. M., under McClellan's orders, toward the battlefield, six miles away. Smith's division led the column, and arrived on the field a little before ten o'clock. It took position at first in a piece of woods on the left of the stone bridge, known as the "Burnside Bridge," to the left of the centre of McClellan's line. It was soon hurried farther on, and across the river and round to the right to the assistance of Sumner. The time was a critical one. Sedgwick had made a gallant advance; but being unsupported on either right or left and taken on each flank and even in the rear by superior numbers massed against him, had narrowly escaped utter annihilation. Sumners' other two divisions had attacked the Confederate centre; but striking it at some distance to the left of Sedgwick, had not made any effective diversion in his favor, or secured any important advantage, though they had done some severe fighting. Richardson and Crawford had fallen. Sedgwick had been thrice wounded and obliged to leave the field. His division had partially given way, with a loss of over 2,500 men, and Jackson was preparing to push his advantage by striking again his undefended left flank, when Smith came to his relief. Smith's leading brigade, Hancock's , approached within canister distance of the enemy, broke the lines and silenced the Confederate batteries in front of it, and held its ground. Brooks's Vermont brigade came next, and was at first hurried to Sumner's right; but was presently brought back to the assistance of French's division. Smith's third brigade, Irwin's, was placed by him on the left of Hancock's, and advanced, driving back the opposing lines, till it came abreast of the Dunker Church, which marked the line of Sumner's advance. The Vermont brigade was sent to the left of Irwin, where it joined on to the right of French, whose division, thus reinforced, filled the gap through which McLaws and Early had previously pressed, to Sedgwick's sorrow. Smith intended that the

Vermont brigade should support Irwin, in his advanced position, and had such support been rendered, a decisive advantage might have been gained at that point. Brooks, however, had been withdrawn by Sumner⁴ and posted, with a portion of French's command, behind a low crest. The brigade made a handsome advance and came under a sharp fire of artillery, as it moved into position on French's right; but the enemy's lines in its front having fallen back, it had little fighting to do and suffered comparatively little loss.⁵ The Vermont regiments stood in line all that afternoon, while Burnside with the Ninth corps, after hours of most unfortunate and unaccountable delay, was forcing the passage of the stone bridge, and making the final indecisive assault on Lee's right. Night fell on them, in this position. The ground in front of McClellan's right and centre was so much fought over by different brigades and divisions that it has been found difficult to locate beyond dispute the point reached by Brooks's brigade. But it advanced in line of battle over a cornfield, strewn with dead — and there is little doubt that it was "the historic cornfield" of Antietam. Mr. George W. Smalley, the N.Y. Tribune's army correspondent, writing from

⁴ General Smith complains of this warmly, in his report, saying: "It is not the first or the second time during a battle that my command has been dispersed by orders from an officer superior in rank to the general commanding this corps, and I must assert that I have never known any good to arise from such a method of fighting a battle, and think the contrary rule should be adopted of keeping commands intact." The first time probably was at Williamsburg, when Sumner refused to let Smith send his second and third brigades to join Hancock; and the second at Savage's Station, where the division was divided and sent in on the two extremes of Sumner's line.

⁵ "The Vermont brigade was sent to the assistance of French's division, who having expended their ammunition, were making feeble resistance to the enemy. The Vermonters behaved with their usual gallantry, resisting the advance of the enemy, and although frequently subjected to the fire of artillery, they held their ground bravely. The brigade was composed of men who could always be depended on to do what they were ordered to do."—*Three Years in the Sixth Corps*.

the field, says: "At this crisis, when all we had gained upon our right had been wrested from us, Franklin came up with fresh troops. * * * Smith was ordered to retake the cornfields and woods which had been so hotly contested. It was done in the handsomest style. His Maine and Vermont regiments and the rest went forward on the run, and, cheering as they went, swept like an avalanche through the cornfield, fell upon the woods, cleared them in ten minutes, and held them. They were not again retaken. The field and its ghastly harvest remained finally with us. Four times it had been lost and won. The dead are strewn so thickly that as you ride over it you cannot guide your horse's steps too carefully. * * * Smith's attack was so sudden that his success was accomplished with no great loss."

The loss in the Vermont brigade was indeed surprisingly small, aggregating but 25 killed and wounded. The Second Vermont had five men wounded. The Third, one officer and three men wounded. The Fourth, one man killed and five wounded. The Fifth, two men wounded; and the Sixth, eight men wounded. This though the men were for some time under what General Brooks — who does not use big words — calls "a galling fire of both artillery and sharpshooters;" but they were kept close to the ground when not moving, and the shell and grape flew over them without doing much damage. General Brooks himself would not lie down, but moved to and fro on foot along his lines, a constant mark for the enemy's sharpshooters. In the course of the afternoon a bullet struck him in the mouth, knocking out two teeth. A man ran to him and asked if he was wounded. "No," replied the gruff old soldier, spitting out a molar, "had a tooth pulled." Though in serious pain, he did not leave the lines till after dark.

At sundown the roar of battle ceased, and the heated cannon were allowed to cool, and the wounded were gathered from the field and the unwounded sought food and rest.

"The blessed night came and brought with it sleep and refreshment to many; but the murmur of the night wind breathing over fields of wheat and clover, was mingled with the groans of the countless sufferers of both armies."⁶ All the night the Vermonters lay on their arms in the front line. They had little sleep, for the skirmishers in front were firing at every moving form, and they fully expected a renewal of the battle in the morning. They remained all the next day in the same place, while burying parties, under a flag of truce asked for by Lee, were burying the dead. In not renewing the contest on Thursday morning General McClellan made the mistake of his life-time. He had lost 11,500 men killed and wounded and 1,000 missing; but he had inflicted equal or greater loss on the enemy; and Lee could far less afford the loss. McClellan had two corps substantially intact. He had over 60,000 men upon the ground against 30,000 — the latter the more hardly marched and fought, and most exhausted. He waited a day and night, during which Humphrey's and Couch's divisions arrived, and then gave orders to attack at daylight on the 19th; but at daylight Lee was gone. His invasion of the north had come to an end, on the very banks of the Potomac; and he postponed to a later day the assistance to the people of Maryland in throwing off "the foreign yoke" of the national government, which, on his entrance of the State, he had proclaimed his purpose to render. On the 19th, the Sixth Corps moved forward over the field, on which hundreds of dead still lay blackening in the sun and tainting all the air with sickening stench, through the streets of Sharpsburg, filled with disabled wagons and strewn with knapsacks and guns, past houses riddled by shell and churches filled with rebel wounded; and bivouacked for the night between the village and the Potomac. Next day, marching back through Sharpsburg and

⁶ Colonel Palfrey.

again over the battlefield, it turned to the north and moved up the river, twelve miles, to Williamsport.

On the 23d, the Sixth Corps moved out to Bakersville on the Hagerstown pike, and thence on the 26th to Hagerstown. Here it remained a month, while McClellan was reorganizing his army and Lee was holding the Shenandoah Valley and destroying railroads in that region. General Brooks was appointed military governor of Hagerstown — a thriving city of 5,000 inhabitants — and his regiments did duty as provost guard.

It was a quiet time at Hagerstown. No enemy was near. The inhabitants of the region were at least nominally friendly, and had plenty of poultry and fresh vegetables to sell. The camps were pleasant. No weary searches at the end of hard marches were needed to find wood and water. The men resumed their long interrupted occupations of drilling and loafing, the latter varied by earnest discussions of the probable effect of the Emancipation Proclamation, just issued by President Lincoln, to take effect on the first of January following.

On the 10th of October, the army received a sensation, from Stuart's second raid. Lee, as much puzzled as the authorities at Washington to divine what was keeping the Army of the Potomac so long in Maryland, sent out Stuart with 1,500 cavalry, and orders to "ascertain the position and designs of the enemy." He crossed the Potomac above Williamsport, penetrated to Chambersburg, Pa., where he destroyed a good deal of government property; and while General McClellan was telegraphing to Washington that none of the rebels should return to Virginia, and was sending troops here and there in Maryland to points where Stuart had been, the latter completed his second ride entirely round the Union army, and returned to Virginia, well supplied with new clothing and shoes, and with fresh horses found in the stables of the Pennsylvania farmers. During the stir oc-

casioned by this episode the Second and Fifth regiments were hastily loaded into cars and sent to Chambersburg on the 11th. But Stuart had departed before they started, and they returned to Hagerstown on the 16th.

While in camp at Hagerstown, the Vermont brigade received an accession of 250 recruits, sent down from Vermont; and the Twenty-sixth New Jersey, Colonel Morrison, a new nine months regiment, 1,000 strong, was attached to the brigade — the first and only mixture of troops of any other State, during its existence. The Jerseymen were not altogether a congenial element in the brigade; but they looked up to the Vermonters as veterans, and profited by their association with them.⁷

At Hagerstown the brigade lost by his promotion the blunt, brave and trusty commander, under whom it had thus far marched and fought, and to whose soldierly example and instructions its officers and men owed so much. General Brooks was assigned to the command of the First division of the Sixth Corps, upon General Slocum's appointment to the command of the Twelfth corps, and took his leave of the brigade with mutual reluctance and respect, which found

⁷ "We were emphatically a green regiment," says an officer of the Twenty-sixth New Jersey, quoted in *New Jersey in the Rebellion*, p. 540, "when we entered on active service. But we had one great advantage. We were brigaded with veterans, and with veterans, too, who had won a high reputation in the Peninsula and Maryland campaigns. Their example was our real teacher in the Art of War." The lessons taught the Jerseymen were not confined to the art of war. On one occasion, some men of the Second Vermont, having repeatedly lost some of their fresh meat, which they had reason to believe went into the camp of the Twenty-sixth New Jersey, killed and dressed Colonel Morrison's fat Newfoundland dog and hung his carcass in the quartermaster's store tent. As they expected, it was purloined that night by some of the New Jersey boys, who took it for fat mutton. The Vermonters were on the watch, tracked the dog-meat into the camp the Twenty-sixth, and ascertained that it was served next day on the tables of several messes of the New Jersey officers. Of course the story soon ran through the brigade, and the New Jersey boys visiting the other camps for some time after were greeted with numerous bow wows by way of friendly salutation.

expression on the part of General Brooks, in the following general order:

HEADQUARTERS, SECOND BRIGADE,
Smith's Division, Oct. 21, 1862.

The brigadier general commanding this brigade hereby relinquishes its command. In thus terminating an official connection which has existed for precisely a year, the general commanding experiences much regret. He is not unmindful that his own reputation has been identified with and dependent upon that of those who have served under him; and it is with great gratification that he thanks them for the noble manner in which they have sustained him, in the performance of his arduous duties in camp and field. He will watch their future career with deep interest and trusts he will ever have occasion to feel proud that his name has been associated with the Vermont brigade.

By order of Brig. General Brooks.

THEODORE READ, Captain and. A. A. G.

A meeting of the officers of the brigade was held to arrange to present to General Brooks a testimonial of their regard. It was proposed among other things that a fine horse and equipments be purchased for him. An officer rose and said it was very well to talk about buying a horse for General Brooks; but he would like to know who was bold enough to undertake the task of presenting it to him. It was thereupon suggested that the horse might be fastened in front of the general's quarters at night, with a note attached to the bridle, stating for whom it was designed and from whom it came. A beautiful table service of solid silver was subsequently procured by the officers of the brigade and presented to the general, who received it with tears standing on his cheeks and a voice too much choked by emotion to permit him to make formal reply.⁸

⁸ General Brookes resigned from the army, July 14, 1864. He resided in Huntsville, Ala., after the close of the war, and died there in 1870. He always retained and often expressed his high opinion of the Vermont troops, and he is remembered with respect and affection by all who served under him. He was alluded to, by a speaker, at one of the army reunions, as "the author, founder, and finisher of the Old Brigade," and the Reunion Society of Vermont Officers, at its meeting in 1872, adopted resolutions of high respect for his memory, declaring that the reputation of the First Vermont brigade "was largely the fruit of the vigorous instruction, the impartial discipline, the soldierly example, and the inspiring patriotism of General Brooks"

The ostensible and to some extent real cause of the delay of the Army of the Potomac in Maryland, for six weeks after Lee had returned to Virginia, was lack of supplies of clothing and shoes. But as the needs of the Sixth Corps, which were as great as those of any part of the army, were not supplied in these respects when they finally marched, it was plain that the army could have moved in its old clothing. The Vermont brigade was much in need of underclothing, overcoats and blankets.

At last, in the last week of October, the army began to move, the advance crossing the Potomac on the 26th. On the 28th, the Sixth Corps received marching orders; and on the 29th broke camp and moved to Williamsport, camping for the night in the oak groves where it had camped five weeks before. Next day it marched down through Boonsboro to Pleasant Valley, and the next filed through Crampton's Gap and Burkittsville, halting and spending Sunday, November 1st, in a charming valley near Berlin, Md. Here the next morning it crossed the Potomac on pontoon bridges, marched through Lovettsville, and on to the south along the base of the Blue Ridge, and then across the Valley to White Plains east of Thoroughfare Gap, where it remained during a storm of sleet and snow, which lasted all day of the 7th, and the 8th. On the 9th, it moved to New Baltimore on the Warrenton pike, in the southernmost gap of the Bull Run Mountains, the general headquarters of the army being at Warrenton.

Here the corps and the army rested a week, during which important changes in the commands of both took place. General McClellan, the popular idol of 1861, and still the idol of most of the army, was relieved of the command, and was succeeded by General Burnside. The army was divided into three grand divisions. Franklin was appointed to the

command of the Left Grand Division, and Sumner and Hooker to the commands of the other two grand divisions. Maj. General William F. Smith succeeded Franklin in the command of the Sixth Corps, and Brig. General A. P. Howe was appointed to the command of the Second division, of which the Vermont brigade was a part — General Brooks remaining in command of the First division. Colonel Whiting of the Second Vermont, the ranking colonel of the Vermont brigade, succeeded to the command thereof, on the promotion of General Brooks.

None of these changes were particularly gratifying at the time to the Vermont troops. In common with a large portion of the army, they as a body retained confidence in General McClellan (though some of the best soldiers in the brigade had ceased to share it,) and somehow could not feel it to be serious crime that he had not marched them harder and fought them more desperately. They knew nothing of the neglect, not to say disobedience, of orders, on his part, which had so sorely tried the much enduring President; and they thought it "hard lines" that he should be superseded so soon after he had beaten Lee and driven him out of Maryland. They had nothing against Burnside, for he was known as the friend and admirer of McClellan, and a frank, generous and patriotic soldier. The army did not know how much he distrusted his own ability for the chief command, though some of those highest in rank did, and shared his distrust; but whatever he was he could not take McClellan's place in the confidence and affection of the army. The new division commander, General Howe, had commanded the second brigade of Couch's division, which was attached to the Sixth Corps during the Maryland campaign. Howe was a New Englander, a native of Maine, a West Point graduate, a good disciplinarian and brave soldier, who earned the respect of his troops during the year or more in which he commanded the division, and who came to hold the highest opinion of the

Vermont troops. But he was new to them at this time, and could not have been expected at once to fill the place of General Smith in their regard. Neither could Colonel Whiting fill the place of General Brooks. The officers and men pretty generally approved of him in camp; for he understood his business, took good care of his troops, and insisted on the regular order of promotions in the regiments; but all knew that fighting was not congenial business to him; and that he could not be relied on for presence of mind, nor indeed always for presence of body, in emergencies.

General McClellan gave the Sixth Corps and the army a farewell review, at New Baltimore, on the 10th, when his farewell address was read, and he was greeted with hearty cheers, as, accompanied by General Burnside and an imposing cavalcade, he rode along the lines, while the batteries fired salutes and the bands played "Hail to the Chief."

On the 15th of November, Burnside, having completed the reorganization of the army, which was now a well equipped body of 125,000 men, and secured the reluctant assent of the administration to a movement on Richmond by the way of Fredericksburg, began his march for the Rappahannock. Whiting's brigade at this time numbered about 3,200 officers and men, the Vermont regiments having about 500 each, present for duty, and the New Jersey regiment about 700.

On the morning of the 16th, the Sixth Corps broke camp, moved out through the desolate and deserted village of New Baltimore, crossed the Orange and Alexandria Railroad at Catlett's Station, and camped two miles beyond near the Virginia "village" of Weaverville, consisting of a mill and a blacksmith shop. The next two days' marches, of about ten miles each, through the pine and oak barrens, brought the corps to the banks of Acquia Creek, four miles north of Stafford Court House, around which General Franklin concentrated his grand divisions, while Sumner took his

grand division to the Rappahannock at Falmouth, opposite Fredericksburg, and Hooker was held a few miles back. Here the army remained for eight days, while Burnside was waiting for pontoons — the delay of which, through fault of General Halleck or some subordinate, cost Burnside the opportunity to occupy Fredericksburg unopposed — and making preparations to force the passage after it had become plain that Lee was in force on the opposite bank. During this quiet week the troops stockaded their tents, built fire places, and had made themselves very comfortable in camp by Thanksgiving Day, November 27th. This was a clear and pleasant day; and though no "boxes" from home could come to help out the army rations, the men were not altogether destitute or unhappy, and were preparing to celebrate the day, when marching orders interfered. The Second and Fifth regiments were left to guard the telegraph lines and roads above Acquia Creek Landing, while the other four regiments packed knapsacks, pulled the tents off from the stockades, and starting in the forenoon, marched five or six miles to the south, halting and pitching their tents by moonlight, south of Potomac Creek. Here they remained several days. The first week in December gave the troops some arduous experience of cold rains, mud and snow, during which the inevitable picket duty became at times a service of severe exposure. On the 6th of December, the brigade moved again with the division, some six miles, over ground frozen hard enough to bear the army wagons, halting four or five miles from Belle Plain, and five or six miles north of Skinker's Neck, where Burnside at first contemplated making his crossing of the Rappahannock. The weather was severely cold. The brigade trains did not get along till the next morning. The men huddled under their shelter tents with two inches of snow for bedding, and the tentless officers crouched around camp fires in the woods. Six sick soldiers, in another brigade of the corps, died in the ambulances that bitter

night.⁹ On the 10th, the Second and Fifth regiments joined the brigade; and on the 11th the whole army was in motion for the Rappahannock.

THE FIRST FREDERICKSBURG.

The fortnight's delay had given Lee all the time he needed for preparation to meet the movement. He had concentrated his army of about 80,000 men¹⁰ about Fredericksburg, and had strongly fortified the heights which encircle the town. His army occupied Fredericksburg and the ridge or brow, with a higher ridge behind it, which begins at the river bank above the Falmouth Ford, and extends behind the town nearly parallel to the river for six miles, to the Massaponax, a tributary of the Rappahannock, emptying into it about five miles below the town. On the plain, three quarters of a mile to a mile and a half wide, between the ridge and the river, here from three hundred to four hundred yards wide, stood and stands the quaint old town of Fredericksburg, the place of the death and burial of the mother of Washington, and a town of 4,000 inhabitants before the war. The ground on the north bank is of somewhat similar formation to that on the south, though the heights are lower, and much nearer the river. The ground on the north side favored a crossing, for it was easy to post batteries enough to command the points selected for the bridges. But the crossing effected, Burnside was just where Lee wanted him; and the latter must have witnessed with a stern pleasure the preparations which were made by the Federal commander to dash his army against the terraced heights along which lay the Confederate lines.

The Union generals, on their part, were not blind to the hazards of the effort, and many of them viewed it with

⁹ Surgeon Stevens, Seventy-seventh New York.

¹⁰ His aggregate present for duty December 10th, was 78,228.

strong forebodings of disaster. Hooker strongly advised Burnside not to attack. The vagueness and fluctuations of Burnside's plan, the confusion and contradictions of orders, the want of concert of action, and other causes of his failure, have long been fruitful subjects of discussion; but they need not be discussed here.

The battle was chiefly fought on the 13th of December, though the various movements of advance and retreat occupied five days. On the 11th, the pontoon bridges, five in number, were laid, not without serious annoyance, delay and loss from the enemy's sharpshooters, especially at the bridges opposite the town. A striking feature of this day was a bombardment of the city by a hundred guns, posted on the crests on the north bank. This fired the town in various places, but had little other effect. The 12th was consumed in marching the various corps across the bridges, taking position on the south bank, and reconnoitring the enemy's position in front. The 13th was occupied from eleven o'clock in the forenoon till night with successive attacks on the enemy's positions, made from the right, under Sumner, against the Confederate left and centre, held by Longstreet, and from the Union left, under Franklin, against the Confederate right, held by Jackson's corps. These attacks had one fate. The Union columns all suffered severely from the fire of the Confederate batteries, while advancing across the plain, but pushed forward to the foot of the heights and to the stone walls which sheltered the enemy's infantry; and then fell back in shattered masses, without anywhere establishing a permanent lodgment. "Six times," says General Lee, "did the enemy, notwithstanding the havoc caused by our batteries, press on with great determination to within one hundred yards of the foot of the hill; but here encountering the deadly fire of our infantry his columns were broken and fled in confusion." There was not, in point of fact, so much of this fleeing "in confusion" as may be supposed; but

division after division was driven back with heavy loss. Hancock lost in round number 2,000 men, French 1,200, Sturgis, 1,000, Humphreys 1,000, and so on through a terribly bloody list.

No assault was made by any division of the Sixth Corps; and grave fault was found with General Franklin because he did not use that corps and the rest of the 50,000 men under his command, in a much more formidable attack from the Union left, than was made. Franklin was even charged by Burnside — and the charge was sustained by a report of the Committee on the Conduct of the War — with causing the defeat of the army by his failure to attack with all the force he could use; and for this he was soon after relieved of his command, with very serious detriment to his reputation as a soldier. But his reply to the charge, and the facts and orders in the case, have left it to this day an open question, whether or no Burnside meant at the time, as he subsequently said he meant — that the main assault on Lee's position should be made by Franklin. The latter averred most earnestly that he did not so understand his orders; and the orders were so confused and contradictory as not to compel such an understanding of them. Whether the general result would have been different if Burnside had dashed twice as many men against the heights is doubtful, in view of the immense strength of the enemy's position, and of the character of the commander and troops — Stonewall Jackson and his corps — opposed to Franklin. One thing is pretty certain — that if the main attack had been made by Franklin, the Sixth Corps would have had a prominent share in it; and the Vermont colonels, in common with the rest, would have had to report far longer lists of killed and wounded. As it was, the Sixth Corps and Howe's division and the Vermont brigade were by no means idle or out of danger.

Of the four corps arrayed by Burnside on the plain of Fredericksburg, the Sixth was placed on the left centre, the

order of battle being, from right to left, Second, Ninth, Sixth and First corps. The position of the Sixth Corps was along the Old Richmond Stage road, otherwise known as the Bowling Green road, on both sides of Deep Run, over against, and half a mile from Franklin's bridges. "The divisions of Howe and Brooks," says General Franklin in his reply to the report of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, "were centre, and bridges." These were posted on Friday, the 12th, Brooks on the right, holding a portion of the Stage road, with a line in front of Deep Run, and Howe on his left along the crest of a hill, with his right at a sharp turn of Deep Run. A skirmish line was thrown out in front nearly to the Richmond and Fredericksburg railroad, which runs about half way between the Richmond Stage road and the heights. The orders to Howe and Brooks were to hold the position and not to advance unless it became necessary, in a general attack. Under these orders they remained for the most part stationary, while the advances and heavy fighting and useless sacrifices of life took place to the right and left of them, on Saturday. Their skirmish lines in front, however, were constantly and often sharply engaged, both on Saturday and Sunday; and it was on the skirmish line that the Vermont regiments were employed, and suffered such loss as they received.

Describing their part in the battle more in detail, the brigade marched in the morning of Thursday, the 11th, from its camp, five miles back from the river, with Howe's division, which reached the bank of the Rappahannock in the forenoon. As they passed over Stafford Heights, its brow grim with batteries at points stretching for three miles to the right, the valley opened before them. Fog and the smoke from the Confederate batteries hid most of the opposite bank till noon. On the left bank the engineers and working parties were laying the bridges, and hard at work

in spite of the rebel sharpshooters and occasional artillery fire from across the river. About noon the bombardment of the city, before mentioned, opened from over a hundred guns; and the roar of artillery and screaming of the shells, the rising clouds of white smoke from the guns, and the dense pillars of darker smoke defined against the background of fog across the river, as the fires kindled by the shells gained headway in the city, offered stirring sounds and sights. At four o'clock P.M., the construction of Franklin's bridges, three in number, was so far advanced that the Sixth Corps was ordered to cross, and marched down to the plain; but the hour was too late to effect a crossing and to occupy a defensive position on the other bank before dark, and the corps was ordered back to the hills and bivouacked there on the frozen ground.

At daylight next morning the crossing was effected, Howe followed Brooks and taking position on his left. When formed on the right bank the Sixth Corps advanced half a mile and took position on the old Richmond stage road, Brooks and Howe in front and Newton's division in reserve. From the heights, some 1,500 yards away, the enemy's batteries, as soon as the fog lifted sufficiently to disclose the movement, opened a spasmodic fire.

Howe's division was formed in three lines, its right resting on the ravine of Deep Run, Pratt's brigade in front, with two batteries in its line and two more on its right and left, Vinton's brigade next, and the Vermont brigade forming the third line. The division held this position during the afternoon of Friday and the next two days and nights, the positions of the brigades being interchanged, however, each brigade in turn taking the front for a day and night. During Friday night the enemy, in addition to his batteries on the heights, brought down 21 guns to the sloping edge of the plain, near "the Bernard cabins," to the front and left of Howe's division, and some sharp artillery duels were main-

tained between them and the Union batteries during the day on Saturday and on Sunday morning. The fighting on the skirmish line was continuous and active. General Franklin says: "Smith's line of skirmishers was nearly constantly engaged." General Smith says: "Our skirmish line was engaged nearly all the time." General Howe calls the skirmish line of his division "an angry skirmish line," and elsewhere mentions the "sharp clashes of the skirmish lines," and the "constant activity" of the skirmishers.

In this skirmishing all of the Vermont regiments but the Sixth took active part. The Second Vermont, under Lieut. Colonel Joyce, was sent forward on Friday to the skirmish line, which was advanced, the Confederate skirmishers being driven back for some distance. An effort of the enemy to restore his line, just before night, was repulsed. The Confederates advanced confidently, but were received by the Second, whose picket reserve was partially sheltered by a ditch, with a volley, which sent them back, leaving several prisoners in the hands of the Second. On Saturday morning, the enemy, of Pender's brigade, having strengthened his skirmish line, again endeavored to drive back the skirmish line of Howe's division; "but," says General Howe, "they immediately came into collision with those hardy veterans of the Vermont brigade, under Lieut. Colonel Joyce of the Second Vermont, and were handsomely repulsed, and themselves driven back."¹¹

A more formidable attack was made on Howe's line, on Saturday afternoon, immediately after the repulse of Franklin's main assault from the left. The attacking force was Law's brigade (of North Carolina and Alabama troops) of Hood's division, and a portion of Pender's brigade. It was repulsed chiefly by the Vermonters, the Third Vermont hav-

¹¹ While this skirmish was in progress, General Vinton, commanding The Third brigade, rode up to the skirmish line and was severely wounded in the abdomen.

ing a specially prominent part. While the preparations for the attack were in visible progress in front, the Third, which was on the right of the brigade, was ordered forward to a point near the railroad, on the edge of the ravine of Deep Run. The regiment was taken thither by Lieut. Colonel Seaver¹², who led it up through the ravine, and deployed it along the edge, which was fringed at that point with growing timber. It came out right on the flank of Law's brigade, which was then charging Howe's line, to the left, and opened on it a raking fire, under which it broke and retired with heavy loss. Law reported a loss of 214 men killed and wounded in this operation, and the Sixteenth North Carolina, of Pender's brigade, which participated in the movement, lost 54 officers and men killed and wounded, and a number of prisoners. General Pender's account of this affair is as follows: "After the heat of the action on the right, the enemy advanced a brigade up Deep Run, throwing "one regiment somewhat in advance, which so sheltered itself behind the trees, as to get near "enough to take an officer and fifteen men of the Sixteenth North Carolina prisoners, who were "protecting the left flank of their regiment. This left the regiment to be raked by a fire down the railroad track. The Colonel (McElroy) drew his regiment back to the ditch and held his ground "until General Law sent forward two regiments to its assistance. These three then charged the enemy, driving them from the railroad cut and across the fields to within a short distance of their "batteries." Nothing like the operation described in this last sentence took place;¹³ and the statement is in effect con-

¹² Colonel Hyde being considerably prostrated at the time, by physical disability, as he claimed.

¹³ "Howe's division on the left of Smith's corps, being more advanced than the others, fronted the Heights of Bernard's Cabin, and the adjoining woods, which were occupied by Howe's right and the left of A. P. Hill. About three o'clock, (of the 13th) Law's brigade attacked the left of Howe along the railroad, and was speedily repulsed with loss." — Comte de Paris

tradicted by General Law, who does not claim that his regiments did more at that time than to check the fire from their left, and says he then withdrew them. The Fourth regiment under Lieut. Colonel Foster¹⁴ was actively engaged on the skirmish line on Saturday. It was on the extreme left of the division skirmish line, and when Gibbon's division advanced to the railroad, in support of Meade's assault, the Fourth was advanced sufficiently to maintain a connection with Gibbon's line, on its left. The regiment distinguished itself by its steadiness and efficiency, and lost more men killed than any regiment of the brigade, suffering especially from canister.

The Fifth, Colonel Grant, was on the skirmish line on Saturday, on the right of the Fourth, and was again engaged on the skirmish line on Sunday, during which day most of the casualties in the regiment occurred. While looking after the skirmishers, Colonel Grant received a painful blow on the leg from a spent ball. The regiment, as usual, behaved well.

The night of the 13th of December, 1862, has been called "probably the most painful ever experienced by the Army of the Potomac during its whole existence."¹⁵ But the Vermonters, though they knew that the fighting had been heavy, realized little of the frightful carnage that had taken place in other corps. They brought in their wounded and sent them across the river, and buried their dead; and only learned on the day following that 12,000 men had been sacrificed in this fruitless battle. The casualties of the brigade were 148 in number, divided as follows:

	Killed	Wounded.	Died of Wounds.
Second Vermont Regiment,	5	59	0
Third	2	8	1
Fourth	12	45	2
Fifth,	1	12	0
Sixth,	1	1	0
Twenty-sixth New Jersey,	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Total,	21	127	3

¹⁴ Colonel Stoughton being absent, at Washington.

¹⁵ Comte de Paris.

This was a slight loss as compared with that of some of Hancock's brigades which were pushed against Marye's Heights and lost over half their number. Yet the battle was no boy's play for the Vermont troops, who had to stand under frequent artillery fire, when not busy on the skirmish line, by day, and could sleep only by snatches on their arms by night, for sixty hours; and they were not sorry, on Monday morning, to be relieved by General Newton's division, and to be marched back near the river out of fire. General Howe's report makes more prominent mention of the Vermont troops than of any others on his skirmish line, and when he says that his line was "gallantly maintained at all points," and that his infantry lines stood "unmoved for three days and nights under the direct and enfilading fire of the enemy's batteries, and at all times exhibited a discipline and soldiership worthy of veterans of the first class," the Vermonters are entitled to their share of the praise. They in fact established in this battle the reputation, which they never lost, of especial efficiency and steadiness as skirmishers.

Burnside, rendered desperate by his defeat, proposed to renew the battle on Sunday, and to head his old corps, the Ninth, in person, in another mad attempt to storm the heights; but he was dissuaded by his corps commanders. Lee, on his part, did not venture to take the offensive, and on Monday night, in a storm of wind and rain, the Army of the Potomac marched back across the bridges, and returned to its camps.

The Sixth Corps went into camp near White Oak Church — a little white-washed meeting-house standing in a clump of oaks — about four miles from the Rappahannock and the same distance from Belle Plain, on Potomac Creek, now the base of supply. Here were three extensive landings, one for the receipt of commissary stores, another for the shipping and discharging of troops, ordnance and quartermaster's stores, and another for forage, at which a million pounds of

hay and grain were handled daily. This immense supply station was under the capable charge of Captain and A. Q. M. Perley P. Pitkin, of Vermont, the former quartermaster of the Second Vermont.

A month of uniform and quiet life followed the First Fredericksburg. The troops built shanties and made themselves comfortable in camp. The weather was generally mild and much of it pleasant; and the health of the older soldiers was pretty good, though there was a good deal of sickness among the recruits. The morning report of the first of January, 1863, showed an aggregate of 3,933 men in the five Vermont regiments, with 2,760 present for duty.

The days passed in the usual routine of picket and guard duty, battalion and skirmish drills, and inspections, with one or two brigade drills and reviews, till on the 19th of January, marching orders were once more received, and in the forenoon of the 20th, the brigade started, with the Sixth Corps, with three days rations, over frozen ground and good roads, for some unknown destination. Three or four miles from camp the columns were halted and an order from General Burnside was read, announcing that the army was again to meet the enemy, and calling for the best efforts of officers and men. Burnside's present plan was to cross the Rappahannock at Banks's Ford, about six miles above Fredericksburg, turn the left of Lee's position, and fight a decisive battle on Salem Heights. This purpose was defeated by the elements. The corps marched that day about 12 miles. That night a terrific rain storm set in. The bottom dropped out of the roads; and the march of the army next day became an exhausting flounder in the mud. Another day of rain followed; the army made no progress; and mired ammunition wagons, stalled artillery, pontoon trains, supply wagons and ambulances, all at a standstill and in almost inextricable confusion, filled the roads. Sixteen horses tugged in vain on a single field piece. The men were set to

corduroying roads. To the Vermont brigade, which was well to the front of the column, and had camped about a mile from Banks's Ford, was given the task of helping the exhausted horses and mules pull through the pontoon train and artillery. The men had a hard day's work. It took a hundred men on the drag ropes to furnish the motive power for a single pontoon, in mud through which it was not easy for an unburdened man to make his way. General Burnside was active in encouraging the men.¹⁶ But it soon became plain to him and to all, that the movement, concealment of which from the enemy was essential to its success, was a failure. The rations were exhausted; the order to return was given that night, and the next morning the troops floundered back to their camps, weary, footsore, and scarcely recognizable among themselves from the coating of Virginia mud which covered them. So ended the famous "Mud March," which was the closing movement of General Burnside's short career as army commander.

General Burnside had learned from President Lincoln, after the failure of the attempt against Fredericksburg, that a number of his corps and division generals considered him incompetent to command and had no faith that any enterprise under him could succeed. He had hoped to remove this want of confidence by a successful movement. The effort had failed through the interference of the elements. The condition of mind in which it left Burnside can be inferred from his action. He made out an order dismissing from the service Generals Hooker, Brooks, Newton and Cochrane and sending away from this Army of the Potomac

¹⁶ "As he [Burnside] rode through our division in the afternoon, with only two staff officers, himself and horse covered with mud, his last rim turned down to shed the rain, his face careworn with this sudden disarrangement of his plans, we could but think that the soldier on foot, oppressed with the weight of knapsack, haversack and gun, bore an easy load compared with that of the commander of the army." — Surgeon Stevens.

Generals Franklin, Smith, Sturgis and Ferrero; took it to Washington, and demanded either its approval by the President, or the acceptance of his own resignation. Mr. Lincoln thought it better that the army be deprived of an unsuccessful though honest and patriotic chief, than of most of its corps and division generals. So General Burnside's resignation was accepted, and General Joseph Hooker, instead of being dismissed the service, was made commander of the army in his stead.