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CHAPTER XVII.

Cold Harbor—Part Taken by the Vermont Brigade the First Day—The Assault of the Second Day—Gallant Part of Stannard's Brigade—Unsuccessful Attack of the Third Day—The army in Trenches—Exposures and Sufferings of the Troops—Movement of the army to the James—Investment of Petersburg—The Vermont Brigade in the front Line—Movement of the Sixth and Second corps against the Weldon Railroad—Heavy Loss of the Brigade—Over 400 Vermonters captured—Over Half of them died in Rebel Prisons—Expedition against the Danville and Lynchburg Railroad—Back Again to Washington—Early's Raid Against the Capital—The Sixth Corps sent to meet Him—President Lincoln wants to see the Vermont Brigade—The Engagement in front of Fort Stevens—Hard Marching in Maryland and Virginia—First Sight of the Shenandoah Valley—Return to Washington—A hot Day at Harper's Ferry and March to Frederick, Md.—Results of Halleck's Strategy in chasing Cavalry with Infantry—Change of Commanders—Sketch of General P. H. Sheridan—Return of the Sixth Corps to the Valley.

It was on the first of June that the Vermont brigade, marching left in front, moved down across the road leading from Old Cold Harbor to New Cold Harbor, and fronted into line on the south of that road, on the left of the division, and corps, and on the extreme left of the army. Open ground in front extended to the enemy's line of intrenchments, which ran along the edge of some woods, about half a mile away. These were held by four Confederate divisions, those of Hoke and Kershaw, so often opposed to the Sixth Corps, being in front of it now. The ground was nearly the same as that on which the battle of Gaines's Mill, the first of the Seven Days' battles in 1862, was fought, with, however, the positions of the combatants reversed. General Wright had been ordered to attack, at once, on his arrival, with the co-operation of Smith's command; but

for reasons already given the afternoon was well advanced before the dispositions were completed. In the formation of the second division for the assault, the Vermont brigade was placed in the front line, formed in a double line of battle, with the Third Vermont thrown out as skirmishers. Two other brigades of the division were in its rear. About five o'clock P. M., fifty Union guns opened vigorously, in return to those with which the enemy had been for some time shelling Wright's lines. As the advance was about to be made, the sudden appearance and firing of a hostile battery which opened from the left, and a strong pressure on the skirmish line from the same direction, caused apprehensions of a flank attack from that quarter. To meet this, General Neill, commanding the division, was ordered to refuse the left of his line. Brig. General Grant, under his orders, accordingly fronted the Fourth and Sixth regiments and Major Hunsdon's battalion of the Eleventh to the left, while the Fifth was detached to support a battery close by. As a consequence of this arrangement these regiments did not participate in the main assault. The Second regiment, under Lieut. Colonel S. E. Pingree, and Major Fleming's battalion of the Eleventh,¹ under the immediate command of Lieut. Colonel Benton, went forward with Russell's division on their right, which made a simultaneous charge with Rickett's division farther to the right. It was no holiday work. The enemy was well posted, his lines covered and concealed by woods, while the attacking troops moved over open ground. They started at a moderate pace, for the men had marched hard and had been suffering much from the heat during the day. Both the artillery and musketry fire in front was terrific. In twenty minutes nearly a quarter of the assaulting force had fallen; but they moved steadily on. At the centre, General Ricketts, of whose division the Tenth

¹ Consisting of Companies F. L. K. and H., to which Company E. was added for the time being.

Vermont regiment formed a part, advancing along the line of the road to New Cold Harbor, struck the enemy's main line, took 600 prisoners of Hoke's and Kershaw's divisions, and though compelled by a rally of the latter to relinquish a part of the works after entering them, also held a part.² Upton's brigade entered the Confederate intrenchments on the left of Rickett's. The brigade on the right of the Vermont regiments did not reach the works in front, but halted about 300 yards from them. Fleming's battalion, however, pressed on to within 100 yards of the enemy's breastwork, when, discovering that the battalion was advancing alone, without support on either flank, Colonel Benton halted and withdrew it a short distance. Here, throwing themselves flat, the men secured partial shelter from the bullets which whistled over and around them by digging shallow trenches with their bayonets, tin plates and cups, and held their ground till nightfall. On the right of the Sixth Corps, Devens's division, with heavy loss of officers and men, captured an advanced line of rifle-pits. Still farther to the right Brooks 's division was repulsed from the enemy's main line. The sun sank red in the west, on a field veiled by clouds of smoke and dust, and the stretcher-bearers were busy along a front of over two miles. The enemy continued their efforts to regain the captured works till nine o'clock, when they ceased. During the night Wright and Smith intrenched the positions they had gained. In this assault the battalion of the Eleventh engaged lost 13 men killed and 107 wounded. The Second Vermont had nine men wounded. The loss of the Sixth Corps in killed and wounded was about 1,200, and of the Eighteenth corps 900.

The next day was occupied in making arrangements for a renewal, in much stronger force, of the effort to force the passage of the Chickahominy. Hancock's corps was placed

² The Tenth Vermont distinguished itself, capturing almost entire the Fifty-first North Carolina. The Tenth lost about 180 killed and wounded.

on the left of Wright, taking in part the place of the Second division of the Sixth Corps, which was brought around to the right of the corps to take the place of Devens's division which was moved still further to the right. The corps of Warren and Burnside were posted on the right of Smith. In this arrangement, Neill's division, of which the Vermont brigade was a part, occupied with its front line the rifle-pits which Devens had carried the day before. The front was a narrow one, and the division was formed in successive lines, the Vermont regiments forming the fourth line. The bulging of the Union line to the front at this point, however, brought the entire division, rear as well as front, under fire during the skirmishing, which was often brisk in front; and the troops were only saved from serious loss by burrowing in the sandy soil. General Lee, on his part, was also concentrating his army, and industriously strengthening his breastworks, three parallel lines of which guarded his centre. Generals Grant and Meade had intended to make the grand assault at four in the afternoon of the 2d; but various delays and a severe thunder storm at that hour led to a postponement of it to the next day.

Next morning, Friday, June 3d, the men, who had lain on their arms all night, were roused in the gray of the early dawn, and shortly before five o'clock the cracking along the skirmish line announced the beginning of the assault. The Second, Sixth and Eighteenth corps were rushing forward against the hostile breastworks, now wrapped in folds of white smoke, while bursting from behind them, a pitiless storm of lead and iron swept the slopes and hollows in front.

Hancock's Corps lost a thousand men in fifteen minutes, and though it forced its way into the enemy's works at two points, taking three guns and several hundred prisoners, it could not hold them and was forced back; retaining, however, an advanced position, where it intrenched and held its ground.

Of the Sixth Corps, the second division, which was on the right of the corps, was formed for the attack in three lines, the Vermont brigade forming the second line. The front line, composed of two regiments of Wheaton's brigade, drove the enemy's skirmishers from a line of rifle-pits and advanced to the edge of a piece of woods, about two hundred yards from the enemy's main line of intrenchments. The Union lines on either hand were making no headway, and Wheaton halted; the Vermont brigade moved up behind him, and at his request, General L. A. Grant now relieved his line, placing in its stead the Third and Fifth Vermont regiments, while Wheaton took his brigade back, leaving the Vermont brigade in front of the division. But no further advance was ordered from that point.

The other divisions on its left had been, if anything, less successful; though advanced positions were gained and held, in some places within forty yards of the enemy's works. The Sixth Corps lost 800 men that morning, including some valuable officers. On the right of the Sixth Corps, Martindale's division, of General Smith's command, made a gallant advance. His leading brigade was commanded by a well known Vermonter, General George J. Stannard, who after recovering from his wound received at Gettysburg, was assigned to the command of a brigade of the Eighteenth corps. Moving down a ravine which opened out at a point where the enemy's lines made a re-entrant angle, Stannard made three gallant and desperate charges. Twice he nearly reached the breastworks in front; but he raking fire from both flanks was too deadly to be endured, and he relinquished the attempt; but not till after every regimental commander but one, sixty per cent. of his line officers and fifty per cent. of the men of his brigade had fallen. Stannard was himself wounded in the thigh, but kept his saddle, and he lost every member of his personal staff, killed or wounded. Among them was Lieutenant George W. Hooker, of the Fourth Ver-

mont, who received two dangerous wounds in his shoulder and side. With the aid of a single orderly, along remaining of his personal attendants, Stannard withdrew the shattered remnant of his brigade and re-formed it in the rear. Still further to the right Brooks's division suffered severely, and gained little ground. The Eighteenth corps lost a thousand men. Another thousand was lost by the Fifth and Ninth corps. No decisive advantage was gained at any point. The assault was a general failure.

Preparations were made, however, by the corps commanders, to renew it at noon. In the new dispositions for this, the Vermont brigade, now in the front line, was to lead the division. The enterprise looked like a forlorn hope. The men were maintaining their position in the open timber, by lying closely on the ground. The skirmishers, of the Third and Fifth regiments, in the edge of the woods, were sharply engaged and losing a good many men. The enemy's main lines were in full view from the skirmish line, his intrenchments evidently strong and amply defended, and artillery and musketry were in full and eager play on both sides. The order to advance was awaited under these circumstances, not with impatience, yet with stern determination; but it did not come. This was the time, when, according to Mr. Greeley and Mr. Swinton, the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac with one consent deliberately refused to obey an order to renew the attack. This statement has been squarely denied by General Grant,³ and indignantly repelled by many soldiers. Certainly there was never a time when the Sixth Corps or the Vermont brigade refused to

³ "I never gave any order to any army that I commanded during the rebellion, to make an attack, where it was disobeyed. It is possible that I had given an order for an attack for a certain hour and afterward concluded that it would be better, possibly, not to make it; but I do not remember that any such circumstance as that took place at Cold Harbor." U. S. Grant.

attack when ordered. The facts were, as stated by General Humphreys, adjutant general of the Army of the Potomac, that as early as seven o'clock in the morning, Lieut. General Grant had directed General Meade to suspend the assault at the moment it became clear that it was not likely to succeed. At a later hour, after consulting his corps commanders and learning that with the exception of General Wright they were not sanguine of success, he directed General Meade not to renew the attack.

There was a sharp clash of picket lines and their supports on the right of the Second and left of the Sixth Corps at eight o'clock that evening, in which the enemy was repulsed, and with this the battle of Cold Harbor ended. The loss of the Vermont brigade in it was 104 men, almost all of the Third and Fifth regiments—the Third losing 10 killed and 56 wounded, and the Fifth seven killed and 22 wounded. During the night of the 3d, General Wright directed General L. A. Grant to send half of the brigade to strengthen General Russell's division. The Third, Fifth and two battalions of the Eleventh, under colonel Seaver, were accordingly detached and sent to the left, where they were placed in the front line. The rest of the Vermont brigade retained its position in the front line of the Second division.

As Lieut. General Grant was now desirous to detain as much of Lee's army as possible near Richmond, while an expedition under General Hunter moved up the Shenandoah Valley against Lynchburg and the Confederate lines of supply by rail and canal accessible from that point, he gave orders to the corps commanders of the Army of the Potomac to intrench their lines, and to press them against those of the enemy by saps and parallels. In pursuance of these instructions ten days now followed of the closest contact with the enemy possible, short of actual assault in line; and of the most incessant and severe exposure that the army had yet experienced.

In a few hours after the close of the fighting on the 3d, the whole army was in trenches. From under the breastworks zigzag ditches, six feet deep, were run out in front, at the ends of which smaller breastworks were thrown up for the picket posts. At night the main trenches would be advanced to the skirmish line, and fresh saps pushed forward. This had to be done under fire at short rifle range from the enemy's lines,⁴ while his guns commanded almost every rod of ground for a breadth of half a mile along the five or six miles of the front of the Army of the Potomac. The musketry firing on the front lines was continuous, and the slightest exposure made the soldier a target; while to frequent showers of shell and grape from the enemy's field batteries was added the work of siege howitzers, set on end, which dropped large shells within the Union trenches.⁵ No reliefs or changes of troops could be made except at night, and any sound brought a response of bullets or shells. Confederate sharpshooters, posted in tree tops, picked off

⁴ At some points the Union approaches were within forty yards of the Confederate parapets.

⁵ The following incident, related by Captain Walker, of the Eleventh Vermont, shows something of the vigor and accuracy of the enemy's artillery at this time:

"During one of the lat nights of our stay at Cold Harbor, a company of regular engineers threw up in the midst of our brigade a little earthwork for the use of a section of artillery which was placed in position just at daybreak. The enthusiastic artillerists had great expectations in regard to the damage about to be inflicted upon the enemy by their two little field pieces, and at "sun-up," as our colored brothers say, they opened vigorously .It was intended for a surprise, and it was, not along to the enemy; but also and especially to our "regular" allies, who were spending their first morning under fire. It could not have been more than ten minutes, before, to their consternation and our amusement, the whole concern, earthwork, guns, gun-carriages, platforms and artillery had disappeared in a cloud of dust and smoke, literally knocked to pieces by the concentrated fire of half a dozen hidden rebel batteries. At night the poor artillerists gathered up the fragments of their field pieces, and quietly retired, sadder and wiser men."

the officers, if they moved outside of the embankments which protected the tents. The health of the men, especially of those in the front lines, began to suffer from overwork, constant watching and exposure to the scalding sun while lying in the trenches, as well as from the scantiness of the supply of water, want of vegetable rations, insufficient cooking of their food—for the cooking was necessarily of the rudest—and from the contamination of the air by the numbers of unburied bodies of dead men and animals between and behind the lines. Under these circumstances, for ten days, the Vermont brigade held the front trenches at two important points, the regiments relieving each other, but the brigade as a whole having no relief. During all this time hostilities were in progress except for an hour or two on the 7th, when a flag of truce brought a brief respite. During this period the brigade lost 48 men killed and wounded by the enemy's pickets and sharpshooters, each regiment having its share of the loss. Among the killed was the gallant young major of the Sixth, Major Crandall, who was shot in the abdomen by a sharpshooter, on the 7th, and died in a few hours.

Preparations were now in progress for the next important movement of the Army of the Potomac, which was to pass to the south side of the James River and to secure a position where it could at once threaten the Confederate capital and intercept its main lines of communication and supply from the south. This plan involved a withdrawal from lines in the closest contact with those of the enemy, a march of fifty-five miles across the Peninsula, and the crossing of a large river. Its first result was expected to be the seizure of Petersburg, which was only an outlying defence of Richmond, though twenty miles distant from it. All of these operations but the seizure of Petersburg were executed by Lieut. General Grant with consummate skill and absolute success. The attempt to occupy Petersburg by a *coup de*

main failed, and its reduction was only effected by ten months of siege.

The Army of the Potomac started for the James River, on the night of June 12th, General Warren with the Fifth corps covering the movement by a feint against Richmond from the left, while General Smith withdrew his command to White House, and proceeded thence by water around to and up the James to the neck of land named from the village of Bermuda Hundred, ten miles north of Petersburg, which General Butler had been holding for a month with a force of twelve thousand men.

The Vermont brigade was concentrated on the night of the 11th, and started with the Sixth Corps on the night of the 12th, leaving the Fourth regiment on picket, in a new line of rifle-pits, thrown up for the purpose in the rear of Cold Harbor. The army moved by several roads. The march of the Sixth Corps, which followed the road taken by the Ninth corps, began in earnest about midnight. In the morning there was a short halt, for breakfast, near Despatch Station; and then the long column moved on steadily all day in a cloud of stifling dust, outmarching the Ninth corps and passing down along the Chickahominy, till at sunset it turned to the south and crossed the river at Jones's Bridge, twenty-three miles by the road from Cold Harbor. Moving on, it halted and bivouacked a mile south of the Chickahominy. Starting at daylight next morning, and marching through a region whose comfortable farm houses and fine residences were in strong contrast with the desolations around Richmond, the corps descended during the forenoon from the high lands to the undulating plain which skirts the James. Here fields of tasseled corn and grain already yellow, varied the green of the meadows; and old mansions, surrounded by noble groves, showed how much of ease and wealth had prevailed before the war. The corps halted a little before noon near the almost deserted village of Charles City Court House, a mile

or two from the residence of the late ex-President John Tyler, now abandoned and stripped of everything the soldiers considered worth taking.

On the morning of the 15th, the corps moved to the river at Wilcox's Landing, where it lay for two days guarding the bridge-head, while the other corps were passing.

In the evening of the 16th, the first and third divisions of the corps were ferried over in steamboats, while the second division marched over the ponton bridge, two thousand feet long—the longest ever laid over such a current—which swayed and tossed with the river's tied, but held fast till it had borne across the larger part of the army and its train of wagons and artillery ambulances, which poured over it in a continuous stream, fifty miles long.

PETERSBURG.

On the 15th of June, General Smith was hurried forward with the Eighteenth corps, which had debarked at Bermuda Hundred the night before, to Petersburg. He reached the defences of the city before noon, and before dark had carried a mile and a half of the outer intrenchments, including seven redoubts, and had taken 300 prisoners and 16 guns. In the assault on the works, Stannard's brigade led the advance of Martindale's division and lost over 300 men, killed and wounded. That General Smith did not follow up this advance, force his way into Petersburg and seize the bridges across the Appomattox that night, has been called "the mistake of the campaign;" and it was perhaps the greatest mistake of General Smith's military career.⁶ By nine o'clock the troops

⁶ "General Smith gives, in his report, the following reasons for his hesitation: "We had broken through the strong line of rebel works; but heavy darkness was upon us, and I had heard some hours before that Lee's army was rapidly crossing at Drury's Bluff. I deemed it wiser to hold what we had, than by attempting to reach the bridges to lose what we had gained, and have the troops meet with a disaster." General Smith's caution has been commended by some; but it cost him the fame of a brilliant achievement, and the army many weeks and months of labor and fighting.

of Lee's army began to arrive, to reinforce the two brigades of Confederate troops and the militia, less than 4,000 all told, which, under General Beauregard, had hitherto partially manned the works; and a new line of intrenchments, thrown up during the night in the rear of the captured redans, next morning faced the assailants. Smith had been also reinforced by Hancock's corps. Each commander now hurried to the spot all available troops, and within two days the armies of the Potomac and of Northern Virginia again faced each other, on the lines of Petersburg.

On the 16th, the Second corps, with two brigades of Brooks's division of the Eighteenth, carried three more redoubts, and at daylight on the 17th, General Potter's division of the Ninth corps carried about a mile of works, on the ridge of the Shand House, east of the city, taking four guns and 600 prisoners.

The second division of the Sixth Corps, temporarily detached from the rest of the corps, which had been sent in transports up to Bermuda Hundred, marched all night towards Petersburg, after crossing the James, and on reaching the lines next day, the 17th, was posted in some captured works on the right of the line, relieving General Brooks's troops, which had carried and occupied Redan No. 4, the evening previous.

A picket line of the Second regiment and part of the Fifth, was thrown out by General Grant, and the rest of the Vermont troops lay on their arms for the night. During the night General Beauregard withdrew his forces from a large portion of his front line, to a stronger and shorter line, from five hundred to a thousand yards nearer the city. The next afternoon a general assault by all the corps of the army was ordered by General Meade. While by this, some ground was

Gained, its main result was to develop the fact that Petersburg was now garrisoned in full force, and that the Confederate position was too strong to be carried by direct assault. This information was gained at heavy cost of life and blood. The Union losses of the three days exceeded 7,000 killed and wounded, the large part being sustained on the 18th. In this assault, somewhat to their surprise, the Vermonters were not ordered to take part, and enjoyed the rather rare opportunity of seeing others do the fighting.⁷ On the 20th the brigade, lessened by the departure of 200 officers and men of the Second regiment, whose time had expired, was in the front line all day, in full sight of the spires of Petersburg, two miles away, and at times under artillery fire from the front and from Confederate batteries on the right across the river; only one Vermonter, however, was killed and but three or four wounded.

THE AFFAIR AT THE WELDON RAILROAD

The Union assaults had thus far been directed against the lines on the east and southeast of Petersburg. Relinquishing his efforts to carry these, Lieut. General Grant now entrenched his position in front of them and began extending his lines to envelop Petersburg on the south and cut the railroads entering the city from the south and southwest, which were the main arteries of communication and supply between the Confederate capital and the Southern States.

Among the movements to this end the Sixth Corps was, on the evening of the 21st, relieved by the Eighteenth corps,

⁷ "Here near by us, is the Vermont brigade, General L. A. Grant, in reserve. An officer near me remarked that it is the first time he ever knew that brigade to be in reserve."—Army Correspondent of the *N.Y. Times*. This was the first Battle of Petersburg, included in Adjutant General Washburn's official lists of battles in which the regiments of the First Vermont brigade took part.

and, moving at midnight, marched round to the west, halting during the forenoon of the next day near the Williams House, beyond the Jerusalem Plank Road, to which road the Union lines had already been extended. General Wright's orders were to move on the next day some two miles, to the Weldon Railroad, running south from Petersburg, seize it and intrench his position, while the Second corps, under General Birney - General Hancock being temporarily disabled by an outbreak of his Gettysburg wound - which had been also moved to the left, was to support the movement and keep up the connection between the Sixth Corps and the rest of the army. Such connection, however, was not maintained, and during the afternoon, General A. P. Hill, who had been sent out by General Lee to protect the Weldon road, taking advantage of a wide gap left between the right of the Sixth Corps and the left of the Second, pushed through it suddenly, took the line of the Second corps in reverse, captured with small opposition most of a brigade, and went back to his intrenchments, taking with him 1,600 prisoners, and leaving a force to guard the railroad.

In the operations of this day, the two corps commanders, moving largely irrespective of each other, had been ordered to take especial precautions to ensure the safety of their exposed flanks, and General Wright committed to the Vermonters the duty of guarding the left flank of the Sixth Corps. While the mass of the corps moved forward in line of battle, the Vermont brigade marched by the flank on the left and rear of the corps line, and was thus in position to repel any attack on the flank of the corps. The movements were slow, through the thickets, and halts frequent; and, with his customary caution, General L. A. Grant kept the exposed side of the brigade well covered by a skirmish line, consisting of the Third regiment and Walker's battalion of the Eleventh. Had General Birney used equal care for the protection of his

flank, the mortifying reverse of this day, already referred to, would not have occurred.

The brigade was sent to the assistance of the Second corps during the assault on the flank and rear of the latter in the afternoon; but as General Birney had fallen back, it was not needed and was recalled to its former position near the Williams house. Dispositions were at once made to retrieve the disaster to the Second corps. At dusk that corps was again thrown forward; and General Wright also advanced, driving in a skirmish line of the enemy for a mile through thick brush, the Vermont brigade still guarding the left flank of the corps, as before. It was nearly midnight when the Sixth Corps was halted, about a mile from the Weldon road. In this movement, the picket line, composed of the Third and a battalion of the Eleventh, was strengthened by the Fourth regiment. The night passed quietly on that portion of the lines, and in the morning no enemy was visible in front.

This day, June 23d, was a very dark day in the calendar of the brigade, being marked by the heaviest capture of its members that ever occurred in its entire history. The men were roused before daylight in expectation of an attack or an advance; but no movement took place except to perfect the dispositions of the troops which had been posted in the darkness of the previous night. During the forenoon, Captain Beattie, of the Third Vermont, was sent out with a company of 90 picked men to reconnoiter in front. He reached the Weldon railroad, unopposed, and sent back word that he had found the road unguarded and cut the telegraph line, and with his report he sent a piece of the telegraph wire to prove his word. A working party of pioneers was thereupon sent out with tools to tear up and destroy the track. To protect them and give warning of any approach of the enemy, General Grant was ordered to send out a picket detail of 200 men. These were taken from Major Fleming's battalion of the Eleventh regiment, the detail being under

command of Captain E. J. Morrill, and they reported to Lieut. Colonel S. E. Pingree, field officer of the day, by whom they were posted, according to instructions, in a line extending from the right of the skirmish line of the division, and at a right angle with that line, out to the railroad. Captain Beattie with his company picketed a line along the railroad; and 200 cavalry men were deployed at a right angle with these on the left, thus enclosing with the pickets a hollow square, extending half a mile along the railroad, and back from it to the division skirmish line. The area thus enclosed was mainly open ground, with two or three farm buildings nearly in the centre of it. On each side was timber, that on the north, toward Petersburg, being a dense forest, extending from the railroad back a mile or more, to the front of Rickett's division, and that on the south a narrow strip of woods. The right of the main line of the Vermont brigade joined the left of Rickett's division, turning at an obtuse angle; and the line was extended to the left of the brigade by other troops of the second division.

General L. A. Grant was now called on by General Wheaton, commanding the division, to furnish another detail to support the skirmish line, and Major Fleming was sent out with the remainder of his battalion, to which company A, of the Eleventh was added. The detachment was stationed by an officer of General Wheaton's staff, about half a mile or more in front of the brigade, at the left of the open ground.

In front of the line of the Vermont brigade was a swell of ground, the low crest of which commanded the entire open area. A line of infantry along it could have swept half of the open ground in front with musketry. A battery posted on it, could have shelled the whole area, as well as the strip of timber on the left, which was so narrow that persons on the crest could see over and through it. The advantage of occupying this crest was so to General L. A. Grant, that after waiting sometime for an advance of the lines to it,

which he supposed would be ordered, he took the responsibility, when the operations commenced in front, of moving forward the line of his brigade to it;⁸ requesting the commanders of the brigades on his right and left, to swing out and connect with him. The one on the right did not do so, however, and General Grant was soon ordered to bring back his brigade to its former line. General Grant then went in person to General Wheaton and asked him to advance the division line, so that the crest might be occupied.⁹ Receiving no satisfactory response, Grant next went to the corps commander, and at the former's earnest request General Wright rode with him to the top of the crest to inspect the situation. Some lively skirmishing was then in progress in front and to the left, and a force of the enemy was plainly visible, coming from the direction of the railroad, around outside the strip of woods, and apparently aiming for the left and rear of the Vermont detachments on the skirmish line. General Wright decided that it was now too late to advance the main line to the crest, and to Grant's expressions of concern for the safety of his men in front General Wright replied that if attacked they could fall back into the woods on their right, behind Ricketts's picket line, which General Wright supposed to be advanced nearly to the railroad. This, however, was a mistake on the part of General Wright. Ricketts's pickets afforded no adequate protection against an attack from that quarter, though the Eighty-seventh Pennsylvania, of his division, which had been sent out as an additional guard to the pioneers, made a fight at the right, and lost 83 men killed, wounded and captured. Beyond advancing the skirmishers of the Fourth Vermont to cover Fleming's left, which was ordered when it was plain that the latter

⁸ That is of the portion of the brigade left in line, full half of the brigade being out on picket, and in support of the skirmishers in front.

⁹ Statement of General L. A. Grant.

was in danger, little was done by the division and corps commanders for the protection of the detachments in front; and this advance of the Fourth, as it proved, was simply sending it to be captured with the rest.

The working party, before this, had torn up half a mile of track, extending south from where they struck it, when, about the middle of the afternoon, they became aware of the approach of a considerable force of the enemy, which had been sent out west of the railroad from the right of his lines around Petersburg. The pioneers, with Captain Beattie's sharpshooters who had moved to the left with them, and the cavalry pickets, accordingly fell back to the left and rear, and rejoined the corps without serious loss. The skirmishers under Captain Morrill, on the right of the open ground, maintained their position, expecting the enemy to attack, if at all, from that direction. The Confederate troops approaching from that quarter divided, a portion of them making a demonstration in front, while the larger part pushed into the woods on Fleming's right. He prepared to receive the attack from his front by hastily piling a low breastwork of rails. On his left the Fourth Vermont, as has been stated, was deployed as skirmishers, its line extending through a piece of woods to the narrow belt of timber, heretofore described. Bursting suddenly through this, the enemy came in on the left of the Fourth, swinging round into the latter's rear as they advanced into the open field, and enveloping the line. Captain Tracy of the Fourth, one of the most gallant young officers in the brigade, commanded the left company, and rallied his men for a brief fight; but he soon fell dead, and after about a dozen men of the Fourth had been shot down, most of the rest, seeing resistance and flight were alike hopeless, threw down their arms. About fifty men, however, of the Fourth, including the color-guard, escaped through the woods, before the enemy's lines met

behind them; and made good their retreat to the main line, taking the colors with them.

See his danger, Major Fleming now endeavored to withdraw the skirmishers and picket reserved of his battalion to his right and rear; but found the woods there full of rebels, who at once pushed out a strong line behind the Vermonters, till it met the other Confederate line. The men of the Eleventh were thus in turn completely cut off. They made a brief fight against vastly superior numbers and then surrendered. Two field officers, Majors Pratt and Fleming, and 24 commissioned officers - eight of the Fourth and sixteen of the Eleventh-gave up their swords, and 373 men of the two regiments were captured.¹⁰ About the time that this occurred in front or shortly after, a considerable force of the enemy advanced on the left till it struck the skirmish line of the corps, on its extreme left flank, there refused so that it faced to the south. The skirmish line at this point was held by Major Walker's battalion of the Eleventh, two companies being deployed in front and the rest of the battalion held as picket reserve. The skirmishers repulsed two charges, from under cover of piles of rails, when the enemy pushed in on their left, through an opening left by the fault of the division officer of the day in charge of the skirmishers on the left,¹¹ who had failed to make the right of his portion of the line connect with that held by the Vermonters. The latter consequently were obliged to fall back in haste, and lost an officer, Lieutenant Sherman, killed; two officers, Lieutenants Chase and Parker, captured, and a dozen or twenty men, killed, wounded and missing. The skirmish line

¹⁰ The companies of the Eleventh so captured were A., F., H., K. and L. The men captured averaged over 50 to a company. Enough escaped, with those in hospital or excused from duty or detailed as cooks and orderlies, to leave about 40 men to a company for further service.

¹¹ A Pennsylvania officer.

was soon re-established, however, and the enemy withdrew from that portion of the front of the corps.

While Pratt and Fleming were making their short and hopeless fight in front, the rest of the brigade were within plain hearing of the firing and of the "rebel yell" with which the enemy closed in on their comrades, but were not permitted to move to their support. Instead of advancing, spades were ordered up, and rifle-pits dug, to protect the corps front. At dusk the Second Vermont was sent out as skirmishers and met the skirmishers of the enemy in the edge of the woods about six hundred yards in front. The latter retired, and hostilities having ceased for the night, the regimental and brigade officers counted up their losses, with heavy hearts. At midnight the brigade was withdrawn to its former position near the Williams house. It is easier to ask questions about such an affair as this, than to get satisfactory answers to them; and the officers and men of the brigade have never understood why the swell of ground in their front was not occupied by artillery and infantry; why the Vermont detachments were not withdrawn after the sharpshooters and pioneers left the railroad; or why if needed in front they were not supported, instead of being sacrificed without object or gain to anybody but the enemy. It is safe to say that if General Getty had been in command of his division this melancholy affair would not have happened. Whoever was chiefly responsible for it, no share of the blame can be justly laid at the door of any Vermonter. General L. A. Grant had no control of the detachments in front. They were sent out and posted under orders and by aids from the division head-quarters. He was anxious about them; and if his suggestions and earnest requests had been regarded, they would not have been surprised and surrounded. Lieut. Colonel Pingree, as division officer of the day, had a very long and difficult picket line to superintend, and obeyed the orders given him with all possible fidelity. He of course had

nothing to do with the pickets of Ricketts's division, and was not responsible for the arrangement which permitted the enemy to fill the woods on the right and cut off the retreat of the Vermonters. To his "coolness, bravery, and almost superhuman efforts" his brigade commander alludes, in his report, in terms of very high praise. Majors Pratt and Fleming obeyed their orders and fought as long as resistance was of any use.

The aggregate loss of the brigade in this affair of the Weldon Road was 459, as follows:

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Total.
Second Vermont Infantry	0	1	0	1
Third	1	1	0	2
Fourth	3	1	139	153
Fifth	0	0	1	1
Sixth	0	1	0	1
Eleventh	9	31	261	301
Total	13	45	401	459

Of the wounded men three of the Fourth and 11 of the Eleventh died of their wounds. A sad sequel must be added to this disastrous episode. Of the 401 men thus captured, over one half died within six months after their capture, a few in Confederate hospitals, but most of them in the prison pens of Andersonville and Columbia, S.C. The names of two hundred and thirty-two Vermonters, most of them strong and vigorous men when taken that day, who thus died by a lingering death in the hands of the enemy, are elsewhere given in the pages of this history. A number who lived to be exchanged, came home mere wrecks of men and died soon after, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that 70 per cent of the men so captured died in prison or from the results of their captivity. The officers as a rule fared better. Several escaped. One, Captain Morrill, of the Eleventh, was fired on while attempting to escape from his captors, and died of his wounds so received. Another, Lieutenant Parker

of the same regiment, escaped from prison, to die by the teeth of southern blood-hounds, set upon him by his pursuers. Of the rest, some were placed under the first of the Union guns, at Charleston, S.C. Some came home in sadly shattered health.

The southerners have been more sensitive to the charge of inhuman treatment of their prisoners, than to any other brought against them, and southern writers and statesmen have written many pages and uttered many words to refute it; but no statements or sophistries can wipe out or gloss over the stain of such facts as these.

The brigade remained in the works near the Williams house, for two weeks, with the exception of a single short expedition. At noon of the 29th, General Meade learned that General Wilson, who with a column of 5,500 cavalry¹² had been out for ten days on a raid against the Danville and Lynchburgh Railroad, sixty miles of which he had destroyed, was on his way back and had been intercepted at Reams's Station, ten miles south of Petersburg, by a strong force of Confederate cavalry and infantry. The Sixth Corps was accordingly drawn out of the lines and sent to Reams's Station to open a passage for Wilson. The brigade started at two o'clock of the 29th, leading the advance of the corps. Arriving within half a mile of the station at six o'clock, the Third Vermont was deployed as skirmishers, and engaged and drove from the field the skirmish line of the enemy, which was covering the retirement of the Confederate infantry, consisting of two of brigades of Mahone's division. During the forenoon Wilson had been surrounded at that point by W. F. Lee's and Wade Hampton's cavalry and Mahone's infantry, and after a disastrous fight in which he suffered heavy loss of men and guns, had retreated to the south. The enemy, having made Wilson all the trouble they

¹² Of which the First Vermont Cavalry was a part.

could, did not stop to see the Sixth Corps, and beyond the slight skirmish referred to there was no fighting done by the corps. The Vermont brigade bivouacked at Reams's Station that night, tore up a good piece of the railroad the next day, and then returned with the corps to the lines in front of Petersburg. Wilson made a detour to the south and east, and came in two days later.

The Vermont brigade was now about to leave the Army of the Potomac for the first time, and to enter on a campaign of peculiar interest and importance. It was first to aid in repulsing the last rebel demonstration against Washington; and then, for four months, to march and fight and conquer under a new commander. On many bloody fields it had made a reputation for tenacity and reliability in emergencies, second certainly to that of no other brigade in the army. It was now, under Sheridan, to do some hardly less severe fighting, and in addition was to enjoy, with the consciousness of duty alone, the unwonted experience of sharing in distinct and memorable victories.

BACK TO WASHINGTON.

While the Army of the Potomac was, in the campaign whose fortunes we have been following, making its last march from the Rapidan to Richmond, the Shenandoah Valley had become a field of fresh interest. General Hunter had relieved the unlucky Sigel; had defeated the Confederate General Vaughn, and had advanced to Lynchburg, to find himself confronted there by General Early, who had come with his corps to guard that chief city of Western Virginia and important centre and supply station for the Confederacy. Outnumbered, and short both of ammunition and supplies, Hunter had then withdrawn into the Kanawha Valley, leaving the Shenandoah Valley open to Early. The latter made use of this opportunity to push rapidly northward into Maryland through

the passage thus opened, and to threaten the National capital, which he hoped to find but slightly defended. Of course, there was no little trepidation in Washington, when Early's plan became developed, and troops were hurried thither from various quarters; but as many of these were green troops, and a strong nucleus of veterans, under a capable and trusty commander, was needed to allay apprehension and perhaps to assure the safety of the capital, General Grant, at President Lincoln's request, withdrew the Sixth Corps from the lines before Petersburg, and sent it to Washington. Ricketts's division, which formed nearly half of the corps, having lost much fewer men in action than the others, was despatched by transports to Baltimore, and reported on the 8th of July, to General Lew Wallace, commanding the department. The latter, with three or four thousand undisciplined troops, had moved out from Baltimore and thrown himself between early and Washington, at the point, five miles south of Frederick, Md., where the Baltimore and Ohio railroad crosses the Monocacy River. Here, on the 9th of July, the battle of Monocacy was fought, in which General Wallace was attacked and defeated by Early, General Ricketts severely wounded, and 1,500 men of his division killed, wounded and captured.

This battle, to be hereafter described in connection with the history of the Tenth Vermont regiment, delayed Early's advance on Washington for two days, which was just the time needed to get the rest of the corps there. The order for them to move came late in the evening of the 9th, and within two hours they were on the way to City Point. The long drought of that summer, which lasted *forty-seven* days from the 3d of June, had set in, and the roads were beds of dust, ankle deep; but the march was accomplished at a rapid rate, the fourteen miles being made between midnight and six A.M., and with much less discomfort under the stars than it would have been under the July sun. Next day, under the superintendence of Colonel and A. Q. M. P. P. Pitkin, now

in charge of the land and water transportation of the Army of the Potomac, the two divisions took transports for Washington, and by noon the brigade, with the exception of the Eleventh regiment, which did not embark till five P.M., was steaming down the James. The voyage down the river and up the Potomac, past Harrison's Landing, Newport News, Fortress Monroe, Belle Plain and Acquia Creek, and other familiar points, was a rest and relief to the men, who were weary of digging and living in rifle-pits; and they entered on their third campaign in Maryland in excellent condition of mind and body. Before entering on the record of the campaign it will be well to note some of the recent changes in the personnel of the brigade.

The older regiments of the brigade now averaged less than 400 muskets apiece, present for duty, and the Eleventh about 950. The vacancies in the roster of officers made by the slaughter in the Wilderness, had been partially filled by promotions. The Second regiment was now commanded by Lieut. Colonel A. S. Tracy; the Third, by Colonel T. O. Seaver; the Fourth, by Colonel George P. Foster; the Fifth, by Captain Eugene A. Hamilton, Lieut. Colonel Lewis being still disabled and no field officers having been appointed to take the place of those lost; the Sixth, by Lieut. Colonel O. A. Hale; and the Eleventh, by Lieut. Colonel George E. Chamberlain, Colonel Warner being on duty in the defences of Washington. The two battalions of the Eleventh—the uncaptured fractions of Major Fleming's battery having been consolidated with the other two battalions—were commanded by Major Charles Hunsdon and Major Aldace F. Walker.

The brigade, reporting present for duty 2,600 officers and men, were still commanded by General L. A. Grant; and General Getty, having recovered sufficiently from his wound to take the field, was again in command of the division, much to the satisfaction of the troops thereof.

General Getty and his staff preceded the division in a small steamer, and were the first of the corps to land at Washington. It was an anxious time in Washington, and President Lincoln, looking pale and careworn, and Secretary Stanton, were standing on the wharf as they landed. "What troops does this steamer bring?" asked Mr. Lincoln, of one of the first men who stepped on shore, who happened to be Surgeon Allen of the Fourth Vermont, at that time medical director of the division. "It brings Major General Getty and his staff, but no troops," was his reply. The careworn president turned away with evident disappointment, saying: "I do not care to see any major generals; I came here to see the *Vermont brigade*."¹³

The two divisions reached Washington during the evening of the 11th, and landed next morning. Mr. Lincoln was again on hand to witness the disembarkation, breaking his fast meanwhile on a piece of hard tack, which he had begged from a soldier, and evidently much relieved by the arrival of the corps. All Washington, save the few sympathizers with the rebellion, shared this feeling. Early, who marched straight for Washington, after the battle of the Monocacy, was then but five miles from the capitol and in plain sight of its dome, and the sound of his cannon, in his reconnoissances and skirmishing in front of the forts during the day previous, had filled the citizens with the utmost consternation. His numbers, at first underestimated, were not greatly exaggerated; and it was believed in the city that his army numbered 30,000 or 40,000 men. The defences north of the city had been hurriedly manned with a few regiments of hundred-day troops, called out by the President for the emergency, together with a few companies of heavy artillery, some detachments from the invalid corps, and a battalion or two of government clerks and laborers, hastily organized and

¹³ Statement of Surgeon S. J. Allen.

armed for the occasion. Little reliance, however, was placed upon them, and till the Sixth Corps arrived the city was in a state of mind little short of absolute panic. As the column of bronzed and sturdy veterans marched up Seventh Street, with the easy swing of old campaigners, they had no reason to doubt that they were welcome. The sidewalks were thronged with people, who as their eyes fell on the Greek cross, shouted: "It is the old Sixth Corps!" "Hurrah for the men who stormed Marye's Heights!" "We are all right now!" Some ran along the lines with buckets of ice water, for the morning was sultry, while others handed newspapers and eatables into the column. The color came back to the white lips which has been whispering: "The foe! They come!"—and confidence that the danger was already over replaced the terror of the day and night previous.

The corps had reached Washington not an hour too soon. It moved out on the Rockville pike, to the sound of the cannon of Early, who had, as he says in his "Memoir," determined to attack the defences of Washington that morning and was then examining the works in preparation for the assault. He had halted the afternoon previous in front of Fort Stevens—a strong bastioned work on the Seventh Street pike—with 10,000 or 12,000 men and fifty guns. His men, he says, were tired with hard marching, and he took time to reconnoiter. His skirmish line, composed of troops of Rodes's division, was about 500 yards from the fort, and his sharpshooters filled the Rives house and the house of Mrs. Lay, on the right and left of the turnpike leading to Silver Spring and Rockville. A portion of Wheaton's brigade, which was the first to reach the ground, was deployed as skirmishers in front of the works. On the arrival of the Vermont brigade, the Second and Third regiments were posted in rifle-pits to the left of the fort, and the rest of the brigade, with other portions of the corps, were massed in a piece of woods west of Fort Stevens. The fort, and two or

three others near it, had been built in good part by the Eleventh Vermont, and having been stationed for over a year in them, as an artillery regiment, its officers and men were familiar with the range of every gun and would have been glad to show the raw troops how to use the artillery they were awkwardly handling; but the Vermonters were held to take part in the general assault which was contemplated by the generals, half a dozen or more of whom, including General Halleck, General McCook, General Meigs, General Wright and the division commanders, were on the ground. Before attacking, however, General Wright thought best to send out a brigade, to develop Early's position and relieve the Union line from the enemy's sharpshooters, whose bullets were flying altogether too thickly around the forts. While arrangements for this advance were in progress, a company of 80 men, selected for their skill as marksmen, was sent out under command of Captain A. M. Beattie, of the Third Vermont, to the skirmish line, to try conclusions with the enemy's sharpshooters. They soon found active employment drove the rebels from a house with some loss, one Vermonter being killed and half a dozen wounded in the operation, and otherwise rendered excellent service. In the afternoon the skirmish line was still further strengthened by 50 picked men of the Sixth Vermont. These troops all participated in the advance later in the day.

Shortly after four o'clock, the Third brigade, Colonel Bidwell's, of Getty's division, filed out into the road in front of Fort Stevens and deployed in two lines.¹⁴ The forts opened a vigorous fire with their heavy guns to clear the way, and then Bidwell's brigade moved out steadily. Early had been strengthening his skirmish line with both infantry and artil-

¹⁴ "The pseudo-soldiers who filled the trenches around the fort, were astonished at the temerity displayed by these war-worn veterans in going out before the breastworks, and benevolently volunteered most earnest words of caution."—Major A. F. Walker.

lery, and they opened a sharp fire on the advancing lines. The latter advanced up a slight acclivity to the Rives house, from which the Confederate skirmishers were speedily driven, and then to a crest beyond, where they encountered the supports of the enemy's skirmish line. These had thrown up a breastwork of rails and earth, and made a stout resistance, under which every regimental commander of Bidwell's brigade fell killed or wounded. But the advance of the latter could not be stopped. They swept the crest in the handsomest manner, driving back Early's lines for a mile, when, having accomplished all that was expected of them, they were halted, and were relieved at sundown by the Vermont brigade, which picketed the front for the night. The Union loss in this affair was 280. Early left 30 dead on the field, and 70 men, too seriously wounded to be moved, at the house of the elder Blair, at Silver Spring, where Generals Early and Breckenridge had their headquarters. Early probably lost as many men as the Sixth Corps. It was on the whole a sharp and well conducted fight, and a portion of it took place in the presence of a more distinguished group of spectators than witnessed any other action of the war. President and Mrs. Lincoln, Secretary Stanton and other members of the cabinet, and several ladies, came out to Fort Stevens during the afternoon, to see some actual fighting; and Mr. Lincoln remained during the action, upon the invitation of General Wright, which the latter much repented having given, when to his surprise it was accepted by the President. Mr. Lincoln, with a torn coat sleeve, persisted in standing on the parapet of Fort Stevens, by the side of General Wright, in spite of the earnest remonstrances of the latter and the entreaties of Mrs. Lincoln, till an officer was wounded within three feet of him by a rebel bullet, when he consented to step down to the banquette, still looking over the parapet till the enemy was driven out of sight. Within the fort crouched cabinet officers and prominent civilians, breathless

with excitement, while in the hostile camp beyond stood General Breckenridge, of Kentucky, who four years before, as vice-president of the United States, occupied the chair of the Senate, in the building whose lofty dome now rose white before him, but of which he was to have no nearer view.

The fact of the presence of the veterans of the Sixth Corps, indicated to General Early by this affair, was enough for him; and that night he fell back through Rockville, leaving in flames the elegant house of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, which stood near his camp. He marched all night to the northwest toward the fords of the Potomac, and halted in the morning near Darnestown, Md., eighteen miles away.

At noon of that day, Getty's and Russell's divisions of the Sixth Corps started in pursuit, followed by Emory's division of the Nineteenth corps, which had just arrived at Washington, all under command of General Wright. The Vermont brigade, being on the picket line, started last of the corps, in the latter part of the afternoon. The men were already weary with a night and day of picket duty; the roads were narrow and obstructed with mired army trains; and the night march was a most confused and exhausting one. The brigade, nevertheless, had made about twenty miles when it halted for breakfast next morning. After a short hour's rest it started again—being now in the lead of the division, under the system of rotation in marching which placed the brigade which brought up the rear one day in advance on the next—and during the afternoon reached Poolesville, thirty miles from Washington, having marched, by the roads traveled, about forty miles in twenty-four hours. The last few miles of the march were enlivened by the sounds of skirmishing from White's Ford, in front, where Early was crossing the Potomac, was firing on his rear guard. Here the brigade lay with the corps for a night and a day, during which nothing more

exciting occurred than the hanging of a spy, which took place near the corps headquarters at one o'clock in the morning.

At daylight on the 16th, the corps crossed into Virginia, fording the Potomac, which here ran with a strong current three feet deep, at White's Ford and at Conrad's Ferry, near the scene of the famous Union disaster of Ball's Bluff, early in the war,¹⁵ and moved on through Leesburg to the Catoctin mountains. Here the members of the Third Vermont regiment whose three years' term had expired, and who had not re-enlisted, took their leave for home. Their departure took from the brigade those sterling officers, Colonel T. O. Seaver and Lieut. Colonel S. E. Pingree, unsurpassed in every quality of the true soldier; Major Nelson, a worthy officer; and 15 line officers and 150 men who had fought with the brigade in every action and battle from Lee's Mill to Petersburg. The remainder of the regiment was consolidated into a battalion of six companies, under Captain (soon to be made major) Floyd, retaining its title of the Third Vermont.

On the 18th of July, the corps, now entire, having been joined by Ricketts's division, advanced to the Blue Ridge, and crossed it on the heels of Early, by Snicker's gap. Here the Vermonters had their first view of the Shenandoah Valley with which, in the three months following, they became tolerably well acquainted. This day General Crook, with two fragmentary divisions of General Hunter's army, which had moved up the Valley to aid in intercepting Early's

¹⁵ "Brigades were crossing in several places for a mile up and down the river. Every one greeted the unusual sensation of the slippery rocks and the gurgling water with shouts and laughter. The burdened men were here and there overthrown by the swift current, and occasionally one would slip from a staggering horse and be buried for an instant in the stream, to the amusement of all but the unfortunate. In such a gleeful humor we re-entered Virginia and laid ourselves out to dry upon her sacred soil."—Major A. F. Walker.

retreat, reached the west bank of the Shenandoah river, at Snicker's Ferry, and had a fight with Early's rear guard, in which the former lost 400 men killed and wounded. The head of the column of the Sixth Corps, under Ricketts, reached the eastern bank of the river before this action was fairly over, but not in time to take part except by firing across the river with artillery. Early barely slipped through between the columns of Crook and Wright before they united, and made good his retreat toward Strasburg.

Supposing that Early was on his way back to Richmond, and understanding that the object of his own expedition was accomplished, General Wright now decided to return to Washington. The corps rested on the 20th.¹⁶ The next day it faced about, re-forded the Shenandoah, and with soaked shoes and blistered feet, made the toilsome ascent of the Blue Ridge. Crossing the crest of Snicker's Gap at midnight, Getty's division overhauled and then passed the division of the Nineteenth corps which had preceded it on the road and was doing its best; pushed on in the darkness in a forced march across the valley, with brief halts for coffee; re-crossed the Catoctin ridge in the morning; and kept on without halt to Leesburg. Striking here the turnpike, the corps moved on through Drainsville. July 23d, it marched through Lewinsville, past Camp Griffin—where the Vermont brigade spent its first winter—crossed Chain Bridge, and went into camp near Tenallytown, in the northern defences of Washington. General Wright had notified General Halleck, on the 21st, that "two days' each march" would bring his command back to Washington. The command found the march anything but "easy." The Vermont brigade had done some hard marching before this; but all who shared the experience of this ten days, agreed that it was the hardest continuous marching in its history; and they did not see that they had

¹⁶ "That day everybody robbed a bee hive, and hard tack was eaten with honey."—Major Walker.

anything to show for it. The pursuit of Early had been a failure; and the hurried return, at a rate which caused hundreds of good soldiers of the two corps to fall out on the way, to be captured by the guerrillas and sent to Richmond—though explained by General Wright's desire to get back to Grant by the time Early should rejoin Lee—might well have been omitted altogether. For General Early had not returned to Richmond.

The corps spent three days at Tenallytown, resting, receiving new shoes and clothing, and waiting for orders, expected hourly, to return to the Army of the Potomac. But when orders came they directed the corps to move in quite a different direction. When General Early learned that the Sixth Corps had left the valley, leaving only Crook's inferior force of infantry and cavalry a few miles to the north of him, he at once turned back from Strasburg, struck and defeated Crook at Kernstown, and followed him till he escaped into Maryland. Having thus secured undisputed possession of the valley, Early proceeded to break up the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, and despatched his cavalry, under "the robber" McCausland, into Maryland and Pennsylvania, to burn towns, levy contributions of money, and plunder non-combatants. When the news of Crook's defeat reached Washington, the Sixth Corps was at once hurriedly despatched to the assistance of Hunter and Crook, who were now guarding the South Mountain gaps in Maryland. The corps moved, on the 26th, through Rockville to the north, forded the Monocacy on the 28th, and passed through Frederick to Jefferson, Md., beyond the South Mountain.

On the 29th, it marched by Sandy Hook along the Potomac and between the mountains to Harper's Ferry; crossed the river on a long ponton bridge; climbed Bolivar Heights; and arrived at evening, footsore and weary, at Halltown, four miles south of Harper's Ferry. The corps had marched seventy-five miles in two days and twenty hours.

Here Hunter and Wright united their forces under command of the former. This day McCausland started on his raid to Chambersburg, Pa., Early covering his departure by a cavalry expedition to Hagerstown, Md. The news that the enemy was again north of the Potomac, caused fresh perturbation in Washington; and brought orders from General Halleck to Hunter, to move all his forces into Maryland to repel the invasion. Hunter replied that Wright's troops were too much fatigued and scattered to move at once; but Halleck made his order peremptory,¹⁷ and the Sixth Corps accordingly moved back across the Potomac. It was a sultry day, as the forces poured into the hot, dusty basin of Harper's Ferry; the heat was overpowering, and men and beasts stood bathed in sweat and panting for breath, for hours, waiting for their turn to cross the narrow bridge. Getty's division crossed in the night, and through on foot all night, made barely five miles of progress in the jam of men, horses, guns and wagons. The "Sabbath day's journey," of the next day, however, exceeded considerably the scriptural limit, for it was one of twenty miles. The heat was frightful; the air a cloud of blinding dust; the pace rapid, and the amount of straggling beyond parallel. Thousands fell out of the ranks and hundreds sank under sunstroke.¹⁸ Horses gave out as well as men, and numbers were left by their riders along the road. If a horse revived after a few hours rest, it was at once rigged with a hempen bridle and mounted by some footsore soldier, and ridden bareback till it sank again. Towards night, of the hardest day in the history of the brigade, the mounted officers and regimental colors,

¹⁷ "Wright's and Crook's forces should immediately moved towards Emmettsburg—they must make a night march."—Despatch of General Halleck to Hunter.

¹⁸ "Our infantry is suffering dreadfully. Six men fell dead yesterday in one of our smallest brigades."—Hunter to Halleck.

accompanied by a corporal's guard of the strongest men of their respective regiments, marched into Frederick City. The corps had nominally reached that point. In reality it was strung out for fifteen or twenty miles to the rear—thousands of the men lying exhausted in the woods, and other thousands dragging themselves slowly along the road, faint for want of food and water and barely able to carry their muskets. The march cost the corps as much as a sharp engagement, in losses of men who died of sunstroke or broke down permanently. And it was absolutely needless; for Hunter's infantry were no obstruction to McCausland's cavalry; and Early's infantry were all south of the Potomac. It was a piece of General Halleck's peculiar strategy.

The corps halted at Frederick a day and night, during which most of the stragglers came in, and the men got some rest; and on the 3d of August it moved five miles to the south to the little village of Buckeystown on the Monocacy. Here the troops camped along the hillsides of a pleasant valley; and lounging in the shade, and bathing in the river, gained rest and strength and almost forgot their recent trials.

During this week of comparative quiet, Early's cavalry were foraging and swapping lame horses for better ones taken from the farmers in Pennsylvania and Maryland. On the 30th of July, McCausland had reached Chambersburg, Pa., fifteen miles north of the Maryland line, demanded \$500,000 in currency or \$100,000 in gold from the inhabitants, on penalty of having their town burned; and, the money not being produced—as it could not be, for there was no gold and less than \$50,000 in currency in the town—applied the torch and laid in ashes a thriving place of 3,000 unarmed inhabitants, without even so much as notice to them to remove their sick and bed-ridden inmates. Then, having allowed his soldiers to plunder the citizens of their money and valuables to the amount of uncounted thousands, he retired laden with booty. Returning into Maryland and down the south branch

of the Potomac, he was struck at Moorefield, West Virginia, by General Averell, who had followed him up closely with two brigades of cavalry, and came to serious grief, losing all his artillery, 400 horses, 420 men captured, including 38 officers, and most of his wagons. "This affair," says General Early in his memoir, "had a very damaging effect upon my cavalry for the rest of the campaign."¹⁹ This was the last Confederate raid into Maryland; but General Early still remained in the lower Shenandoah Valley, with an army of nearly 20,000 men—a standing menace to the North and to the national capital.

About this time both President Lincoln and Lieut. General Grant reached the distinct conclusion that things were not going as well as they might in the Shenandoah Valley. The latter was detained in person at Petersburg by some important matters, among which were the operations attending the explosion of the famous mine; but he saw that there must be a change of generalship and consequently of commander, in the Valley. Having sent up from the Army of the Potomac the remainder of the Nineteenth corps and a division of cavalry, to reinforce Hunter's army, on the 1st of August he sent a man who was in himself a stronger reinforcement than an army corps. This was an officer at this time little known to the army or to the country at large. A native of Ohio, now in this thirty-fourth year; a graduate of West Point; a colonel of a Michigan cavalry regiment early in the war; then a brigadier general, commanding a division of infantry at Murfreesboro, Chickamauga and Chattanooga,

¹⁹ McCausland told Rev. Mr. Edwards, of Hagerstown, Md., that he was "from hell," and many inhabitants of Pennsylvania and Maryland thought he told the truth. General Early, however, assumed the sold responsibility for the burning of Chambersburg; and has repeatedly, since the close of the war, justified the act, as one of just retaliation for the unauthorized burning by Union soldiers or stragglers, of half a dozen private residences of prominent members of the Confederate Congress, in various portions of the field of war.

he had attracted the notice of General Grant both by his fighting qualities and executive ability. He had been made a major general, brought to the East, and placed by Lieut. General Grant in command of the cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac. Under his the cavalry arm of the army had been doing both hard riding and hard fighting. His capacity for still higher command remained to be seen; but it is plain that General Grant did not doubt it, for he sent him to Washington, telegraphing at the same time to General Halleck: "I want Sheridan put in command of all the troops in the field, with instructions to put himself *south of the enemy*, and to follow him to the death. Wherever the enemy goes let our troops go also." General Halleck, however, had no thought of relinquishing the direction of the campaign, and proposed to confine Sheridan to the command of the cavalry. On the 4th of August, President Lincoln telegraphed General Grant: "Look over the despatches you have received from here, and discover, if you can, that there is any idea in the head of any one here of putting our army south of the enemy, or of following him to the death in any direction. * * It will never be done unless you watch it and force it." In two hours from the receipt of this despatch General Grant started for Washington. the next day, at evening, he appeared at General Hunter's headquarters near Monocacy Station. His first question to Hunter, was, "Where is the enemy?" Hunter replied that he did not know, adding that he had been so ordered hither and thither by despatches from Washington, that he had been unable to determine the position of the rebels, much less to pursue them. General Grant simply said: "I will find out where the enemy is;"²⁰ and he put the army in motion that night for the Valley of Virginia. General Sheridan joined Grant and Hunter the next day; and the next, General Hunter relin-

²⁰ General Badeau.

quished to the junior general the command of the army, which the latter made famous as the "Army of the Shenandoah."

It was on the 7th of August that General Philip H. Sheridan assumed command of all the forces in Washington, Maryland and West Virginia, with his headquarters at Halltown. The men of his new command did not give him an enthusiastic welcome, for, as one of them said, "they knew little of his services except through the newspapers, and in reading of them made the usual cavalry allowances." But all who did not know him, had no fears for him;²¹ and the army began to like him as soon as they made his acquaintance. Though he was not an imposing figure at first glance, a second look found a good many striking points about him. His short, compact frame and large chest betokened great strength and endurance. His bright black eyes, now twinkling with humor and then lighting with intense expression, lost sight of nothing around him. His large and closely shorn head was full of character. His words, gesture, and action showed him to be thoroughly in earnest. His whole manner betokened confidence in himself, while it was as free as possible from self-conceit; and his simple bearing and genial ways soon made every soldier his friend. The troops noticed at the start that their new general was visible to his command. He did not follow the column but rode at its side, taking the dust with his men, watching details of the march, and bringing order and progress out of confusion, when the inevitable blockades of the roads by the trains occurred, with an aptness which reminded the men of the Sixth Corps of Sedgwick. When the column halted, two tents and two flies furnished the modest shelter allotted to the headquarters of the army;

²¹ General Sherman, who was then investing Atlanta, telegraphed General Grant that day: "I am glad you have given General Sheridan command of the forces to defend Washington. *He will worry Early to death.*"

—something of a contrast with the good old McClellan days, when the headquarters tents and baggage filled sixty six-mule wagons.

In the movement of the army across the Potomac, the Sixth Corps was brought by railroad from Monocacy Junction; and as it once more passed through Harper's Ferry the men adopted for it the title of "Harper's Weekly."