

To quote this book, use the following: Benedict, George Grenville. Vermont in the Civil War. Burlington VT: Free Press Association, 1888 (Note chapters 1-20 are in volume 1, chapters 21-32 in volume 2. Page numbers are true to the original.)

## **CHAPTER XVIII.**

### ***The Campaign in the Shenandoah Valley.***

*Under Sheridan in the Valley—Strength and situation of the opposing armies—Movement to the South—Early reinforced—Sheridan retires down the Valley—Engagement at Charlestown—The Vermont brigade holds the skirmish line against a Confederate division—Casualties in the Vermont regiments—Reconnoissance to Gilbert's Ford—Visit from General Grant—The battle of Winchester or the Opequon—Part of the Vermont brigade—The grand charge—Losses of the brigade—Battle of Fisher's Hill—Crook's flank movement—Charge of Getty's and Rickett's divisions, and flight of Early—Three weeks of marching and manoeuvring—The Sixth Corps starts for Washington but returns to Cedar Creek—Battle of Cedar Creek—The surprise in the morning—Gallant stand of Colonel Thomas and the Eighth Vermont—Action of the Tenth Vermont—The part of Getty's division and the Vermont brigade—Arrival of Sheridan—The grand advance of the Sixth and Nineteenth corps, and final charge of the cavalry—Casualties of the Vermont brigade—Close of the campaign—Voting for President—A month of rest at Kernstown—Departure from the Valley.*

On the 9th of August, General Sheridan had concentrated about Halltown and within five miles of Harper's Ferry, the most effective Union army that had ever been assembled in the Valley. It consisted of the Sixth Corps, reduced to less than 12,000 by its hard campaigning; a division of the Nineteenth corps, to which another division of that corps was soon added; two divisions of Crook's army of West Virginia; and a cavalry corps of about 8,000 men. These gave him, with his artillery, 36,000 men reported present for duty; and, after allowing for the various details for hospital attendants, teamsters, train-guards, &c., which always reduce by from ten to fifteen percent the aggregate present for duty, an army of about 30,000 men actually under arms.

General Early's headquarters at this time were at Bunker Hill, ten miles west of Halltown. He had an army of some 20,000 men, to which was added a week later Kershaw's division of infantry, Fitz Lee's division of cavalry, and a battalion of artillery, all under General Anderson, who had succeeded to the command of Longstreet's old corps.

Three days after assuming command of the Army of the Shenandoah, General Sheridan put it in motion to the south. As Early was awaiting his reinforcements and was not ready to fight, he withdrew up the valley, the two armies moving on nearly parallel lines, Sheridan on the east side of the valley, and Early along the west side. For three days the two armies thus moved to the southwest, till on the 13th, Early made a stand at the strong position of Fisher's Hill, two miles south of Strasburg. Here he intrenched his lines, expecting if attacked to be able to hold his own till Anderson, who was coming through Chester Gap, and was not far away, should join him, when he intended to take the offensive.

In this movement up the valley the Sixth Corps marched the first day to Clifton, a large plantation near Berryville; the next to Newtown; and the next to Cedar Creek. Though the weather was hot and the marches were pretty long and rapid, they were made with comparatively slight fatigue. The troops marched straight across the country through the fields and open forests, the roads being left to the army trains. The infantry halted for ten minutes in every hour. The turf was a relief to their tired feet, and the comparative freedom from dust, often the greatest torment of the soldier, afforded a grateful contrast to most of their previous marching in Maryland and Eastern Virginia.

At Cedar Creek, Sheridan's advance came upon Early's, and there was some desultory skirmishing. Next morning the enemy had retired, and Sheridan moved forward to Strasburg; but finding Early very strongly posted, he withdrew

the same day to Cedar Creek. A little south of this, the Massanutten Mountains, rising abruptly, divide the valley southward into two—the Upper Shenandoah and the Luray Valley. Strasburg lies at the entrance of the Upper Shenandoah, and in front of it to the southwest, rises the commanding eminence of Fisher's Hill, on the sides of which Early had planted his batteries. Ten miles to the southeast lies Front Royal, at the entrance to the Luray Valley.

The 14th and 15th were occupied by Sheridan in reconnoitering; and in some skirmishing on the latter day, two men of the Second Vermont were wounded.

By the 16th, General Sheridan had decided that Cedar Creek was no position for him in the present condition of affairs. The ten days' rations with which he started were more than half gone. Mosby, with his irregular cavalry, was at work in his rear and had captured a train of 75 wagons loaded with supplies, at Berryville. His position was an exposed one. Moreover an engagement that day at Front Royal, where Kershaw attacked the cavalry which Sheridan had sent thither, disclosed the fact that Early's reinforcements, of the departure of which from Petersburg General Grant had notified Sheridan, had arrived on his flank. These additions gave Early a superiority of numbers as well as advantage of position. Sheridan would doubtless have been in serious danger had he remained there another day. That night, however, he withdrew to Winchester, and next day, leaving Torbert with some cavalry and Penrose's New Jersey brigade of the Sixth Corps at Winchester, to hold Early in check, he pushed on to a position near Berryville, which he had before selected as a good one to hold. Torbert and Penrose were attacked by superior numbers in the afternoon; but held their ground till night, when they gave way with a loss of 700 men, killed, wounded and captured. In his retreat down the valley Sheridan had burned all the wheat and hay south of Berryville and Win-

chester, and drove off all the cattle, of course much to the disgust of the owners and of Early, who expected to supply his army with them. In this retrograde movement down the valley, the Vermont brigade, starting with the Sixth Corps at midnight of the 17th, marched through Middletown, halted at Winchester for breakfast, moved on about six miles and bivouacked on the bank of the Opequon. Starting again early next morning it marched all the forenoon, without stopping for breakfast. At noon the brigade halted near Clifton, and the men made quick work of what remained of their rations, which had been in short supply for three days. Then, resuming the march, they moved on nearly to Charlestown, halting and camping at ten P. M., about two miles southwest of the ruined Court House and jail of the place, made forever famous as the scene of the trial and execution of John Brown. Here supply trains met and fed the hungry soldiers. At this point, as above stated, Sheridan faced about, and posted his army around Charlestown on the southwest, while Early, who had followed close behind him, went into his old camp at Bunker Hill, leaving Anderson's corps at Winchester. Early remained quiet for two days, while he and Anderson were planning a combined attack on Sheridan. This took place on the 21st, and failed. Anderson's advance from Winchester was so hindered by Merritt's and Wilson's cavalry, that he did not get within co-operating distance of Early; while the latter's demonstration, though made in force with two divisions, did not fairly reach the front of the Sixth Corps, against which it was directed, but was checked by the skirmishers.

The Vermont brigade took the main part in this skirmishing, which was heavy and continued all day, and behaved in a manner which entitled Charlestown to an honored place in the list of the engagements of the First Vermont brigade.

## ENGAGEMENT AT CHARLESTOWN.

The camp of the brigade at the time was in a pleasant grove near Welsh's, or the Flowing Spring,<sup>1</sup> some two and a half miles southwest of Charlestown. A short distance in front the picket lines of the Sixth Corps ran in a large curve along the crest of one of a series of rolling ridges. Cavalry were supposed to be guarding the approaches. All had been quiet on the picket line for two days; and the troops in the various camps were preparing for the usual Sunday morning inspection, when suddenly, at nine o'clock, sharp firing broke out on the picket line. Soon the pickets were seen falling back across the fields, following by a strong skirmish line of "Johnnies." The camp of the Vermont troops was the nearest to the picket line; and General L. A. Grant was hurrying his regiments into line, when General Getty rode into the camp, and directed him to move out at once and re-establish the picket line. Nearly a mile of this, sweeping in a semi-circle from the Winchester turnpike round to the left of the camp of the brigade, had been driven in. Beyond the retreating pickets the enemy's skirmishers were numerous, and their bullets began to whistle through and over the camps. How strongly they were supported, or where their supports were, was not known; but the brigade moved out to the left of the pike, in the direction from which had come the sound of the heaviest firing, and it proved to be the place where it could do the most good. With scarce a moment's delay the brigade filed out of the woods, and formed in the open fields in front. The Third, Fourth and Sixth regiments were deployed as skirmishers in a curved line, and advanced rapidly. They were supported by the Second, Fifth and Eleventh, each in line of

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<sup>1</sup> So called from a large spring of crystal clear water, which gushed from a fissure in the rock at the foot of a hill on which Welsh's house stood, in volume sufficient to form a good sized brook.

battle, moving out behind them on diverging lines. The skirmishers soon reached the foot of a hill, the slope of which was covered by a great field of Indian corn, the tall stalks of which almost concealed the enemy's skirmishers. Exchanging volleys with these at the edge of the field, the Vermonters pushed straight into the corn and drove the rebels out of it and over the crest of the hill. The supporting regiments followed eagerly. As the second battalion of the Eleventh, which was on the left, was about to enter the cornfield, its gallant commander, Lieut. Colonel Chamberlin, received a bullet in the abdomen, and fell from his horse, mortally wounded. Major Walker succeeded to the command of the battalion, and it pressed right on. The Confederate skirmishers were kept on the run and were followed over the second ridge, from which the Union pickets had been driven half an hour before. Here the older regiments on the right halted, in the face of a line of the enemy. The battalions of the Eleventh on the left, however, unaware that their duty was confined to re-establishing the picket line, kept on, with more zeal than discretion, and followed their retreating opponents half a mile farther and till they nearly ran against the battle line of Rodes's division. They were saved from serious disaster by General Getty, who had accompanied the brigade, had perceived the rash advance of the left of its line, and hastening after it, halted the battalions with some difficulty and ordered them back to the ridge, where the rest of the brigade stood. General Getty had his horse shot under him in this operation. As the battalions of the Eleventh withdrew, the enemy advanced, following them closely and firing heavily. They fell back in good order, however, and made good their connection with the rest of the brigade. This was now all deployed as skirmishers, covering a full mile of line, which ran in an irregular curve bending out and in according to the conformation of the ground. The enemy soon pressed upon them apparently in

much superior force, and from the shelter of the ridges, fences and stone walls, maintained a galling fire. The Vermonters sought similar protections, and where such was not available, piled rails into breastworks, or dug pits in the sandy soil, and held their ground immovably. The Sixth regiment held an exposed position near the centre of the line, and suffered severely, losing both its field officers and a number of men. Major Walker's battalion of the Eleventh, to the left, was also for the most part without protection, except such as they could make for themselves with rails, while the enemy in their front, behind a stone wall, kept up an incessant fire at short musket range.

Right in the Union skirmish line on the left of the turnpike, was the fine place of Mr. John B. Packett, whose wife was a daughter of Colonel John A. Washington, the former owner of Mount Vernon, who had been killed in the Confederate service. The house, a large brick mansion, had been guarded from injury and intrusion by the Union generals, and the family had remained in it. Among the inmates were several ladies in mourning, among whom was a tall and beautiful young woman—understood to be a sister of Mrs. Packett—who showed remarkable courage in the trying scenes which followed. The family were urged to leave the house and go to the camp of the Vermont brigade, when the Union skirmishers occupied the premises; but they refused to do so, and took refuge in the cellar. In and around this house some especially plucky fighting took place. The skirmishers, who were men of the Eleventh Vermont, were posted through the garden and grounds with only slight protection, and were suffering serious loss, when General Getty came along the line, on foot, having lost his horse, and, upon the suggestion of Major Walker, directed him to occupy the Packett house with sharpshooters. Major Walker at once filled the back windows of the house with some of the best marksmen in his command, and from this vantage ground

they began to make things unpleasant for the Confederate skirmishers. The enemy's fire was at once largely concentrated upon the house. The bullets rattled thickly against it; but its brick walls afforded excellent shelter and the men within returned the first with deadly effect. This had gone on for an hour or more, when the enemy brought up artillery to the aid of his musketry. A section of a battery was run to the crest of a ridge in front, and getting the range of the house after two or three shots, the shells now began to plow through its walls and explode within the rooms. Using the shell holes for loopholes, and returning volleys for the cheers which rose from the Confederate lines as the chimneys toppled and breaches opened in the walls, the brave men of the Eleventh held their position, and were loudly cheered for their pluck by all the Union troops around. Nine shells entered the house, before they left it. One of these exploded in the basement and sent the trembling inmates weeping and shrieking to the rear. These were guided to the camp of the brigade and received all possible protection from the weapons of their friends, and reached Charlestown uninjured. The house was twice set on fire by the shells, and extinguished by the Vermonters. At last, after holding it for an hour, and after several men had been killed and wounded by fragments of a shell, which exploded in one of the upper rooms,<sup>2</sup> Major Walker withdrew his men from the house, to a less exposed position. The ground regained by the Vermont brigade was held by them all day against the strong force in their front. Early, who was waiting for Anderson to come up before making a general assault, confined his operations to pressing the Union skirmish line at various points; but it was not a light pressure. Sheridan calls the skirmishing "sharp and obstinate." Early describes it as "very heavy." It was

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<sup>2</sup> The shell struck and demolished a case of drawers which had been the property of George Washington.

so, and it lasted till nightfall. Two mules were employed all day in carrying cartridges to the Union lines, and 56,000 rounds of ammunition were used that day by the Vermont regiments. The enemy's loss were not stated; but the Vermonters who picketed the same ground a week later found numerous graves on the ground and other indications which satisfied them that the Confederates lost more than they did. Ricketts's division was placed on the left of Getty's in the course of the afternoon; and other troops were brought up within supporting distance. By some of these the enemy's line was felt, and found to be a full line of battle. An episode which occurred near the close of the day, is thus related by Major Walker: "About six o'clock, a few of our officers were lurching on the rear piazza of the shattered Packett house, on bread and mil furnished by the owner, who had returned thoroughly subdued, when their attention was called to a regiment from another division passing out before the left of our line. Our men had no disposition to follow, though taunted with having spent the day fighting a phantom. The new comers marched boldly on, up a somewhat steep ascent, but preserving a capital front until they approached the stone wall mentioned above, when suddenly a grey line of rebels rose up apparently two deep along the whole extent threatened—proving that we had fought all day a full line of battle with artillery to boot, and had held our ground with a skirmish line. The valiant regiment which was to show Vermonters their folly, confronted by the unexpected apparition; and saluted by a thousand rifles, fled in dismay, without firing a gun, and we could not help greeting their discomfiture with peals of laughter." This was the closing incident of the day. That night, Sheridan, not liking the position at Charlestown, withdrew his army to Halltown, five miles back, where he intrenched himself in one of the strongest positions in the valley. The Vermont brigade held the

line in front of Charlestown till three A. M., and till all the rest of the army, except the cavalry videttes, had moved to the new position. It then drew quietly out, and marching rapidly entered the lines of Halltown after daylight. General Sheridan superintended the withdrawal, and entered the lines behind the Vermont brigade. Each of the regiments of the brigade was engaged in this affair and did its duty gallantly. The casualties were as follows:

	Killed.	Wounded.	Died of wounds.	Total.
Second Vermont	5	13	0	18
Third "	3	15	1	18
Fourth "	1	10	1	11
Fifth "	2	4	1	6
Sixth "	8	31	5	39
Eleventh "	5	27	8	32
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Total,	24	100	16	124

There was more or less skirmishing along the lines in front of Halltown during the next three days, in which the Vermont troops had no part, and several days of comparative quiet for the main army followed, during which Sheridan was making cavalry reconnoissances and Early engaged in various demonstrations, "to keep up," as he says, "the fear of an invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania."

Not daring to undertake such an invasion, however, and seeing that Sheridan's position was too strong to be attacked, Early moved back to his old position at Bunker Hill on the 27th and 27th. Sheridan followed him on the 28th to within feeling distance, taking his former position in front of Charlestown. As his troops marched through Charlestown, they found no traces of the gallows where John Brown swung, or of the grave where his body was said to lie mouldering; but they remembered both, and the bands, as did probably every northern band of music that ever passed there, reminded the rebellious citizens that he soul was still "marching on."

After a sharp cavalry fight at Leetown, from which place General Merritt drove out the enemy's cavalry, and a fight at Smithfield, which was occupied first by Merritt, then by two of Early's infantry divisions, and then by Ricketts's division of the Sixth Corps, Early retired to the high ground west of the Opequon, between Manchester and Martinsburg, and Sheridan faced him, with the sixth corps at Clifton, next the Nineteenth corps, now filled by the arrival of its remaining division which had come up by way of Snicker's Gap, and the Eighth corps at Berryville. This was the situation on the 3d of September, and there was little change for two weeks. The cavalry were active in reconnoissances, and in hunting the ubiquitous Mosby, who was a constant torment on Sheridan's rear and flank; but the infantry had little to do, except to dig rifle-pits. On the 6th the Vermont soldiers voted for State officers.

September 13th, Getty's division was sent out from Clifton, with Merritt's cavalry, to Gilbert's Ford, or Edward's Crossing, on the Opequon. The Vermont brigade led the column, which was accompanied by Generals Sheridan and Wright. The skirmishers of the Third and Fourth Vermont crossed the Opequon in the forenoon, and advanced till they met the enemy's pickets, a short distance beyond. Early advanced two divisions of his infantry, before whom the Union skirmishers retired to the east side of the creek. A sharp artillery duel followed, between Cowan's battery and a rebel battery of heavy guns, some of the shells from which, passing over Cowan, exploded in the ranks of the Vermont brigade, which was lying with the division, massed in the woods, a quarter of a mile behind the battery. Several Vermonters were wounded, among them being Lieutenant Bedell, of the Eleventh, whose terrible wound and remarkable rescue from death and captivity are elsewhere told, and form a tale of surpassing interest. The division returned to its camp at

nightfall, having developed the presence of the enemy in force.<sup>3</sup>

During these weeks of comparative inaction, General Sheridan was waiting, before taking the offensive, for Lee to recall the reinforcements he had sent to Early—a measure rendered probable by the extension of Grant's lines in front of Petersburg, and the steady depletion of Lee's army. Lee had in fact requested the return of Anderson with Kershaw's division and Cutshaw's battalion of artillery, about the 1st of September, and Anderson had started for Petersburg on the 3d, but his movement was prevented by an unexpected encounter with General Crook at Berryville. On the 14th of September he started again and found his march unimpeded. His departure was Sheridan's signal for action.

The impression that this period of comparative quiet could not last long, which had prevailed for some days in the army, was suddenly strengthened by the appearance at General Sheridan's headquarters at Charlestown, on the 16th of September, of Lieutenant General U. S. Grant. Impatient of the delay of offensive operations in the valley, he had come up from Petersburg to confer with Sheridan in person, bringing with him also a plan of battle to give to the latter. He was met by Sheridan with the information, received the night before, that Kershaw's division had at last been detached from Early's army; the he (Sheridan) was now fully ready to move, having been waiting only for this weakening of his opponent's force, and was confident of success. "He explained so clearly," says General Grant in his report, "the location and condition of the two armies, and

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<sup>3</sup> This reconnoissance is the affair which appears in Adj. General Washburn's official lists of engagements as "Opequon, September 13, 1864." It was hardly of consequence enough to be included in the list, and the title is misleading, as liable to be confounded with the battle of Winchester fought a week later, which in various histories bears the title of The Opequon.

pointed out so distinctly the course he should pursue if left at liberty, that I saw no instructions were necessary except the simple words, 'Go in!'" General Grant remained one day more, and then returned to City Point. On Sunday, September 18th, a supply train arrived; the sick men and superfluous baggage were taken back to Harper's Ferry in the same wagons; five days rations were distributed; and the troops of Sheridan's army lay down that night quite certain that they would not sleep in that camp another night. Early, on his part, was not wholly unprepared for action on the part of his opponent, for, having gone on the 17th the Rodes's and Gordon's divisions to Martinsburg, on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, to put a stop to the repairing of the road, which was in progress at that point under protection of Averell's cavalry, he learned at the telegraph office there that Grant was with Sheridan that day. Consequently, as he says, he "expected an early move."

#### THE BATTLE OF WINCHESTER, OR THE OPEQUON.

The situation was as follows: The Opequon Creek, five miles to the west of Sheridan's position, divided the two armies. It was a formidable barrier to the Union army, for the crossings were difficult and diligently guarded by Early. The latter's forces were strung along the pike for twelve miles, from Winchester to Bunker Hill, with his cavalry thrown out to Martinsburg. He had with him, after Kershaw left him, about 17,000 men. Sheridan's army was posted, as it had been for two weeks, between Clifton and Berryville. He states that his "fighting strength" at this time was about 18,000 infantry and 3,500 cavalry. The Vermont brigade, slightly reduced by the departure of the original members of the Fifth Vermont, 107 in number, whose time expired on the 15th, was for the time being under the command of Colonel James M. Warner, of the

Eleventh Vermont, General L. A. Grant having gone north on a brief leave of absence.

General Sheridan's intention had been to move across Early's communications at Newtown, south of Winchester, and to fight him there; but on learning of the movement of Rodes's and Gordon's division toward Martinsburg, he changed his plan and decided to move direct on Winchester, hoping to strike and overwhelm the two divisions near there before the return of Rodes and Gordon' and intending to attend to the case of the latter, a little later.

Sheridan's plan of battle, as thus decided on, was as follows: Wilson, with a division of cavalry was directed to move before daylight from the left of the Union lines at Berryville, over the Berryville and Winchester pike, carry the crossing of the Opequon, clear the way through the long, crooked and wooded ravine beyond, through which lay the approach to Winchester, and hold the open and higher ground beyond, east of the town, till the infantry should come up and occupy it. The Sixth and Nineteenth corps were to follow Wilson as closely as possible through the defile and take position near Winchester; while Torbert with Merritt's division of cavalry was to move from the right to the Martinsburg pike, near Stephenson's depot, six miles north of Winchester, where Averell's cavalry, moving up the pike from Darksville, were to join him, and help to check the return of the two Confederate divisions supposed to be north of that point. In fact, however, Rodes had returned to Stevenson's the night previous, and Gordon marched thither at sunrise, so that both were within easy reach of Winchester, and they were at once called thither by Early, when he learned at daylight that Sheridan had crossed the Opequon in force. Sheridan's army was astir at one o'clock in the morning of the 19th, and at two o'clock Getty's division, leading the advance of the Sixth Corps and of the infantry column, moved out from the camp near Clifton;

marched across the country in the darkness to the Berryville and Winchester pike, and filing into that, reached the crossing of the Opequon at six o'clock. Crossing the creek without delay, the division pushed on through the ravine to the rolling ground, two miles beyond the creek and about the same distance from Winchester, where Wilson had taken an earthwork and was holding an excellent position against the Confederate division of Ramseur, which had advanced to meet him. The sides of the ravine were lined with wounded cavalymen, as the Vermont brigade passed through it; and the enemy's artillery were firing briskly as the brigades of the division successively deployed in the open ground. They were posted on the left of the pike, under the eye of General Sheridan, who was already, as the troops were glad to see, at the very front, and superintending in person details which many of the commanders were wont to entrust to the gentlemen of their staffs. Getty's division was deployed in a single line. The right of the Vermont brigade rested on the pike, and the first and third brigades prolonged the division line to the left, to Abraham's Creek, a little affluent of the Opequon. Rickett's division, which followed Getty's, was deployed on the right of the pike, and Russell's division was held in reserve. On the right of the Vermont brigade was the earthwork taken by Wilson, from which a Union battery was replying to the enemy's fire, from which Bidwell's brigade was suffering severely. The Vermont brigade was sheltered by a strip of pine timber, and the men lay for the most part undisturbed for three rather anxious hours, during which the Nineteenth corps, impeded for a time by the guns and wagons of the Sixth Corps, was making its way through the ravine. This delay in the arrival of the troops on the field, occasioned by the necessity of fording a stream and filing through a long gorge, prevented the crushing of Ramseur, and enabled Early to bring up his detached divisions from Stephenson's; and when, at half past eleven,

Sheridan's lines were at last ready to move forward, he had nearly the whole of Early's army to fight.

The battle was fought in two stages. In the first, the Sixth Corps, advancing on both sides of the Berryville pike, drove back Ramseur and Rodes for a this of a mile, while on the right, Emory with the Nineteenth corps attacked Gordon and drove one of his brigades<sup>4</sup> back through the woods which had sheltered it, and to within musket range of his artillery. The Union line became broken along its centre during this advance, by the fire of the confederate batteries; and with the aid of a fresh Confederate brigade, of Rodes's division, arriving at this time, the enemy rallied. Rodes and Gordon then advanced with their divisions, driving back a part of Rickett's division of the Sixth Corps and Grover's of the Nineteenth, nearly to the line from which they had moved. In this advance of the enemy, General Rodes, one of the best of Early's lieutenants, was killed. Things looked serious for a shot time on the Union right. The front line of the Nineteenth corps was almost wholly disorganized, and was replaced by the second line. The right of Rickett's division was also considerably broken up. His left, with Getty's division, remained firm, though it fell back a short distance to keep up a continuous front. General Early said that if he had had fresh troops to push in at that time, the day would have been his. General Wright now ordered forward Russell's division. "It was," as he says "too early in the battle to choose to put in the reserves." Still, "seeing that the fate of the day depended on the employment of this force," he sent it forward. It deployed with division front, and advancing relieved Rickett's until he could re-form his division, when Sheridan sent the latter farther to the right. Upton's brigade, of Russell's division, was held by Sheridan, till a Confederate column, which

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<sup>4</sup> Evans's brigade of Georgia troops.

was pushing through the interval between the Sixth and Nineteenth corps, presented its flank, when Upton, with a gallant charge, struck and drove it back in disorder and with heavy loss. General Upton was wounded in this charge. The Union line was then re-established; the demoralized troops, which, to the number of two or three thousands, had gone to the rear, were brought back into line; and General Russell filled the gap in the Union centre with two of his brigades. While posting these along a crest, this modest and gallant officer, the idol of his division, fell dead, pierced through the heart by a piece of a shell.

Two hours of comparative quiet followed, though there was heavy skirmishing along the lines. Early was re-forming his lines across the ground between Abraham's Creek and Red Bud Run, there about a mile and a half apart. He was now strengthened by the arrival of Breckenridge, who with Wharton's division and King's artillery, which had been left back at Stevenson's and had narrowly escaped capture by Merritt and Averell, reached the field at two o'clock. Sheridan was also re-arranging his lines, distributing ammunition, and bringing up Crook's command,<sup>5</sup> hitherto held in reserve behind the right of the Nineteenth corps.

About four o'clock the second stage of the battle opened, with an attack by Crooks on Early's left flank, the troops composing which were driven back in confusion, while Torbert charged up the Martinsburg pike with his cavalry, driving the enemy's cavalry in a confused mass through Breckenridge's broken infantry. As soon as Sheridan, who supervised this movement in person, saw it in process of successful execution, he started on his black horse down the front of the Nineteenth and Sixth Corps, riding at tremendous speed and accompanied only by a single orderly, along the skirmish line,

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<sup>5</sup> This was composed of two small infantry divisions, commanded by colonels, and was known as the "Eighth corps" and as the "Army of West Virginia."

amid the flying bullets, and ordered a simultaneous advance of both corps. Getty, seeing the enemy's left in disorder, had already ordered his division forward, and the general advance was made with great steadiness. The Confederate lines fell back before it for a mile, till reaching some breastworks constructed early in the war near the town of Winchester, Early strove to make a final stand. But the effort proved unavailing. Sheridan, who had again hurried to the right, sent Torbert to charge once more around Early's left, which gave way at once. Colonel Thomas of the Eighth Vermont led the advance of the Nineteenth corps with a famous bayonet charge of his regiment. The Sixth Corps rushed simultaneously for the works in front; and as the evening fell, Early's whose army broke through the town in complete retreat. "We sent them whirling through Winchester," said Sheridan in his famous dispatch. "I never saw our troops in such confusion before," wrote a captured Confederate officer,--"our scattered troops, closely followed by the large army of pursuers, retreated rapidly and in disorder through the city." They fled too rapidly to be overtaken by Sheridan's infantry; but his cavalry followed Early's rear to Kernstown, whence, under cover of the darkness, he made good his retreat to Strasburg.

The share of the Vermont brigade in this good day's work cannot be better told than in the words of Major Walker of the Eleventh Vermont:

"It was noon before the Nineteenth corps had reached its place and was formed in three or four lines on the right of the Sixth. Our men during the forenoon had been resting, sitting or lying on the ground. When at last the disposition was completed and the signal gun was fired, they sprang to the ranks, and the line advanced. Particular instructions had been received to the effect that the road<sup>6</sup> was to give the

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<sup>6</sup> The Berryville pike.

direction of attack, and that the guiding regiment was to be the left regiment of the Third division, just across the road from our right.

"In passing through the bit of trees in our front, which was filled with underbrush, our line was necessarily thrown somewhat into confusion. When we emerged from the wood and the ground over which we must make our attack was developed, the prospect was appalling. The hill gradually sloped away before us, for a quarter of a mile, to a long ravine, irregular in its course, but its windings extending either way as far as we could see. The ascent beyond it was in most places sharp, and the enemy held its crest in force, perfectly commanding with musketry and artillery the long slope down which we must pass, though the acclivity on the further side of the hollow was so steep as to actually present a cover from their fire—if it could once be reached.

"When this fearful prospect opened, the line involuntarily halted, and the men threw themselves on the ground as was their wont when under fire. Our own brigade was properly waiting for the movement of the guiding regiment, which lay across the road a little to our rear, and which could not be prevailed upon to stir. To add to the peril of the situation, the road, instead of continuing straight on, as seems to have been expected, here made a bend to the left so that our original orders could not be obeyed without an amount of obliquing that would have resulted in demoralization; from this cause our own brigade was soon afterwards thrown into temporary confusion, and the Third division was presently so disorganized as to be unable to resist a counter-charge made against it by the enemy.

"At length the commander of the brigade at our right crossed to our side of the road and urged us to set his men the example. Colonel Warner took the responsibility, brought the brigade to its feet, corrected the alignment, and gave the command to advance, which was promptly obeyed.

The Third division followed and the line was again in motion. But our point of direction was lost, for we were in advance of our guides, and when it was seen that owing to a curve in the ravine before us the cover on its further side could be reached much sooner by obliquing sharply to the left, we took that direction, almost by common consent, and left the road-side.

"Our whole brigade, every man at the top of his speed, making for the coveted protection of the hill beyond us, plunged pell mell into the hollow. The troops at our right and left were lost sight of. The ravine was of some considerable width and its bottom was marshy, being the head waters of a little branch of Abraham Creek. The steep slope on its further side was covered with evergreens six or eight feet high. To our intense consternation, as we reached its swampy bottom, we saw on our right, at short pistol range, at least a full regiment of the enemy, drawn up in line near the point where the road crosses the hollow, in anticipation of our taking precisely the course we did, and firing coolly, as rapidly as they could load, directly along our line, thus enfilading us completely. The slaughter was for a few moments murderous. We could not retreat, for we should again enter the fire that had been mowing us down in the charge, now cut off by the hill before us. We therefore floundered on, our coherence entirely lost; entered the clusters of evergreens through which the cruel bullets whistled fearfully, and at last, a confused mass at best, those of us who escaped unhurt reached comparative safety under the very crest of the hill, and high above the deadly hollow. We now opened fire for the first time during the day, in the directions of the regiment or brigade that had so frightfully thinned our ranks, but they were almost out of reach from us, as well as we from them. At this moment, however, the Third division approached them and they filed away.

"When this was discovered, and after gaining breath, our

own advance was resumed, but with little pretense of order. Emerging upon the plain before us at the summit of the hill we had climbed, we again turned obliquely towards the road and charged upon a long breastwork filled with rebels, in our immediate front. The retreat of their comrades from the ravine apparently demoralized them; many fled, many more were captured; in fact as we clambered over the parapet it seemed as if the prisoners who then surrendered exceeded in number our entire brigade.

"But we did not stop to count them or to care for them. The principal position of the enemy in this portion of the field had now been gained, and we rushed onward toward the distant spires of Winchester, with shouts and cheers, now thoroughly excited by our unexpected success. A battery of the enemy was before us but it limbered up and retired as we advanced. Several times it turned, fired a round of canister, and resumed its flight. At our left the other brigades of our division were seen moving on in our support. At our right an unfortunate ridge now rose, parallel with our line of advance, along the top of which ran the road so often referred to, and which hid our friends from view; we could only hope that they were equally successful, and pushed wildly forward. A point was reached, probably three-fourths of a mile beyond the intrenchments where we had captured the prisoners when luckily a ditch running across our path suggested cover and a pause. This ditch was reached only by the colors of the Fifth, with perhaps two hundred men from the various regiments. Exhausted with running they opened fire as vigorously as they could, but a line of rebels was seen gradually collecting in their front, as the fugitives were rallied, and the position held by our troops was presently dangerously threatened. And now, to their dismay, the brigade on the higher ground to their left saw reason for retiring and called to them to follow. What it could mean they did not know, but it seemed prudent to withdraw, if only for the purpose of

keeping up the connection. As officer sent to investigate soon reported that at least a division of the enemy were far behind their right, in an orchard which they supposed had been carried by the Third division. Orders were given therefore to fall back to the line of the army, following the low ground on the left, thus keeping under cover of the hill at the right, the enemy meantime being absorbed in their movement against Ricketts; and thus the detachment thus successfully escaped from its dangerous position and re-formed with the balance of the brigade near the works we had carried, being as before on the right of the other brigades of our division, connecting with and at first evening front of the support which was put in to meet the emergency.

"The Sixth Vermont, skirmishers through the morning, had properly allowed us to pass them in our first charge, but subsequently moving forwards, accidentally joined the Third division, where they gained great credit during the remainder of the day. The whole position now held by the Sixth Corps was that occupied by the enemy at noon. Getty's division had been entirely successful, and had completely wiped out everything that had confronted it. The Vermont brigade in particular met as determined resistance as any portion of the line could have done, besides passing through the terrible enfilading fire in the ravine; and not only drove back the enemy and held its ground firmly without assistance, but actually captured hundreds of prisoners, fairly finishing the battle in its front. The rest of the army not being equally fortunate, we afterwards had it all to fight over again."

So much for the first stage of the battle. In the second stage, the order to advance came to the Sixth Corps at half past three o'clock. The positions were substantially as before, Getty's division being on the left, then Ricketts's and Russell's division, the latter now commanded by General Wheaton, then the Nineteenth corps, and Crook as a flanking force on the extreme right. As Getty's division advanced, the Vermont

brigade moved steadily on, with Colonel Warner's headquarters flag flying in the very battle line. Outstripping the brigades on its right and left, it reached a cornfield and garden surrounding a large brick house on the pike, about a mile from the town. At this point in addition to severe musketry fire in front, it was enfiladed by a Confederate battery on its left. It halted behind the fences and opened fire. The enemy was within short musket range, and the men loaded and fired with the diligence of desperation. The artillery rattle up behind and joining in the tumult; and General Sheridan's wish, expressed in the morning to Colonel Tompkins, Sixth Corps chief of artillery, that he might "see some dead horses before night" was gratified.<sup>7</sup> "We were still enfiladed," says Major Walker, "by the battery at our left, and we saw the brigade on our right withdraw a short distance for better shelter behind the crest of a little hill. It seemed to us less dangerous to remain, and we clung to our position though losing rapidly. Major Buxton of the Eleventh was here shot dead, a bullet passing through his brain.<sup>8</sup> Presently the line of the enemy before us was seen to waver and melt away; many had fallen, others could not endure the deadly fire, and at last we caught a vision that redeemed Sheridan's assertion.<sup>9</sup> The whole left of the enemy rushed past us toward our left in the wildest disorder.

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of the repulse of the first attack, Stevens's (Fifth Maine) battery was ordered back by a staff officer who reared its capture, but Colonel Tompkins held it to its work, though the rebels were but two hundred yards from the muzzles of the guns.

<sup>8</sup> Two or three years afterwards some lunatic created a sensation in Vermont by assuming the gallant major's name and title. The imposture, however, could not well deceive those who had seen the major's remains, for his death was so sudden that he did not stir from the position in which he was lying with his face to the ground among his men.

<sup>9</sup> "Crook and Averell are on their left and rear. We've got 'em bagged."

Crook and Averell had done their duty. Merritt, Custer and Lowell were madly urging the pursuit. They caught up with the mass of fugitives directly in front of our position, taking flags and cannon and thousands of prisoners.

"The brigade rose as one man, rushed at the fence that had partially protected us, and as it fell, passed over it into the open plain. The whole army was seized with the same impulse and strode joyfully forward, a huge crescent, with waving flags and wild hurrahs. The scene was wonderful. The infantry kept a rapid march and the alignment seemed complete. 'Beautiful as an army with banners,' is a figure full of meaning and its power was then completely realized. And in that joyful mood, conscious of strength and of victory, we closed upon the city.<sup>10</sup> Our brigade was halted at the edge of the town near a vineyard covering perhaps an acres of ground, filled with grapes, ripe and abundant. The day's work had allowed no time to eat or drink and the opportunity thus offered was improved to the fullest extent. While we were thus regaling ourselves with the luscious fruit General Sheridan came by, and was saluted with the wildest cheers. Since the time of McClellan it had been a point of pride with the brigade not to cheer its officers; but on this occasion tumultuous hurrahs came unbidden from the bottom of every heart."

The battle of Winchester, or of the Opequon, was the most sanguinary, and has been called "by all means the most

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<sup>10</sup> "The cheers of the Union boys (during the final charge) rose clear and strong above the roar of artillery and the harsh rattle of musketry, and Early's demoralized divisions were rushing through Winchester in unutterable confusion. Frightened teamsters were lashing their animals through the streets in greatest alarm; and riderless horses were galloping here and there. Some streets became entirely blocked by the disordered mass, and even footmen could not pass through. A squad of cavalry coming to one of these obstructions leaped from their horses and made their escape on foot. Our cavalry rushed among the panic-stricken fugitives and gathered hundreds of them."—Three years in the Sixth Corps.

important battle ever fought in the valley of Virginia."<sup>11</sup> It restored the lower valley to Union control, which was never again relaxed, and thus put an end to invasions of Maryland and raids against the National capital. It had, moreover, an extraordinary moral effect throughout the North.<sup>12</sup>

It was a hard-fought battle. The Sixth Corps artillery alone expended eighteen wagon loads of ammunition. The losses of Sheridan's army aggregated about 4,300 killed and wounded.<sup>13</sup> Early, who invariably understates his own force, exaggerates that of his opponent, and distorts every possible circumstance in his own favor, admits a loss of 1,793 killed and wounded and 1,818 missing in its infantry and artillery. As his cavalry also suffered heavily, his loss, by his own showing, must have been nearly as great as that of his assailants. It was probably fully equal to the Union loss. It included Maj. General Rodes, Brig. General Goodwin and Colonel Patton, commanding a brigade, killed, and Brig. Generals Fitz Lee and York severely wounded. Sheridan captured 2,000 prisoners—over two hundred of which were taken by the Vermont brigade—five guns and nine battle flags; took and held the field and the village of Winchester, its houses filled with Confederate wounded; and camped that night south of Winchester.

The part of the Vermonters in the victory, as has been seen, was important, and the regiments of the old brigade deserved a good share of the praise which General Getty awarded to the troops of his gallant division, for they were

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<sup>11</sup> General Wesley Merritt.

<sup>12</sup> "We remember no victory in this war which has more suddenly and joyfully awakened the sympathies of the North, nor one which has been welcomed with a more enthusiastic delight."—*New York Tribune*, September 20, 1864.

<sup>13</sup> The exact figures are not obtainable, as the tables of casualties in Crook's command include also the casualties at Fisher's Hill.

the troops that held the right of his line firm when the troops to their right gave way.<sup>14</sup> And other Vermont regiments bore an equally honorable part. The First Vermont cavalry, Colonel Wells, was with General Wilson in the advance through the ravine and operations on the extreme left, as was part of the pursuing force which followed up Early after his rout. The Eighth Vermont, Colonel Thomas, distinguished itself on the right with the Nineteenth corps, as narrated in subsequent pages, while the Tenth Vermont fought in the third division of the Sixth Corps, and lost its brave commander, Major Dillingham, and nearly 60 men, killed and wounded.

The losses of the First Vermont Brigade were as follows:

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Died of wounds.	Total.
Second Vermont	2	30	0	5	32
Third	1	26	3	3	30
Fourth	1	15	0	1	16
Fifth	6	22	0	0	28
Sixth	5	46	0	5	51
Eleventh	7	85	6	12	98
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Total,	22	224	9	26	255

Among the killed were Major Buxton and Captain Duhigg of the Eleventh Vermont, and among the wounded were Lieutenant Towel of the Fourth, mortally; Adjutant Lincoln and Captain Jocelyn of the Sixth, and Captains Eldridge and Safford of the Eleventh.

Colonel Warner's handling of the brigade was highly praised, and he was next day assigned to the permanent command of the first brigade of Getty's division, vice Wheaton, who succeeded General Russell, killed, in the command of the First division of the Sixth Corps. In the absence of

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<sup>14</sup> "With great pride I bear witness to the uniform god conduct of the command, both officers and men. In the battle of Winchester, when the troops on my right broke, nothing could exceed their steadiness."—General Getty, in his Report.

General L. A. Grant, Colonel George P. Foster of the Fourth Vermont now took command of the brigade.

There was no stopping for sight-seeing in Winchester,<sup>15</sup> for Sheridan's troops, and not much for rest; and sunrise next morning found his army moving to the south in pursuit of the enemy.

On the 21st ten officers, including Lieut. Colonel Stephen M. Pingree, Surgeon S. J. Allen, Adjutant French and Quartermaster H. T. Cushman, and 136 men of the Fourth regiment, whose three years' term of service had expired, started for home to be mustered out, leaving a battalion of about 200 men of the Fourth, present for duty, which was allowed to retain its name and organization for the good service it had done.

Two miles south of Strasburg, and twenty miles south of Winchester, in the centre of the valley—here narrowed to five miles by the interposition of the Massanutten chain, half way between the Blue Ridge on the east and Little North Mountain on the west—is the natural fastness and watchtower of Fisher's Hill. The north fork of the Shenandoah winds in a tortuous course along the eastern base of the hill, and under its northern face a small mountain stream, called Tumbling Run, runs across the valley, its banks rising into hills and bluffs, intersected by ravines. Across the North Fork, on the east side, on a peak of the Massanutten, or Three Top Mountains, a signal station commanded a full view of the approaches and of the valley to the north. The position had been selected and intrenched by Stonewall Jackson two years before, and had been a stronghold for the Confederates in all previous operations in the valley. Early had occupied

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<sup>15</sup> Winchester is the resting place of the remains of Thomas, Earl of Fairfax, from whom Fairfax county, Virginia, was named, and of the Revolutionary hero, General Daniel Morgan, of Quebec and Saratoga fame, and the scene of some of Washington's early military experiences in the French and Indian war.

its rugged sides and Sheridan had halted before it, but had not ventured to assail it, five weeks before. Hither Early despatched his trains, as soon as he saw that defeat was probable at Winchester, and here he took his army on the morning of the 20th. He at once added to the strength of the position by fresh fortifications and by extending the defensive works to the west. The ravines were blocked with fallen trunks, and the hills and hollows were furrowed with rifle pits, protected by abatis. Early's guns raked the turnpike and the Back road, which were the main approaches to the position, and so secure did he feel that his ammunition boxes were taken from the caissons and placed for convenience behind the breastworks.

Sheridan followed up the valley pike,—the Sixth Corps leading the infantry. In the latter part of the afternoon, Wright and Emory crossed Cedar Creek, two miles north of Strasburg, where they met the Confederate outposts, and the two corps bivouacked in the woods on Hupp's Hill just outside of that village, the Union pickets occupying the northern outskirts of Strasburg and the Confederate pickets the southern. The Eighth corps halted in the timber near Cedar Creek.

#### BATTLE OF FISHER'S HILL.

In the early morning of the next day, the 21st, General Sheridan reconnoitred the position, finding that Early's main line ran along the south side of Tumbling Run, and that he had been busily strengthening it during the night. He also held an elevation, called in some accounts Flint's Hill, on the north side of the Run, which, to some extent, commanded the centre of his position, and was thus too valuable to be left to his opponent. Sheridan's lines faced Early's with a front three miles long, the Sixth Corps being on the right and the Nineteenth corps on the left; and the lines

were advanced till they came under constant fire from the enemy's batteries and sharpshooters. The troops, however, were sheltered by stone walls, or ridges, or timber, and suffered little loss. The position of the Vermont brigade during the afternoon was to the left of Flint's Hill. The shells whizzed frequently overhead, and as Colonel Foster was passing along the line, the bearer of his headquarters flag, corporal Thomas J. Miller of company K of the Third Vermont was killed by a sharpshooters bullet.<sup>16</sup> As preparatory to the operations of the next day, Sheridan desired possession of Flint's Hill and General Wright was directed to occupy it. He sent three regiments thither, two from Ricketts's and one from Getty's division, but they found the enemy there in force and were twice repulsed. Colonel James M. Warner, commanding the first brigade of Getty's division, was then ordered to carry the position. He did so in a gallant bayonet charge, about sundown, driving the enemy across the Run and winning for himself a brevet as brigadier general.<sup>17</sup>

The Vermont brigade was moved up to support Warner's assault, and halted in a wood which hid from view the operations on the hill. The musketry firing was sharp in front, but its subsidence soon indicated that Warner had carried the hill, and they did not become engaged. After dark the brigade was advanced up to Warner's right, into an open field on the crest and western slope of Flint's Hill. Muskets were then exchanged for shovels, and the night was occupied in throwing up a substantial breastwork to protect their line. This elevation became the centre of Sheridan's lines the next day, and without it the operations of the 22d would have been impracticable. This gained, Sheridan could mature his plan of attack, which in its main features was similar to that

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<sup>16</sup> Miller was the only man of the brigade killed at Fisher's Hill.

<sup>17</sup> One of his staff, Lieutenant J. A. Lewis of the Eleventh Vermont, was wounded in this charge by a bullet which shot away part of his chin.

which had proved so successful at Winchester, and was initiated a month later by Early, at Cedar Creek. It was to move Crook's force, of 5,000 men, which had been kept back out of sight, around to the right, screening the movement by the forests, to Little North Mountain, beyond the left of Early's line, and thus to flank his left and rear, while the sixth and Nineteenth corps were to attack directly in front. At the same time Torbert, with Wilson's and Merritt's cavalry divisions, were sent up the Luray valley with orders to occupy New Market, which would bring him in the rear of Early and enable him to cut off the latter's retreat, should he be driven from Fisher's Hill.

Thursday, the 22d, opened clear and warm, the daylight disclosing the long lines of Confederate intrenchments, fringed with abatis, crowning the hills a mile or more in front, across Tumbling Run. From Flint's Hill the enemy's working parties were plainly visible, busily engaged in strengthening their works. Two light batteries of rifled pieces were brought up to the line of the Vermont brigade, but no shooting took place during the forenoon except between the pickets on the two sides of the Run. Generals Sheridan, Wright, Emory and Crook were noticed reconnoitering the enemy's position from the top of the hill, and the latter, after a close scrutiny of the country to the right with a glass, was seen to ride rapidly away to join his command, which was already moving. During the forenoon Crook's column wound through the woods, to the west, to the mountain side. The glitter of the muskets of his troops, occasionally seen through openings of the forest, indicated their progress to the eyes which were watching the movement from Flint's Hill, but it was wholly concealed from the enemy, whose attention was also diverted during the forenoon by a movement of Ricketts's division. This moved in handsome shape from the woods to the front and right, driving in the enemy's skirmishers and halting in front of

Early's left, while Averell's cavalry moved to a bare knoll to the right of Ricketts. Taking this movement to betoken a direct attack from that quarter, Early bent all his energies to strengthening his works on his left and to the construction of a new earthwork to command the ground between him and this threatening battle line.

At two o'clock P. M. Crook had reached the mountain and was making his way without path or guide along its steep side, making sure to climb high enough to clear the enemy's left, which rested on the base of the mountain. By four o'clock he had completely turned Early's flank and formed his command for the assault. Half an hour later he was sweeping down the confederate left and rear, driving before him Lomax's astonished cavalry, which were guarding Early's extreme left, and taking in reverse the divisions of Ramseur and Pegram, whose troops, supposing Crook had come across the mountain, fled from their trenches in utter dismay.

General Sheridan, who from his post of observation on Flint's Hill had been impatiently awaiting Crook's appearance,<sup>18</sup> no sooner saw the glitter of his bayonets as his line emerged from the woods at the base of the mountain, than he ordered the Sixth and Nineteenth corps forward against the Confederate left and centre. Getty advanced his division to the slope close above Tumbling Run, under heavy fire from the batteries on the opposite crest. The artillery, hitherto massed behind Flint's Hill, went rapidly into battery in the field in front, and replied with the roar of thirty guns. Ricketts swung his line around and up to the enemy's works in his front, the men rushing up the steep ascent and taking the earthwork which had been built before their eyes,

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<sup>18</sup> "General Sheridan spent hours that day sweeping with his glass from right to left, occasionally pausing to remark to some bystander, or to mutter to himself: "I'll get a twist on 'em, d—n 'em."—Major A. F. Walker.

and joining Crook, who still kept steadily on, in his flanking movement. Then Early's whole army broke for the rear in utter rout.<sup>19</sup> This retreat was the signal for a general forward rush of the troops of the Sixth and Nineteenth corps. It was a headlong run over fields, walls and rocks, a rush through the brook, a scramble up the heights, through the abatis and over the breastworks, and then, turning to the left, a hurried pursuit of the enemy, in which all formations were largely lost. Guns were fired and re-loaded as the soldiers ran. Captured cannon were wheeled about and discharged at the panic-stricken foe. General Sheridan joined Getty's division, shouting: "Run boys, run! Don't wait to form! Don't let them stop!" adding to those who were too tired to run: "If you can't run, then cheer!" The rush continued till Early's entire line of works, so difficult of access and so strongly fortified, had been swept clean of defenders, and till the enemy had vanished into the woods, on their hasty way to and through Woodstock.

In the first advance of Getty's division, at four o'clock P. M., the Vermont brigade leaped over the breastworks in its front, with the rest of the division, and moving off by the left flank, with the Second regiment deployed as skirmishers, went to the right and down near the bank of Tumbling Run, the rebel grape and shell meanwhile rattling vigorously through the trees which partially covered the movement. In the charge on the enemy's works an hour later, the brigade crossed Tumbling Run at a point where it had been dammed and formed a shallow pond; floundered through this; crossed another branch of the Run, and charge up the hill to and over the works which had guarded the front of Pegram's division. Here four guns of Carpenter's battery,<sup>20</sup> a battle-flag

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<sup>19</sup> "My whole force retired in considerable confusion."—General Early in his Memoir.

<sup>20</sup> Alleghany (Va.) Artillery.

and 300 prisoners were taken by the troops of Getty's division, and on a handsome staff which was here taken the headquarters flag of the Vermont brigade was afterwards mounted. The division first halted on the Valley turnpike where it crosses the summit of Fisher's Hill. Some Confederate troops which had apparently been cut off from the enemy's extreme right being discovered on the hill between the turnpike and the Shenandoah, the Eleventh Vermont was sent by General Crook across a deep ravine, to dislodge them. They made their escape, however, without awaiting attack, and the Eleventh returned by a long circuit to the pike, a mile to the south, where the remainder of the brigade joined it. A halt of the Sixth and Eighth corps was now ordered, to permit the troops to disentangle themselves and find their respective regimental colors and to get supper, while General Sheridan with the Nineteenth corps pressed on after Early. The Sixth Corps soon followed, marching twelve miles that night to Woodstock, while Crook's troops returned to Strasburg for their knapsacks, which had been laid aside when they started on their detour.

This battle naturally occupies but a small space in the Confederate reports; and even on the Union side the victory has been undervalued by historians from the fact that it involved such small loss to Sheridan's army. But no battle in the valley showed more military genius on the part of the Union commander, and his army appreciated it and him. Sheridan's loss was about 400 killed and wounded. He captured 16 guns and 1,100 prisoners. Early's despatches to Lee mention a loss on his part of 261 killed and wounded, making his total loss about 1,400. The victory would have been far more complete, had Torbert fulfilled his mission and intercepted Early's retreat at New Market. But that over cautious officer had allowed himself to be held in check at Milford, by Wickham, with two small brigades of Confederate cavalry, and fell back toward Front Royal without fighting. "The

operations of the cavalry," said Sheridan, "up the Luray Valley, on which I calculated so much, were an entire failure. Had General Torbert driven the enemy's cavalry, or turned the defile and reached New Market, I have no doubt but that we would have captured the entire rebel army. I feel certain that its rout from Fisher's Hill was such that there was scarcely a company organization held together." General Early, writing to General Lee, three days after, admits as much. He says: "In the affair at Fisher's Hill, the cavalry gave way, but it was flanked. This would have been remedied if the troops had remained steady; but a panic seized them at the idea of being flanked, and without being defeated they broke, many of them fleeing shamefully. The artillery was not captured by the enemy, but abandoned by the infantry. My troops were very much shattered." But had Early's infantry made a more determined stand his loss would only have been the greater. Their precipitate retreat, and the darkness which fell on the field, were all that saved him from annihilation on the spot.

"The annals of war," says General Wright in his report, "present perhaps no more glorious victory than this. The enemy's lines, chosen in an almost impregnable position and fortified with much care, were most gallantly carried by assault, capturing most of his artillery, a large number of prisoners, and sending his army on the run, in the most disorderly manner; and all this, from the impetuosity of the attack, with an absurdly small loss on our part." The loss of the Vermont brigade, like that of the corps and the army, was "absurdly small." The Tenth Vermont regiment lost more men in the charge of Ricketts's division than the six regiments of the Vermont brigade, having one man killed and two officers and seven men wounded, while the brigade had but one man killed and four or five wounded.

The victory of Fisher's Hill was celebrated by salutes of artillery in Grant's army before Richmond, and at Washing-

ton, and the news of it met an enthusiastic reception throughout the North.

Early's demoralized troops fled in the night of the 22d, through Woodstock to an excellent position for a stand, called the "Narrow Passages," four miles south of Woodstock. Sheridan followed him by the turnpike, which he found lighted by burning wagons, destroyed by Early to prevent their capture, though the latter says that all his trains were carried off in safety. The Sixth Corps halted next morning at Woodstock, where a supply train overtook the tired and hungry soldiers, and was welcomed by them, not only for its burden of rations, but as a mark of excellent management on the part of their general. This day was practically lost by the inefficiency of Averell,<sup>21</sup> who went into camp with his cavalry division after the battle of Fisher's Hill, instead of following the enemy, and when he finally go to the front of the Union infantry allowed himself and them to be kept stationary by mythical bodies of the enemy, reported by him as in position near Mount Jackson.

On the morning of the 24th the army again advanced and overtook Early, strongly posted at Rude's Hill, three miles south of Mount Jackson, where several barracks were found full of wounded Confederates. Sheridan prepared to attack, deploying his infantry and sending the cavalry out on the enemy's flanks, but his opponent declined to fight and withdrew, in line of battle, through New Market to Sparta, twenty odd miles to the south. He was closely followed by Sheridan. The day was clear; the country a plateau so open as to allow each side to observe the movements of the other, and the day was one of the most picturesque and exciting of the campaign. Early fell back rapidly, his trains leading the war, and his rear guard halting every mile or two and using artillery on his pursuers. On Sheridan's side the

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<sup>21</sup> For which Sheridan relieved him of his command.

artillery, baggage-wagons and ambulances, moving in double procession, filled the smooth, wide turnpike. The infantry marched on each side of the pike, the Sixth Corps on the left, with Getty's division in advance, in parallel columns of brigades, the Vermont brigade being next the pike. The Nineteenth corps marched on the right of the pike, and in front Devin's cavalry crowded closely on the enemy's rear with a light battery, which often galloped to the front of the skirmish line and opened furiously on the fugitives. Thirteen miles was made in this fashion without a halt and with the enemy in constant sight. At nightfall the tired troops of the Sixth Corps went into camp six miles beyond New Market, almost within range of Early's guns, having gained a mile or more on the Nineteenth corps in the march. Early made a show of halting for the night; but after dark, leaving his watch-fires burning, he put five miles more between him and his pursuers; and the latter saw him no more till he woke them up on the foggy morning of the 19th of October at Cedar Creek. Early made good his retreat to Brown's Gap, sixty miles south of Fisher's Hill; and three weeks of marching and maneuvering, without fighting except between the cavalry of the two armies, followed.

At Brown's Gap, Early was reinforced by the return to him of Kershaw's division of infantry, and Cutshaw's battalion of artillery, which about made good his losses at Winchester and Fisher's Hill. Sheridan followed him to Harrisonburg and Mount Crawford; and then becoming satisfied that Early could easily avoid a decisive encounter, and preferring to be nearer his base of supply, which was now eighty miles away, he began preparations to return down the valley, intending to terminate the campaign by the destruction of the crops in that fertile section. To this end he threw his cavalry across the valley from the Blue Ridge to the North Mountain,

and the crops of grain and the mills which had been so valuable a source of supply to the Confederate army, were thoroughly destroyed, as he retired.

From the 25th to the 29th of September, the Vermont brigade was with the Sixth Corps at Harrisonburg. Though rations were scanty, the men supplied themselves by foraging, and there was no suffering. On the 29th, a march of seven miles was made to Mount Crawford. Here detachments sent out to the numerous mills obtained large supplies of flour, and Major Safford of the Eleventh Vermont, a practical miller, ground and brought into camp a full day's ration for Getty's whole division. On the 30th, Sheridan's army was again concentrated around Harrisonburg, the Vermont brigade going back to its former camp. October 2d, a battalion of 500 picked men from the brigade, scoured the adjacent mountains for stragglers and guerrillas; but found more apple brandy and cattle than men. The constant raids by Mosby and the guerrillas on Sheridan's trains and communications, during this period made the transmission of mails uncertain; and his army was wholly cut off from news for over two weeks, during which camp stories of the defeat of Grant by Lee, and of the capture of Richmond by Grant, had free and equal circulation.

On the 6th of October, when the army began moving back down the valley, the Vermont brigade broke camp at Harrisonburg and made a long and fast march without any stop for dinner, halting at night near Mount Jackson. At New Market, General L. A. Grant met the brigade, having come up with the escort of a supply train, and resumed command, after eighteen days absence. On the 7th, the march was continued, amid pillars of smoke arising on every hand from burning barns, mills and stacks of hay and grain. The dwellings and household stores were spared, under rigid orders; but all supplies that could aid the enemy were burned

and the cattle and sheep driven along.<sup>22</sup> On the 8th, a cold day, with snow, the army passed over Fisher's Hill, and camped at Strasburg.

General Early had been further re-inforced on the 5th by the arrival of Rosser's brigade of cavalry from Petersburg. Early attributed his recent reverses largely to the inefficiency of his cavalry and he at once placed Rosser in command of his cavalry division. This dashing officer took hold with fresh energy, as well as fresh troops, and aspiring to the title of "Savior of the Valley," he assumed the offensive. On the 8th he attacked Custer, who was covering the rear of Sheridan's column. The First Vermont cavalry were the rear guard on the Back Road that day and maintained a running fight with superior forces for a good part of the day. That night Torbert received orders from Sheridan to start back at daylight and "whip the rebel cavalry or get whipped." He did so, sending Merritt's and Custer's divisions. These struck the enemy's cavalry at Tom's Brook, southwest of Strasburg, and after a spirited fight of two hours put them to rout. Custer drove Rosser back to Columbia Furnace, and Merritt chased Lomax for twenty miles up the pike. Custer and Merritt took eleven guns, about fifty wagons, including the headquarters wagons of four Confederate cavalry generals, and 330 prisoners. Ross lost all his artillery but one gun, and "everything that was carried on wheels," and ceased to make any further trouble to Sheridan for some time. "The command," wrote Early to Lee, in reporting this disaster, "is and has been demoralized all the time. It would be better if they could all be put into the infantry; but if that were tried I am afraid they would all run off." This

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<sup>22</sup> Seventy mills, with the flour and grain, and over two thousand barns filled with wheat and hay, were thus committed to the flames, and seven thousand cattle and sheep were either driven off or killed and issued to the men. Hundreds of refugees accompanied the Union army from Staunton, Mount Crawford and Harrisonburg.

plaintive remark may have been made by Early with special references to Lomax's division, but it applied as well to the whole of his cavalry after Tom's Brook. While the cavalry were fighting the infantry halted at Strasburg.

It was Sheridan's plan to let the campaign rest here and to send most of his troops to operate against Richmond. Accordingly, the Sixth Corps was sent on the 10th of October to Front Royal, on its way to Washington. It remained there two days, expecting the Manassas Gap railroad to be repaired to take it to Alexandria. The weather was delightful, and the rest, with the accompaniments of mutton, honey and grapes, which were found in abundance, was grateful to the men. But the stay there was short. Finding that the reconstruction of the railroad would involved considerable delay, Sheridan ordered the corps to march to Alexandria by way of Ashby's Gap. It accordingly started at daylight on the 13th and the men bade good-by to the valley, many of them expecting, in consequence of a camp rumor to that effect, that at Alexandria they would take transports and join General Sherman in North or South Carolina.<sup>23</sup> The corps had marched some fifteen miles, to the ford of the Shenandoah near Ashby's Gap, and Generals Wright and Getty, leading the head of the column, were already in the stream, when messengers from General Sheridan overtook them, with orders for the return of the corps to Cedar Creek. The explanation of this was that Early, who was supposed by Sheridan to be with his main force at Gordonsville or Charlottesville, the other side of the Blue Ridge and sixty miles away, having learned that Sheridan was detaching troops, had returned to the valley, and had that day reoccupied Fisher's Hill. His presence in that quarter being made known by a skirmish of a Confederate reconnoitering

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<sup>23</sup> General Sherman had not yet started on his march to the sea, and the rumor anticipated the fact, by several weeks.

column with a portion of Crook's command, near Strasburg, Sheridan thought best to recall the Sixth Corps; and it was not many days before the wisdom of this precaution was amply demonstrated. General Wright, on receipt of the order, at once faced his corps about. It bivouacked for the night near the ford, and starting before light next morning reached the lines at Cedar Creek during the afternoon, after a hard day's march by way of Newtown and Middletown. Here, two days later, on the 16th of October, a hundred and thirty-four officers and men of the Sixth Vermont, being the portion of the original members of the regiment, and the last of the original members of the brigade, whose term had expired, and who had not re-enlisted, bade farewell to their comrades and took their departure for Winchester and for home. The remainder of the regiment was consolidated into a battalion of six companies, under command of Major Sumner H. Lincoln.<sup>24</sup>

#### CEDAR CREEK.

Four days of comparative quiet followed the return of the Sixth Corps. The two armies were about five miles apart, Early's in its old position at Fisher's Hill, and Sheridan's army on the left bank of Cedar Creek. A Confederate brigade was thrown forward to Hupp's Hill, half way between the two positions, for a day or two, for reconnoitering purposes, but was withdrawn on the 17th. On the 16th, General Sheridan left his headquarters for Washington, having been called thither by Secretary Stanton for a personal conference concerning future plans, leaving General Wright in command of the

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<sup>24</sup> The command of the regiment was first tendered to Captain F. G. Butterfield, who was commissioned by Governor Smith as lieutenant colonel for that purpose; but as Butterfield was unable to do field duty, in consequence of a wound received at Charlestown, and his recovery was delayed, he declined the command and resigned his commission. Captain Lincoln was then promoted to the majority and placed in command.

army. No more fighting was expected at present, and conviction that Early had got enough of it for one while, threw officers and men to a considerable extent off their guard. This feeling of security was strengthened by the result of a reconnoissance made by General Crook, the officer in command of which reported that Early had left his old camp and retreated up the valley. The probable explanation of this misleading report is that the reconnoitering force did not go beyond Hupp's Hill, and took the withdrawal of the Confederate brigade from that point for an abandonment of the entire Confederate position. The precaution of calling the troops under arms at four o'clock A. M. daily, to guard against an early morning surprise, had been for some time discontinued. The men strolled carelessly among the groves by day, and slept in fancied security at night.

But Early, stung by his former defeats, and aware that he could not stay where he was, since the supplies brought with him to Fisher's Hill were exhausted and the torches of Sheridan's cavalry had destroyed all possibility of obtaining provisions from the valley, had resolved to make a daring endeavor to retrieve his reputation. He had been heavily reinforced and must have had towards twenty thousand infantry, though, in his memoir, written to excuse himself and decry Sheridan as a general, he avers that he went into this battle with but "about 8,500 muskets, and a little over forty pieces of artillery." It was with reference to statements of this sort that a New Englander quoted in Colonel Palfrey's *Antietam* said: "A few more years, a few more books, and it will appear that Lee and Longstreet and a one armed orderly and a casual with a shot gun, fought all the battles of the rebellion, and killed all the Union soldiers except those who ran away." In Cavalry Sheridan was much stronger than Early; but his infantry could not have much exceeded 20,000 present for duty. His entire army may possibly have been 5,000 larger than Early's. It was encamped, as above stated,

on the left bank of Cedar Creek, just above its junction with the Shenandoah. The Creek is a shallow, rapid river, coming through a gap in the Little North Mountain, flowing in a general southeasterly direction across the mouth of the Upper Shenandoah Valley, and emptying into the Shenandoah a little north of the base of the Massanutten or Three Top Mountain, about two miles in a direct line above Strasburg. The Creek was nearly thirty yards wide in its lower portion; but could be waded anywhere, as could the Shenandoah, in that neighborhood, at that time of the year. Wagons could cross at the fords where the banks had been cut down for the accommodation of travel. Elsewhere the steep banks of the creek were a formidable obstacle. A number of knolls and hills, rising from one to two hundred feet above the level of the creek, on either hand, afforded excellent positions for batteries to command the fords. Nearly through the centre of the Union position ran the Valley Turnpike, crossing Cedar Creek, a mile above its mouth, by a bridge. Two miles down the pike from the creek, is the village of Middletown. The Union line was picketed across the valley by infantry pickets and cavalry videttes. Sheridan's army was posted in half a dozen separate camps within supporting distance of each other, extending some four miles or more in an irregular bow, facing southerly on the left, where the creek makes a bend to the east before joining the river, and fronting more towards the west on the centre and right. The Eighth corps was upon the extreme left, in two camps, on separate elevations on the left of the turnpike. On the right of the turnpike, the Nineteenth corps occupied the centre, compactly encamped on an elevated plain, its camp guarded by a line of breastworks a short distance in front, extending along the brow of the bank of Cedar Creek. Back of its camp was the Belle Grove House, the headquarters of Generals Sheridan and Crook. Farther to the right, and across Meadow Run, a deep brook running into Cedar Creek, lay

the Sixth Corps, with Getty's division on the extreme right, and somewhat refused, so that the division faced to the northwest. Its camp was not intrenched. Still farther to the right were the cavalry camps.

The Confederate signal station on the high brow of Three Top Mountain looked down upon all these camps. Guns, troops and tents were distinctly visible from this station, and it was with a definite knowledge of the location of the Union forces, that Early and his lieutenants arranged their plan of attack. It was to be a surprise and a scoop. Gordon was to lead a column in the night from Fisher's Hill through the woods around under the base of Three Top Mountain on the south side of the Shenandoah; stealthily cross the river below the mouth of the creek where the Union line was lightly picketed, no attack from that quarter being deemed possible; and having thus turned the left of Sheridan's line, was to strike Crook upon his left and rear at daybreak and repeat for him the operation he had executed so disastrously to Early's left at Fisher's Hill four weeks before. A small brigade of cavalry accompanying the column had orders to push right to the Bell Grove House and capture Sheridan, whose absence was not known to Early. General Early was himself to take a column, with all his artillery, down the turnpike through Strasburg to Cedar Creek and attack Sheridan's left and centre from the front, as soon as Gordon should have become engaged on the flank and rear. At the same time Rosser, with the cavalry, was to move along the Back Road, and making a circuit around the other flank of Sheridan's position, come in from the north and surprise the Union cavalry in their camp. It was an excellent plan, and in its main features it worked to a charm.

A remarkable warning of the impending danger came to General Wright on the 16th, in the shape of a despatch which was brought to him, professing to be a copy of a message signaled to General Early from the Confederate station on

three Top Mountain and read from the flag by the Union signal officers. It read as follows: "To Lieut. General Early: Be ready to move as soon as my forces join you, and we will crush Sheridan. (Signed) Longstreet." There were some curious things about this. As General Longstreet was not in or near the valley, it was of course a fictitious message. If it was actually signaled from Three Top, it must have been a ruse. Yet it is difficult to conceive the object of such a ruse, since its natural effect of it would be to defeat the proposed surprise. No explanation of the mystery has been given; but it seems probable that the message was the device of some unionist, on one side or the other, who took this method of putting the Union commander on his guard. General Wright hurried off a messenger with the despatch to Sheridan, who was at Front Royal that night, on his way to Washington by way of Manassas Gap. As false alarms about Longstreet's coming had been abundant, Sheridan did not put entire confidence in the genuineness of the message. And as Secretary Stanton's request for a personal interview had been urgent, he did not feel at liberty to change his plan of visiting Washington. He contented himself accordingly with sending back word to General Wright to make his position strong, and be well prepared, adding: "If Longstreet's despatch is true, and the enemy should make an advance, I know you will defeat him." He also countermanded an order sending Merritt's division of cavalry on an expedition against the Virginia Central railroad, and ordered Merritt back to Wright.

After dark on Tuesday evening, October 18th, General Gordon, with three divisions of infantry, his own, Ramseur's and Pegram's, and Payne's cavalry, left the Confederate camp at Fisher's Hill, crossed the North Fork of the Shenandoah, and moved to the foot of Three Top Mountain, where he halted for several hours to give his men rest and sleep. Starting again at one o'clock A. M., his column crept noise-

lessly around the base of the mountain, and along the bank of the river.

At the same hour Early started forward over the turnpike, with Kershaw's and Wharton's divisions. His artillery was held back on the pike at Fisher's Hill, lest its rumbling should betray the movement, till the infantry attack opened, when it was to gallop to the front. The field officers of Gordon's column left their horses behind; and in both columns the officers were required to leave their swords and the men their canteens, lest their rattling should alarm the Union pickets. The weather favored the enterprise, the night being dark and chilly and the morning shrouded by a dense fog which delayed the daylight, and veiled all movement of troops.

After passing through Strasburg, Early divided his columns, sending Wharton down the pike, while with Kershaw's division he turned off from the pike to the right, so as to strike Sheridan's line about a mile below the turnpike bridge, by which Wharton crossed. Early says he came in sight of the Union picket fires at half-past three o'clock, and halted his column for an hour, when he ordered Kershaw forward. By this time Gordon was crossing the Shenandoah at McIntyre's and Bowman's fords, his men wading the stream, which was breast high, and before five o'clock he had crept through the Union picket line, and deployed his leading divisions, unmolested, in the rear of the camp of the Eighth corps. That so large a force should have been able to make its way undiscovered through the Union line, showed strange over-confidence and neglect of duty on the part of the pickets at that point. It was said that some of the Union pickets reported hearing a sound as of the tread of many feet, in the night hours, but no one took or gave alarm.

Kershaw crossed Cedar Creek with equal stillness and success, capturing a lieutenant colonel and 18 men of an Ohio regiment, who were on picket, without firing a shot or creating

any disturbance. When across, he quickly deployed in front of Thoburn's division of the Eighth corps, which held the left of the Union position. Up to this hour, about five o'clock, the mass of Sheridan's army lay wrapped in sleep and utterly unconscious of the blow about to fall.

The first sound of strife that broke the stillness of that foggy October morning came from the picket line on the extreme Union right, near the Back Road, under Little North Mountain. The right of the line of infantry pickets in that quarter was manned that morning by details from the Sixth Corps, Colonel George P. Foster of the Fourth Vermont being in charge, as corps field officer of the day. The line was prolonged to the right by cavalry videttes. Here in the early morning Rosser got through the line of cavalry pickets by luring an outpost from the line by the device of an attack and a feigned retreat. Then, passing a larger force through the gap, he fell upon the rear of the infantry pickets. Captain J. C. Lewis of the Eleventh Vermont was in command of the picket reserve at the post on the extreme right; and about thirty men of the Eleventh and Sixth Vermont were here taken prisoners. The large part, however, of the infantry pickets escaped, and forming an irregular skirmish line some distance to the rear, held Rosser in check for hours, till, perceiving from the sound of the battle behind them that the army had fallen back, they retreated and joined it in time to participate in the final charge of the day.

The sound of the picket firing on the right was heard by many in the camp of the Vermont brigade; but as it soon diminished the men wrapped themselves in their blankets and resumed their sleep, when they were next aroused in earnest by the heavier and more ominous roll of musketry from the extreme left, where Kershaw's solid lines, springing over the parapets of Thoburn's division, woke his men with a rattling volley. Before the latter could get into line, the rebels were in their camp. The tents were dragged from over the heads

of Thoburn's men and many were captured as they lay in their blankets. Others fled without boots or hats or arms. Many fell in behind the breastworks in soldierly order, only to find themselves flanked and surrounded by such numbers that resistance was folly. Thoburn was killed and 500 of his men captured; and seven guns, taken without firing a shot, were turned by Kershaw on the terrified fugitives, who, leaving everything behind save the clothing in which they had slept, poured in disorder to the rear. The mob streamed back through the camp of the second division of the Eighth corps, commanded by Colonel R. B. Hayes, afterwards President of the United States, whose troops had hastily fallen into line, when they were struck by Gordon, who had suddenly burst out of the woods upon their left flank. The division was composed of troops which had done brilliant service at Winchester and Fisher's Hill; but the surprise, the disaster to their comrades, and the sudden menace from two different quarters, were too much for them. They broke at Gordon's assault, and the entire corps, leaving its artillery, camp equipage and wagons went in inextricable confusion to the rear, and did no more fighting, as an organization, that day.

This rout of the Eighth corps left the position of the Nineteenth corps uncovered. The troops of that corps had sprung to arms, in their camp on the right of the turnpike, and fallen hastily into line. Some were placed in the trenches facing Cedar Creek, and were at once under heavy fire from Early's artillery which had now been brought up to the crest on the other side of the creek. They were also threatened by Wharton, who was preparing to throw his division against them. Other portions of the corps, under the direction of Generals Emory and Wright, were hurriedly formed at right angles to the line of intrenchments, to face the combined forces of Kershaw and Gordon, now sweeping up from the flank and rear, and driving before them the demoralized

masses of the Eighth corps. Among the troops brought forward for this purpose was a brigade of brave Connecticut, Maine, Pennsylvania, New York and Vermont troops, under command of Colonel Stephen Thomas of the Eighth Vermont. Thomas had been among the first to get his brigade into line, and he was at once ordered forward to the left, across the pike, to stem the rout. He moved promptly forward to the crest of a ravine and copse of woods, a crowd of fugitives pouring through his lines as he took position. General Wright made an earnest effort to rally the men of the eighth corps on the turnpike, under this cover; but it could not be done, and Thomas was thus without support, in his desperate task of checking Gordon's victorious assault. He made several successive stands, holding the crest till his brigade was flanked on the right and left by overwhelming numbers; then falling back to the pike, where the same operation was repeated; and finally rejoining the division, with his brigade diminished by a third—the heaviest loss suffered by any brigade during the day. Details of this noble piece of service will be given in the history of the Eighth Vermont.

Kershaw and Gordon now united their commands along the turnpike; and Early, having followed Kershaw across the creek, directed an immediate assault upon the Nineteenth corps. The lines of the latter were drawn up along a ridge northwest of the pike and nearly parallel to it. The corps made an organized and energetic stand; but it was heavily outnumbered. Gordon's right far overlapped and flanked Emory's left. Brigade after brigade was enfiladed and compelled to fall back to escape capture. Two of the three batteries attached to the division were cut off along the crest and were turned by their captors on Emory's disordered lines. General Wright, bleeding from a wound in the face, assisted by his own and the members of General Sheridan's staff who had not accompanied the latter to Washington, strove vigorously to rally the fugitives and hold the ground

till the Sixth Corps could come up; but it was a hopeless effort, and seeing that Emory's left was completely turned, General Wright ordered him to extricate his corps as best he could and take position farther back, on the right of the Sixth Corps, with which he (Wright) would make a fresh stand a mile to the rear.

The men of the Sixth Corps, two miles to the right of Crook, had been roused at five o'clock, like the rest, by the firing, and listened with astonishment as it grew heavier and heavier. Tents were struck and knapsacks packed and lines formed in haste in order to be ready to move if necessary; but none supposed it possible that the position of the army could have been turned on the left, and none doubted that a front attack would be at once repulsed. But the truth began to break upon them, when at six o'clock orders came from General Wright to move to the rear and take a position on which the other corps could be rallied. The three divisions moved at once, each by the left flank, in nearly parallel lines, across the plain which stretched behind their camps, and toward some higher ground near the turnpike toward Middletown. Ricketts halted his division on a wooded knoll west of the pike, and Wheaton formed on his left, their lines of battle being nearly parallel to the pike. Here before Emory, who was to form on the right of the Sixth, could get his corps in hand, and before Getty's division, which—starting from the extreme right of the lines, had farther to march—could form on Wheaton's left, Gordon and Kershaw attacked with great fury the first and third divisions of the Sixth Corps. The latter checked the victorious advance of the enemy for thirty or forty minutes. But they were heavily assaulted in front and soon were flanked and enfiladed in succession on the right and were forced to fall back. Some desperate resistance was made before they retired, and the Tenth Vermont regiment, after falling back some four hundred yards, returned in the face of a heavy fire to rescue three guns of a

battery which had been abandoned on the crest. The guns were saved by dragging them off by hand, and the regiment held the crest along for a few minutes till it was swept back to the division line with serious loss. Six other guns, less resolutely protected, fell into the enemy's hands about this time, making, with those taken from the Eighth and Nineteenth corps, twenty-four, which had been worse than lost to the Union army, for most of them were turned upon the Sixth Corps. These, with the forty guns brought up by Early, gave him as heavy a preponderance of artillery as of men against the small third of Sheridan's army now standing to their arms. General Ricketts, commanding the corps, fell, well nigh mortally wounded. Almost every field officer in Wheaton's division was killed or wounded. The losses of men were heavy. It was plain that the lines must be withdrawn to save them from destruction.

At this gloomy juncture, about seven o'clock in the morning, Getty's division came into action. It had marched, left in front, in two lines, aiming for the pike. The smoke and for his everything, as it marched obliquely past the rear of the other two divisions; but the rolling volleys of musketry, heard from behind the curtain of mist, told a plain story of fierce attack and stout resistance. Its column was already under fire from the hostile shell flying over and around the ranks from unseen batteries. The sights visible near the pike were anything but reassuring. Crowds of stragglers filled the fields, some hatless, coatless and barefoot, as they had sprung from sleep. Few or none of these were running, but all were pushing with rapid strides to the rear. Wagons and ambulances, the latter dripping blood, were lumbering hither and thither. Pack horses were wandering loose, and cows, with which many of the regiments had been well supplied since the valley was laid waste, bellowing in fright. Officers were striving with oaths and even blows to rally the crowd, which numbered thousands of men, with arms in their hands

but utterly without organization and intent only on getting beyond the hissing bullets and shrieking shell. A cavalry regiment, stretched across the field, was making a vain effort to stem the torrent. "It was," says an eye-witness, "a sight which might well have demoralized the Old Guard of the First Napoleon." But fortunately for the army the steady heads and stout hearts of the men of Getty's division did not fail them then, nor at any time that day. The division halted first along the small stream of Meadow Brook, (which runs parallel to the pike for a mile or two) taking position on the left and a little to the rear of the First division. The enemy's skirmishers filled, and fired briskly from, a piece of woods in front, and General Grant was directed to throw forward a strong line of skirmishers and clear the woods. He detached for this duty the Fifth and Sixth Vermont regiments and Walker's battalion of the Eleventh, all under command of Major Enoch Johnson, who had been taken from his own regiment, the Second, to command the Fifth. Promptly deploying, the skirmishers advanced, driving out the rebels from the timber, and halting only at the farther edge, so far to the front that they were annoyed by the fire of the batteries of their own division, posted behind its lines, and portions of the skirmishers were led to seek shelter from it behind fences and buildings, though in so doing they exposed themselves to the fire of the enemy. General Getty now advanced his division in two lines across Meadow Brook, his left almost reaching the pike in front of the village of Middletown. Here, for the first time during the day, a skirmish line properly guarded the Union line of battle. The Vermonters showed their customary aptness in skirmish duty, holding their line, though the fog made it difficult to distinguish friend from foe, and keeping back the Confederate skirmishers that preceded the fresh advance of Pegram's division. As the latter came forward, the enemy's skirmishers sought shelter in a hollow, and soon two compact

lines of battle advanced upon the Union skirmishers, the front line firing heavily as they came. The bullets pattered thickly in the woods, as the Vermonters, having held back Pegram till Getty could complete the disposition of his division, fell back, without losing much time, for there was none to lose, on the main line.

About this time Wheaton's division, a short distance at Getty's right, gave way under Kershaw's assault. As Ricketts's division had previously retired for some distance, Getty was left to fight alone. It is related that General Crook rode up to him to say that if he did not retreat he would sacrifice his whole division in five minutes. But to retreat without a fight was not in his nature. Finding, however, some more favorable ground, a short distance behind him across Meadow Brook, he withdrew his division thither, to a semi-circular and partially wooded crest. The lengthening lines advancing upon him, compelled him to extend his three brigades in a single line. The Vermont brigade formed the centre of this, standing in an open field. On its left, at an obtuse angle, was Bidwell's brigade, its front covered by woods, and its left flank guarded by a cavalry battalion, deployed as skirmishers. On the right was Warner's brigade, which had thus far formed the second line of the division, its front partly covered by woods. Warner's right was entirely unguarded, all other troops having left that part of the field. So far as the Vermonters, at least, were concerned, there were no walls or fences for shelter. The men lay down behind the top of the crest, to await the coming attack. The skirmishers were needed in the line, and most of them had barely time to take their places in it, before the enemy was upon them. Pegram and Ramseur advanced their divisions in full line of battle. Their attack fell heaviest on the left of Warner's brigade and on the Vermont brigade. They gray lines moved steadily up, within thirty yards of the top of the crest; and then were met with so withering a fire that they recoiled in disorder.

to the foot of the hill, and across the brook. While re-forming their shattered lines they brought up their batteries and endeavored with grape and shell to clear the way for a more successful charge. But Getty's men hugged the ground behind the crest and suffered little loss; and when, after half an hour's cannonade, another assault was made, it met a similar reception. It was made in still stronger force, for Early, finding that Ramseur and Pegram were brought to a stand-still, had ordered forward Wharton's division, which had not yet been engaged. Wharton's men went in eagerly, only to receive a bloody rebuff. Advancing again through the woods, Wharton charged the right of Bidwell's line and the left of Grant's, with an energy which could hardly be resisted. Bidwell's brigade began to give way, the men retiring doggedly step by step till borne back almost to the foot of the hill. The left regiments of the Vermont brigade, the Sixth and Eleventh, swinging back without confusion, maintained the continuity of the line and kept up a deadly fire. As Bidwell was holding his men to their work, he was struck from his saddle by a fragment of a shell, which tore through his lungs, inflicting a frightful and mortal wound. There was danger that a panic would seize his troops, by whom he was greatly respected and beloved. But the officer who succeeded him in command, Colonel French of the Seventy-seventh New York, sprang to the front, shouting; "Don't run, men, till the Vermonters do." Spurred by the loss of their general, his men rallied with fresh spirit, and regained their lost ground, pushing the astonished Confederates back over the crest, and taking many of them prisoners,<sup>25</sup> while the slopes and woods were filled with dead and dying Confederates. General Grant now threw forward a fresh skirmish line, and the division awaited the next movement of the enemy.

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<sup>25</sup> "Wharton's division came back in some confusion."—Early's Memoir.

During the interval between the two main assaults on the hill, General Getty was notified of General Ricketts's wound, and that the command of the corps had devolved upon him. He accordingly turned over the command of his division to General L. A. Grant; and Colonel A. S. Tracy of the Second Vermont, as the senior officer of the Vermont brigade, assumed command of the latter.

Meantime Torbert's cavalry, ordered to the left by General Wright, were concentrating in considerable force on the left of the turnpike, and now guarded the left of the indomitable division, which was still the only infantry force confronting the enemy. The situation was critical in the extreme. All the artillery of Sheridan's army, except that belonging to the cavalry, had been captured or had gone to the rear. The first and third divisions of the Sixth Corps were over a mile to the rear, reorganizing. The Nineteenth corps had rallied, but was still farther away; and most of the Eighth corps, dissolved into a mob of stragglers, was strung along the pike beyond Newtown. Getty's division had held the enemy in check for over an hour, and the men were as full of fight as ever. But its position now became one of great danger. The artillery fire grew hotter, Early's chief of artillery having got twenty pieces into position in its front; and while the heavy columns of Wharton's division were advancing against the cavalry on its left, Kershaw was pushing his lines around the right of Warner's brigade. General Getty, anticipating trouble from the latter quarter, ordered Grant to withdraw the division, unless he saw some special reason for remaining. Just as the order was received by Grant, a Confederate column, pushing through the woods, attacked Warner's right and rear. He at once fell back; the Vermont brigade followed suit, and the division withdrew in good order for half a mile to a cross road just west of Middletown. The enemy occupied the hill in force as soon as the division left it, and moving up his batteries kept up an incessant

fire. The division remained on the cross road for half an hour; but as the position had no particular value, General Grant left the Second Vermont, deployed as skirmishers and supported by the Third, to hold the enemy in check, and moved the division a mile farther to the rear to another cross road and low elevation which General Getty had selected as a better position for a final stand. The division marched thither in line of battle and in excellent order, and faced to the front with undiminished pluck.<sup>26</sup> The Vermont brigade, as before, held the centre, with Bidwell's brigade, now under Colonel French, on the left, extending to the pike, and Warner's on the right. A stone wall running into the woods on the right afforded protection to a portion of the line, and at other points the rail fences were piled into breastworks. But the enemy, admonished by the reception given to his previous approaches, maintained a cautious distance.<sup>27</sup>

It was now about ten o'clock, and after four hours of fighting and tumult, of almost unbroken success on the Confederate side, and of hasty flight or sullen retreat on the part of the several Union corps and divisions which had been in turn encountered and overwhelmed, a lull fell upon the field. Early's troops were weary after a night of marching and morning of fighting. His forces had become considerably broken in the progress of the battle, and the ranks were thinned not only by losses but by the absence of men who had scattered through the Union camps after plunder. His

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<sup>26</sup> "This division [Getty's] in the had task of retiring slowly and checking the enemy at every available point, performed superb service, whose importance to the fortunes of the day cannot be exaggerated."—Pond's *Shenandoah Valley* in 1864.

<sup>27</sup> "We went back quietly and in good order, a single regiment, the Second Vermont, holding without difficulty the position we abandoned. We carried with us all our wounded, all our shelter tents and all our personal property of every description, and the rebels did not dare to attack us."—*Three Years in the Sixth Corps*.

cavalry was of no account, while the Union cavalry was menacing his flank. He probably discovered that he was not likely to make much further progress, and he devoted himself to reorganizing his lines in order to hold what he had gained.

General Wright, on his part, was active in efforts to retrieve the day. Getty's division was a firm nucleus, and the third and first divisions of the Sixth Corps were moving up, by Getty's order, to the right of the Second. Wright was preparing to bring up the Nineteenth corps to prolong the line, and would soon have been fairly ready to resist further attack. He has never admitted that he had given up the battle, or lost hope of resuming the offensive; but it is very doubtful if he could have done it. The day had thus far certainly gone very seriously against him. It is equally certain that his troops missed Sheridan, and felt as if the army was without its head, and the ship without its pilot.

Now occurred the remarkable incident which gave to this battle its powerful dramatic interest, and to its commander the brightest laurel in his chaplet of fame. General Sheridan, having finished his business at Washington, had hurried back to the valley. He had reached Winchester, on the morning of the 19th, when the sound of artillery told him that a battle was in progress, and he started out at nine o'clock, to find trains and troops of the broken Eighth corps, within half a mile of the town. Giving orders to the brigade in garrison at Winchester to form a cordon and stop the stragglers, he started for Cedar Creek with an escort of twenty mounted men. The story of his arrival on the field, and of the remainder of the battle, as it was seen from the lines of the Vermont brigade, is thus described by the author whose graphic history of this campaign, to the success of which he contributed the share of a brave and capable officer, has been hitherto repeatedly quoted.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Colonel A. F. Walker 's "Vermont Brigade in the Shenandoah Valley."

While waiting for the complete re-formation of the army, sulkily and it is to be feared profanely growling over the defeat in detail which we had experienced, though not in the least disposed to admit that our division had been whipped, in fact a little proud of what we had already done, and expecting the rebel charge which we grew more and more confident we should repulse, we heard cheers behind us on the pike. We were astounded. There we stood, driven four miles already, quietly waiting for what might be further and immediate disaster, while far in the rear we heard the stragglers and hospital bummers, and the gunless artillerymen actually cheering as though a victory had been won. We could hardly believe our ears.

"The explanation soon came, in the apparition which Buchanan Read's as yet embryonic, but now well-known poem, had made familiar. As the sturdy, fiery Sheridan, on his sturdy, fiery steed, flaked with foam from his two hours mad galloping,<sup>29</sup> wheeled from the pike and dashed down the line, our division also broke forth into the most tumultuous applause. Ardent General Custer first stopped the wonderful Inspirer, and kissed him before his men. His next halt was before our own brigade. Such a scene as his presence produced and such emotions as it awoke cannot be realized once in a century. All outward manifestations were as enthusiastic as men are capable of exhibiting; cheers seemed to come from throats of brass, and caps were thrown to the tops of the scattering oaks; but beneath and yet superior to

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<sup>29</sup> This famous steed "Winchester" was of Black Hawk blood—a noted Vermont stock, foaled in Michigan, brought into the service by an officer of the Second Michigan cavalry, and presented to General Sheridan by the officers of that regiment. He was ridden by General Sheridan in nearly every battle and engagement, some forty in number, in which he took part. He was an animal of immense strength and endurance. He lived for thirteen years after the close of the war and till he was twenty years old. His skin was stuffed and is preserved at the Military Service Institute, Governor's Island, N. Y.

these noisy demonstrations, there was in every heart a revulsion of feeling, and a pressure of emotion, beyond description. No more doubt or chance for doubt existed; we were safe, perfectly and unconditionally safe, and every man knew it.

"When our greeting had somewhat subsided Col. Tracy, the first man in the Corps to address him, rode up, hat in hand, saying, "General, we're glad to see you." "Well, by G--, I'm glad to be here," exclaimed the General, "What troops are these?" "Sixth Corps! Vermont brigade!" was shouted from the ranks. His answer was as prompt: "All right! We're all right! We'll have our camps by night!" and he galloped on. So soon had he determined to defeat the enemy. He soon met General Wright and 'suggested that we would fight on Getty's line,' sending us word meanwhile that Getty's division had outdone itself that morning.

"It was now about noon. The next hour was spent by the General riding through the whole command, confirming Wright's disposition and inspiring the troops by his presence and his words. He thus surveyed the entire field and felt that he was master of the position. General Wright, General Getty and General Grant returned to their commands. Custer's cavalry was again moved by our rear to the right of the army. About one o'clock The Vermont Brigade was hastily taken through the woods to a point in the rear of the Nineteenth Corps, where the enemy were pressing, but the attack was easily repulsed without our assistance. Then we returned to a spot where we were concealed from the enemy's view, but from which we could in a moment reach our old position in the line, and where we quietly waited for the order to advance. In ten minutes half the men, with genuine soldier nonchalance, were fast asleep.

"Sheridan's plan of battle was something as follows: to throw forward the right, Nineteenth Corps and Cavalry, striking the left of the enemy and turning it if possible; to occupy the rest of his line by a sharp attack but especially to over-

whelm his left, the whole army following the movement in a grant left wheel. With this view the Sixth Corps, our left, was drawn up in one line, considerably extended, while the Nineteenth was massed in two lines, its flank weighted by the cavalry.

"Time was consumed in making the necessary dispositions and in distributing ammunitions, so that it was nearly four o'clock when the few guns we had remaining commenced their usual ante-battle salute. The challenge was promptly answered, and at the appointed time the whole line advanced against the enemy. Their stragglers had been collected, their line was well closed up and strongly posted, and their advance would soon have been resumed, had not our army taken the initiative. The long thin line of the Sixth Corps was thus hurled against a very heavy line of the enemy,<sup>30</sup> covered throughout by a series of stone walls.

"Our own Division was now the only one in our sight, the rest of the battle commencing in the woods. So it happened that as French's Brigade on Grant's left, General Bidwell being absent and dying, crossed a long open field into the line of fire that flamed from the wall before them, being ordered to move slowly as the pivot of the army wheel, it staggered and at last fell back to its starting place. Warner's troops on our right had obliqued over a hill where we could no longer see them; we were therefore forced to halt behind a fortunate wall, low, and just long enough to cover our Brigade, where we opened fire. Directly in front of our position were a house,<sup>31</sup> mill, and other out-buildings, swarming with the enemy, our only approach to which was along a narrow road by the side of a little mill-pond formed by a dam across our old annoyance, Meadow Run.

"French's broken Brigade seeing that we refused to

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<sup>30</sup> Ramseur's division.

<sup>31</sup> D. J. Miller's house.

retire, rallied with very little delay and again advanced to the charge, this time by General Getty's direction on the double quick, its commander having complained that he could not take his men over the open filed at a slower pace, and with an apparently unanimous determination to succeed. When they were nearly abreast of our position, being still across the Run, our Brigade poured over the wall which had covered it, and rushed promiscuously into the cul de sac by the mill-pond. The attack was successful, and the group of buildings from which the enemy fled in confusion to a wall which protected their second line, was as good a protection for us as it had been for the rebels. The troops of our Brigade were now scattered about the grounds and out-buildings just mentioned, some of them being behind and upon two large hay-stacks, and fully one third of the command being advanced quite a distance further, to the cover of a broken garden wall and among several large trees. French was now in a capital spot nearly up with us, and we were still unable to see the regiments on our right. Officers went over the hill to reconnoitre found a rebel line of battle and a section of their artillery nearly on the prolongation of our line, and it was considered that we should be doing extremely well if we were able to hold our then position, being it will be remembered the extreme left of the army, with a heavy force of the enemy in our front, and even extending across the pike where we had now no troops except a regiment or so of Col. Kitchen's unattached "provisional" train guard, and some cavalry.

"Therefore we kept concealed as much as was consistent with expending the full fifty rounds of ammunition consumed in the next half hour, the rebel fire meanwhile being so hot that we could not carry off our wounded or send for more cartridges. At last however the excellence of Sheridan's plan was proved; a movement became apparent on the right; Warner's left was again seen advancing, and with a cheer we made a final charge against the walls before us. The enemy

faced our advance but for a moments and then fled in confusion; we pursued faster and faster, only stopping to hastily fill our cartridge-boxes with captured ammunition; the retreat became a stampede, the pursuit became a reckless chase, and with tumultuous cheers and throbbing hearts we crowded the motley mob before us, on and on over the miles of hill and plain to the banks of Cedar Creek. Our formation was entirely lost but he had the organization and enthusiasm of recognized success; every man felt that it would not do to allow the enemy to rally on this side of the stream; the front was presently occupied by flags alone, as the more heavily loaded troops became unable to keep up with the energetic color-sergeants; the strong cavalry force on our distant right were seen charging down the field; the rebels obliqued confusedly and in uncontrollable dismay towards the turnpike and the bridge; a final attempt was made to organize a last resistance on the hills that crowned the Creek, but after a feeble volley the line melted away; a last battery faced us with a round of canister, but in vain; we saw the flag that followed Sheridan, a white star on the red above a red star on the white, flashing in the front and centre of the army, literally leading it to victory; the regimental standard bearers viewed with each other in an eager strife to be first in the works of the morning, every brigade in the army afterwards claiming the distinction, our own brigade certainly not with the least ground of any; and so at last we manned the entrenchments of the Nineteenth Corps, while the foe toiled up the other bank of Cedar Creek and hastily formed a battle-line our side our musket range. Artillery came up on the gallop and opened vigorously. Generals exchanged congratulations with each other and their troops. Sheridan's promise was fulfilled again, for we had our camps as the evening fell.

"It is perhaps not surprising that sarcastic cheers and impudent questions concerning the distance to Harper's Ferry and the probabilities of an early mail saluted a few of

General Crook's officers who followed to witness our success. The feeling was prevalent and not unreasonable that we were indebted to them alone for our day's work, with the terrible discomfiture of the morning, but we were afterwards convince that they had done what they could.

"Sheridan was not satisfied even yet. Custer was ordered to pursue the enemy still further. We saw in the twilight the regiments he had selected, being the First Vermont and the Fifth New York Cavalry, cross the creek at a ford a mile above the bridge, then gradually deploy and climb the hill in an extended line; a volley awaited them at its summit which was like a blaze of fire in the darkness, but the brave horsemen did not falter, and that volley was the last.

"Every regiment to its camp of the morning' was the order next received, and we joyfully picked our way to our first position. Tent poles, rude tables, and rustic couches were found undisturbed; a few minutes more and everything was as it had been twenty-four hours before, save in the absence of the fallen. Fires were lighted and the excited men, though weary, were more ready to discuss and congratulate than to sleep; while once and anon a quiet party would sally forth into the night to find and save some groaning sufferer. The bodies of the Union troops left dead and wounded on the field in our first retreat had been most shamefully plundered by the rebels, many of them lying naked on the ground when recaptured.

"At perhaps ten p.m., a cavalry acquaintance hurried into camp and from him we learned the sequel of the day; how Custer and Davies had pushed the cavalry over Fisher's Hill and were still in pursuit; how all our captured cannon had been re-taken and nearly every one of the enemy's guns had been brought into camp by their own unwilling drivers; how prisoners were crowding in by hundreds and the vacant space in front of Sheridan's headquarters had become a corral, full of all sorts of plunder, men, guns, wagons, and mules, upon

which he was wont for many days to look with grim satisfaction; how a Vermont boy had, single-handed, captured a rebel general,<sup>32</sup> for which he afterwards received a well-earned decoration, naively telling Secretary Stanton at the time of its bestowal that the Johnnies in the darkness expostulated with him for interfering with 'the General's' ambulance, whereat he 'guess the general was the very man he was looking for;' how in fact the turnpike had been blocked at the foot of Fisher's Hill, and three miles of wagons and guns were captured entire."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Major General Ramseur.

<sup>33</sup> The following song was a great favorite in the Sixth Corps, after they got back to Petersburg. It was not altogether fair to the other corps, which had done a good deal more fighting than the Sixth Corps supposed; but that was the way the men who wore the Greek cross felt about the matter, at that time.

#### SONG OF THE SIXTH CORPS.

Tune—The Louisiana Lowlands.

I.

Come all ye followers of the "cross"\*  
 Come hither every one;  
 A little story I'll relate  
 About red Cedar Run;  
 At Cedar Run's fierce battlefield  
 The Eight corps ran away,  
 The Nineteenth broke and left the Sixth  
 To bear the brunt that day.

Chorus.

In the Shenandoah lowlands, lowlands,  
 In the Shenandoah lowlands low;  
 Just watch them while I lead the charge,  
 Fight as a single man,  
 For God, their country and their cross  
 And Philip Sheridan.

II.

They held them, giving shot for shot.  
 For yell they answered yell;  
 Then standing firm they faltered not  
 Though thickly flew the shell.  
 Above the smoke, above the fog  
 Their banners flamed aloft—  
 They knew not how to run, those men,  
 Brave followers of the "cross."

III.

At length they yield by slow degrees;  
 Outflanked, outnumbered far;  
 Backward they go, swept by the tide  
 Of stern, resistless war.  
 The battle now seems to be lost;  
 Up rides a single man;  
 One, but a host within himself,  
 Our gallant Sheridan.

IV.

"Come up with me, your Nineteenth, Eighth,  
 Come up with me, I say;  
 Why do you lag so far behind?  
 We have not lost the day.  
 Come up upon this crest of hill;  
 'Twill be a glorious sight;  
 You won't get hurt; you needn't fire;  
 But see that Sixth Corps fight!"

Twenty-four Confederate guns were captured, and twenty-four Union guns, lost in the forenoon, were re-captured—a total of 48, and of these the First Vermont cavalry brought in twenty-three. Sheridan took 1,200 prisoners, re-took all the captured ambulances, with fifty-six of Early's; and of the forty-nine Confederate battle flags sent by him to Washington at the close of the Valley campaign, a large portion were taken here.

Early's trophies were 1,400 prisoners taken in the morning and hurried to the rear and to Richmond before they could be re-taken. He admitted a loss of 1,860 men killed and wounded, including some of his best officers; and his account of the battle indicates that his army was more thoroughly routed than any army of either side since the first Bull Run. Gordon's brigades, he says, all gave way and could not be rallied. Ramseur "only succeeded in retaining with him two or three hundred men of his division." "About the same number of Kershaw's men were rallied by a member of his staff." "Wharton's division retired in disorder."

"Pegram succeeded in bringing back a portion of his command across Cedar Creek in an organized condition; but this small force soon dissolved." Early says he tried hard to rally his men at Cedar Creek and again at Hupp's Hill, two miles back, but could not get 500 men to stand by him. This battle was practically the end of the Valley campaign, and of Jubal Early as a general, though, having been relieved of the command of his own corps (which was given to Gordon), he was permitted to retain command of a division, most of which, with all his artillery, was captured by Sheridan's cavalry at Waynesboro, four months later. This last catastrophe was the last of Early.

In the heavy losses sustained by Sheridan's army, aggregating a little short of 4,000 killed and wounded, nearly half of which were in the Sixth Corps, the Vermont brigade had a share;—yet, considering how hotly it was engaged, and how much fighting it did, it suffered less than might have been expected. Its casualties were as follows:

	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.	Died of Wounds.	Total.
Second Vermont	4	33	3	6	40
Third "	3	38	1	3	42
Fourth	6	20	3	2	29
Fifth	2	16	3	1	21
Sixth	5	32	10	5	47
Eleventh	10	75	21	12	106
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Total.	30	214	41	29	285

Among the killed was Second Lieutenant Oscar R. Lee, of the Eleventh, a brave and capable officer.<sup>34</sup> Among the wounded was Lieut. Colonel Tracy of the Second. While in command of the brigade, shortly after Sheridan's arrival, and while inspecting the skirmish line in front, he was struck from his saddle by a piece of a shell, which inflicted a seri-

<sup>34</sup> Lieutenant Lee had been appointed captain of his company three days before his death, but his commission had not reached him. His shoulder was born away by a shell.

ous wound in his left hip. Captains Hubbard of the Third, Aikens of the Fourth, Kavanaugh of the Fifth, Kinney and Kennedy of the Sixth, and E. P. Lee of the Eleventh, a brother of Captain Oscar Lee; Lieutenants Ferry of the Second, Lyon of the Third, and French of the Eleventh were also wounded in the line, together with Captain Amidon of the Fourth and Captain Baxter of the Eleventh, who were serving on the brigade staff.

General Getty, praise from whom always means something, says in his report that "the conduct of the officers and men of his division was gallant and steady throughout the day," and that he "takes just pride" in recapitulating the service of his division in this battle.

General Wright says in his report: "To the Sixth Corps—which it was my honor to command after the death of that noble soldier, Sedgwick,—to its officers and men, I desire to acknowledge the obligations, which in addition to the many others it has imposed, it laid upon the country by its steadiness, courage and discipline in this important battle. Without disparagement to the soldierly qualities of other organizations concerned, it is but just to claim for it a large share in the successes of the day. Being from the nature of the attack upon our lines somewhat in the position of a reserve force, and therefore fairly to be called upon to turn the tide of unsuccessful battle, it came up noble to its duty, fully sustaining its former well earned laurels."

General Sheridan, in his report, says: "On arriving at the front I found Merritt's and Custer's divisions of cavalry under Torbert, and General Getty's division of the Sixth Corps opposing the enemy. I suggested to General Wright that we would fight on Getty's line. \* \* \* Getty's division of the Sixth Corps and Merritt's and Custer's divisions of cavalry confronted the enemy from the first attack in the morning until the battle was decided." These were the only troops engaged of which this could be said.

When, three weeks later, General Sheridan, who had been made a brigadier general in the regular army after Winchester, was appointed major general in the regular army, the promotion was declared, in terms dictated by Abraham Lincoln, to be "for the personal gallantry, military skill and confidence in the courage and patriotism of your troops displayed by you on the 19th day of October, at Cedar Run, whereby, under the blessing of Providence, your routed army was reorganized, a great national disaster averted, and a brilliant victory achieved over the rebels for the third time in pitched battle within thirty days."

Mr. Lincoln did not confine his remembrance and recognition to the commander of the army. Many of the subordinate officers of the army of the Shenandoah received promotion, either actual or by brevet, among the number being eight officers of the Vermont brigade who received commissions signed by the President, advancing each a grade by brevet for "meritorious service."<sup>35</sup>

The brigade remained in its camp on the left bank of Cedar Creek for two days after the battle; and then was transferred, with the rest of Getty's division, to the village of Strasburg, with picket outposts thrown out to Fisher's Hill. Here, in excellent quarters in the houses of the village. The brigade remained for two weeks. General Early retreated to New Market, where he was reinforced by a brigade from Breckenridge's department, and by considerable numbers of conscripts and convalescents. He had got enough of fighting, however, and each army lay quiet, with the exception of the cavalry, who were sharply engaged at Milford, in the Luray Valley, October 26th.

On the 8th of November, the Presidential election took

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<sup>35</sup> These were Colonels George P. Foster and James M. Warner, brevetted as brigadier generals; Major Enoch E. Johnson and Major A. F. Walker, as lieutenant colonels; Lieut. Colonel Floyd, as colonel; Captain E. Wales and J. E. Eldredge, as majors; and Lieutenant H. C. Baxter as captain.

place, and the Vermont soldiers voted in their camps, giving Lincoln a majority in the brigade of 416, out of 1,112 votes cast. The Second and Fourth regiments gave majorities for McClellan, who was still a favorite with many veterans. On the 9th of November, Sheridan withdrew his army to Kernstown, to be nearer his base. The railroad was repaired from Harper's Ferry to Stevenson's Depot, (six miles from camp) which now became the base of supply; and hay was issued for the horses for the first time in six months.

The Vermont brigade marched with the division and the army from Strasburg, November 9th, to Newtown, and thence to Kernstown on the 10th. Thinking that Sheridan's movement indicated the detachment of troops to Petersburg, Early followed up his rear, and Sheridan on the 12th prepared for battle. The cavalry, however, only, were engaged, Merritt and Custer driving Rosser back over the Back and Middle Roads across Cedar Creek, while Powell routed McCausland's brigade at Stony Point. The latter lost two guns and 250 men. Early returned to New Market on the 14th, and revisited the lower Shenandoah Valley no more.

So ended this memorable campaign. Officers and men of the Vermont brigade had every reason to be well content with their record in it. In his report of the battle of the Opequon, the brigade commander, Colonel Warner, said that to specify the officers who distinguished themselves in action would be to give a roster of the commissioned officers of the brigade. The same might be said of them in each subsequent battle, and the men fulfilled their part as well as the officers did theirs.

The Sixth Corps remained at Kernstown for a month without any service being required of the troops more arduous than light outpost and picket duty, for which formal guard-mountings were resumed, and brigade dress parades at evening. The men made their quarters comfortable; the troops were paid off; the sutlers rejoined the army with supplies of salt

mackerel and gingerbread; Thanksgiving day, on the 24th, brought barrels of turkeys and mince pies from Vermont, the weather was generally fine; the sick lists were small, and the troops enjoyed their four weeks' stay in "Camp Russell." And hoped it might be prolonged through the winter; and that in any case they should not be returned to Petersburg.

On the 21st of November, the corps was reviewed by General Sheridan. It turned out in large numbers, and the parade was conducted with much spirit in spite of a rain storm which somewhat dampened the enthusiasm of the troops. As December opened, the weather became wintry, and as campaigning had ended in the valley, General Grant recalled the Sixth Corps, while Lee at the same time withdrew Early's corps, now under Gordon, to his lines in front of Petersburg. The divisions of the Sixth Corps moved successively, Getty's remaining till the last. On the 9th of December, five months to a day since the brigade left Petersburg, the Vermont brigade broke camp, marched to Stevenson's Depot, took train in a driving snow storm in the afternoon, and that evening, in the darkness and tempest, left the Shenandoah Valley, by way of Harper's Ferry, not to return.