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AN ADDRESS

— TO THE —

Soldiers of the Army of the Potomac,

AND ESPECIALLY TO THE

SURVIVING MEMBERS OF THE FIFTH CORPS,

CONTAINING A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE CASE OF

GEN. FITZ JOHN PORTER.



BY ONE WHO SERVED UNDER HIM.

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WASHINGTON, D. C., JULY 1, 1880.

To my former Companions in Arms the survivors of the Fifth Corps, and to my fellow-soldiers of the Army of the Potomac.

COMRADES: The prominence which has of late been given to the case of Gen. Fitz John Porter, and the efforts put forth to secure a decision upon partisan grounds of the measure now pending before Congress for his relief, lead me to address you in that friendly spirit which should ever govern the intercourse between men who have shared hardships and dangers together.

We may differ in politics—we may not agree as to facts or conclusions in every respect—but there is one broad platform upon which we may all stand—the platform of justice. In this belief I have confidence that you will give heed to my words and approve of what I shall say; or if you cannot altogether approve, that you will accord to me the credit of having spoken naught but the sincere convictions of an earnest heart.

Gen. Fitz John Porter, who now seeks, as he has unceasingly done in the past, reparation for a grievous wrong done him under color of law, was the first commander of the Fifth Corps. For the first two years of the late war the history of events in the field where the Army of the Potomac was contending with rebellion, was his history; and his history, I might almost say, was the history of the Union during the same period. His loyalty, energy, and ability commended him to public notice at the very outbreak of hostilities, and his course during those early days of doubting did not belie the record he had previously made in Mexico.

During the Peninsular campaign he came into yet greater prominence as the central figure of the siege of Yorktown and of the memorable "Seven Days" of battle from Mechanicsville to the James.

We who fought under his leadership at Hanover, Mechanicsville, Gaines' Mill, the Chickahominy, and Malvern had opportunity for judging not only of his capacity as a commander, but were also enabled to form some opinion as to what manner of man we had for a chieftain. We found him to be bold, sagacious, clear and far sighted, and proved him loyal to the very core of his great and sympathetic heart.

He did not approve of the movement of the Army of the Potomac from the Peninsula, nor did McClellan, nor did Sumner, nor did Heintzelman, nor did the other generals—his brother-officers. They all saw the design of the rebel chieftain; they all perceived, and many of them predicted, the change from the base of the James to the Potomac would prolong the war, and even so it proved. It was a fatal mistake, in a military point of view, as subsequent events made plain. The war, which, had Gen. McDowell been permitted to join us after the battle

of Hanover Court-house, might have been ended in 1862, was protracted during three years of sorrow and bloody sweat. Thousands upon thousands of brave men were sacrificed under Grant to secure the base of operations we had gained with comparatively small loss, and which we were compelled to abandon for want of proper support from the government we were risking our lives in defending.

The soil of the "Wilderness" of Virginia was enriched by the blood and shattered forms of thrice ten thousand heroes; the land was filled with mourning, and an army of wounded and crippled veterans were sent to the rear to march up and down life's toilsome way until death should bid them rest,—and all because somebody blundered.

The withdrawal of the Army of the Potomac let loose the combined rebel forces in Virginia upon the Union army in front of Washington, and when we arrived at Aquia Creek Pope was already enmeshed in a net principally of his own construction.

Without having taken that first great precaution of a careful commander to protect his lines of supply, and in case of necessity for retreat, he was set upon by the enemy and hedged about upon every side by a wily foe. From the Rapidan to Manassas he was outgeneraled at every step, and when he arrived upon his old camping-ground he found himself in reality surrounded. The capital of the Nation whose uniform he wore was as inaccessible to his army, without risking almost certain overthrow, as though an ocean intervened.

When he was in his greatest strait the Army of the Potomac came, and its skillful generals began retrieving the errors of Pope by finding the foe and holding him at bay. With the Potomac army came the Fifth Corps, under the command of Gen. Fitz John Porter, and which, marching across the country from Aquia Creek by way of Kelly's Ford, was reported for duty to Gen. Pope at or near Warrenton Junction on the 27th of August, 1862. A portion of the corps—the Pennsylvania Reserves—had reported several days earlier.

It is of our march from Warrenton to Groveton, and concerning the events occurring during the period extending from the 27th to the 30th of August, inclusive, that I intend speaking; for upon the results of that march and upon those events depend the honor or dishonor of one for whom I then had, and for whom I yet entertain, the very highest regard.

I shall endeavor to make my statements clear; and if I am somewhat tedious, I beg you to bear with me, remembering that the story I have to tell covers thousands of pages of printed records and testimony.

I shall endeavor to state only facts as they were presented to my own observation, or appear of record; and if I err in any respect I hope to be corrected, for I would not knowingly do injustice to any one.

At about 10 o'clock at night on the 27th August, Gen. Porter, then with his command at or near Warrenton Junction, received from Gen. Pope the following order:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF VIRGINIA,
BRISTOE STATION, August 27, 1862, 6.30 P. M.

GENERAL: The major-general commanding directs that you start at 1 o'clock to-night, and come forward with your whole corps, or such part of it as is with you, so

as to be here by daylight to-morrow morning. Hooker has had a very severe action with the enemy, with a loss of about 300 killed and wounded. The enemy has been driven back, but is retiring along the railroad. We must drive him from Manassas and clear the country between that place and Gainesville, where McDowell is. If Morell has not joined you, send word to him to push forward immediately. Also send word to Banks to hurry forward with all speed to take your place at Warrenton Junction. It is necessary, on all accounts, that you should be here by daylight. I send an officer with this dispatch who will conduct you to this place. Be sure to send word to Banks, who is on the road from Fayetteville, probably in the direction of Bealeton. Say to Banks, also, that he had best run back the railroad trains to this side of Cedar Run. If he is not with you, write him to that effect.

By command of Major-General Pope :

GEORGE D. RUGGLES,
Colonel and Chief of Staff.

Major-General F. J. PORTER,
Warrenton Junction.

P. S.—If Banks is not at Warrenton Junction, leave a regiment of infantry and two pieces of artillery as a guard till he comes up, with instructions to follow you immediately. If Banks is not at the Junction, instruct Colonel Cleary to run the trains back to this side of Cedar Run, and post a regiment and section of artillery with it.

By command of Major-General Pope :

GEORGE D. RUGGLES,
Colonel and Chief of Staff.

This order was for Gen. Porter to march at 1 o'clock that night, and the object of the movement, as stated by Pope himself, was to drive the enemy, alleged to have been driven back and then retiring along the railroad, from Manassas, and clear the country of him between that place and Gainesville, where McDowell was supposed to be located.

The order further required the Fifth Corps, or so much of it as was with Porter, to be at Bristoe by daylight on the morning of the 28th.

Those of us who marched from Falmouth via Kelly's Ford to Warrenton, know full well the condition we were in on the night of the 27th, when the order to march came.

Hungry, weary, worn-out in fact by the last march of 19 miles in the heat and dust of a sultry midsummer day, we were illy prepared for another 10-mile tramp, and at the end of it be in fit condition to meet the foe in shock of battle. But the duty of a soldier is supposed to know neither fatigue nor hunger; and hence we had scarcely bivouacked before we were ordered to make ready for the next move.

The night was exceedingly dark. I remember it well. The roads were blocked and jammed with thousands of wagons—the trains of Pope's retreating army.

The railroad was obstructed by passing trains of cars and by bridges over which an army could not well pass by daylight, much less at night, and everything tended to make a literal obedience to the order impossible. Besides, in addition to the physical obstructions to be encountered, there was the knowledge—no mere passing belief, but a sound conviction founded upon various facts developed prior to the reception of the order—that Pope misunderstood the situation of affairs; that things were not as he represented them to be. Subsequent events proved the truth of this knowledge and of these convictions.

The enemy had not been driven back, were not retreating in any direction, but, on the contrary, advancing to a new and stronger position almost exactly opposite from where Pope supposed him to be, and lay-

ing a trap for the major-general commanding the Union forces, into which he was only too ready to fall. Gen. Porter nevertheless expressed his desire to carry out the order sent him; but his division commanders, Morell, Sykes, and Butterfield, all experienced soldiers and of approved loyalty, counselled delay of a few hours, maintaining that nothing would be lost, but everything gained thereby.

Gen. Porter, yielding reluctantly to their advice, changed the hour for starting to 3 o'clock, and his troops began to move at that hour. Even then the delays on account of darkness and the obstructions encountered in the shape of wagon-trains, artillery, and the like, proved conclusively the wisdom of his subordinates.

We reached Bristoe shortly after 8 o'clock in the morning, and were all in line by 10 o'clock. We had marched 10 miles; and McDowell, Kearney, and Reno, who had been ordered down to Bristoe and Manassas to help bag the rebel army, (at that time taking up position in the neighborhood of Groveton,) and who had no obstructed roads to travel, and the last two of whom had but five miles to come, did not reach the designated place sooner than we.

And McDowell lost himself by the way and did not get up at all.

They were ordered to march "at the earliest blush of dawn," the order having been issued two and a half hours later than that to Gen. Porter. They had open roads and daylight all the way, and yet we all arrived, except McDowell, at about the same time, we being ahead, if anything.

If the object in view was a combined movement against the enemy, what more could have been required?

The movement proved unnecessary. In fact, the necessity for it had never existed at all. On his arrival Gen. Porter was informed by Pope that Ewell's division (the one to be bagged) had withdrawn in the night towards Manassas. Pope also stated that he intended starting with a portion of his force to "beat up the enemy," (which was equivalent to an admission that his whereabouts were unknown,) and left about 11 o'clock upon that undertaking.

We all know how successful he was upon that expedition. Before nightfall he did "beat up the enemy" in a manner and location fearfully disastrous to himself.

It is worthy of note that Gen. Porter reported to Gen. Pope the change in the hour for starting from Warrenton, and the reasons therefor, almost directly upon receipt of the order.

No exception was taken to the modification, and I contend that, under the discretion vested in commanding officers of large bodies of troops, Gen. Porter did no more than he had a perfect right to do under the circumstances, and did right.

And yet disobedience of this order was one of the charges brought against Gen. Porter, and upon which he was tried.

McDowell was not blamed for not obeying the order to him and failing to get up at all—nor were Kearney and Reno censured because they were less diligent in obeying their orders, or because they failed to march five miles sooner than Porter marched ten. Porter was the only one upon whom the heavy hand of his chief's displeasure fell when Pope

got it through his thick skull that, in order to save himself, some one must be sacrificed.

The afternoon of the 28th found Pope hunting for the enemy in the vicinity of Centreville, where there was no enemy, and some of Pope's choicest troops being cut to pieces by the foe between Manassas and Groveton or Gainesville, where the commanding-general of the Union forces insisted there was no foe.

Pope's only anxiety seemed to be to get behind Bull Run; hence his desire to march to Centreville. Porter hit the nail on the head when he remarked, in one of his dispatches to Gen. Burnside, "We are working now to get behind Bull Run, and I presume will be there in a few days, if strategy don't use us up. The strategy is magnificent, and tactics in the inverse proportion."

On the morning of the 29th, after sunrise, Gen. Porter received the following order:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF VIRGINIA.

NEAR BULL RUN, August 29, 1862, 3 A. M.

GENERAL: McDowell has intercepted the retreat of Jackson. Sigel is immediately on the right of McDowell. Kearney and Hooker march to attack the enemy's rear at early dawn. Major-General Pope directs you to move upon Centreville at the first dawn of day with your whole command, leaving your trains to follow. It is very important that you should be here at a very early hour in the morning. A severe engagement is likely to take place, and your presence is necessary.

I am, General, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEORGE D. RUGGLES,

Colonel and Chief of Staff.

Major-General PORTER.

From this order it appeared that Gen. McDowell, who had mysteriously lost himself the day previous, had been found again, and was at that moment intercepting the retreat of the rebel Jackson.

The order is dated near Bull Run, (that seemed Pope's hobby,) and the rear of the enemy was to be attacked at early dawn. Porter was to move upon Centreville at the first dawn of day, &c. &c.

No wonder Gen. Porter was surprised upon receipt of such an order. So would any one have been, knowing, as he did, that the enemy were in an entirely different direction. The order carried him directly away from the field of action with all his troops, and he knew it.

Gen. Pope might have made himself aware of the same facts had he but chosen to avail himself of the means at hand and exercise a little foresight and common sense. Jackson was expecting Longstreet anxiously, eagerly,—needed his assistance,—and was not apt to make a movement calculated to take him further and farther away from the coming relief. Instead of going to Centreville he would naturally, if not from necessity, have gone in the direction of Groveton or Gainesville. Thus a private soldier would have reasoned, but not so Pope.

At Manassas Junction Gens. Porter and McDowell met. They discussed the situation, and each learned from the other the facts within his knowledge. It appears from their respective statements that both were equally surprised at the rapidly succeeding and contradictory orders of their superior officer.

Neither of them could understand from the dispatches directed to them the objects of the movements they were required to make, and

officers placed in their situations, to act intelligently necessarily required such information. Gen. Porter, while carrying out the order above given, had received repeated messages to hasten to Centreville, where a great battle was expected, posting a force at Bull Run by the way. Gen. McDowell, the day before, (the 28th,) had been ordered, first, to march with his whole force to Manassas; second, to march upon Centreville; third, to march upon Gum Spring, the enemy being, as was probably known to every one but Pope, between Gainesville and Groveton.

Porter, as I have stated, was, at the time of his meeting with Gen. McDowell, on his way to Centreville, in obedience to Gen. Pope's order of 3 A. M. of the 29th. Some of his troops had already passed Manassas Junction when he received a new order, first verbal, afterwards in writing, as follows:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF VIRGINIA,

CENTREVILLE, *August 29, 1862.*

Push forward with your corps and King's division, which you will take with you, upon Gainesville. I am following the enemy down the Warrenton turnpike. Be expeditious, or we will lose much.

JOHN POPE.

Major-General Commanding.

Pope had evidently given up the idea of finding the enemy at Centreville; in fact, had doubtless had some glimmer of the truth beaten into his brain by the pounding of cannon in the direction of Gainesville, and hence sought to interpose a large force near that point between Jackson, whom he had reason to suppose was there, and Longstreet, who was coming or had come through Thoroughfare Gap with his wing of the rebel army.

It is proper here to mention the fact that Gens. Ricketts and King, with a combined force of some 17,000 men, had been sent to the Gap to hold Longstreet in check, but had, without, or rather in violation of orders, withdrawn their commands on the afternoon or night of the 28th, and this without any effort on their part to obstruct Longstreet's advance.

The way thus left open, the rebels came through the pass the same night it was vacated by the Union troops, as above stated, and during the morning of the 29th, and were well on their route to reinforce Jackson in the vicinity of Groveton at about the time Pope was hunting for the last named in the direction of Centreville.

The situation, so far as it concerns this narrative, was, upon the morning of August 29, when Porter received the order to march upon Gainesville and take King with him, about as follows: King, with 9,000 men, was at Manassas Junction; Porter was also there, a portion of his troops having passed that point on the way to Centreville.

Longstreet had passed through Thoroughfare Gap, his army extending from a little south of the Manassas Gap Railroad in a northerly or northeasterly direction toward Groveton, where the right of Jackson rested. Jackson occupied a line extending from near Groveton to the vicinity of Sudley's Springs.

Sigel and Reynolds were confronting Jackson near Groveton; Heintzelman and Reno were moving up from Centreville to their support,

and Ricketts was on the road falling back from Gainesville to Manassas Junction by way of Bristoe.

Buford, with his cavalry, who had been to Thoroughfare Gap with Ricketts, was on the same road near Gainesville watching Longstreet. Pope himself was at Centreville, six miles from Manassas Junction.

The distance from Manassas Junction to Gainesville is eight miles, and from Gainesville to Thoroughfare Gap six miles.

Longstreet's force was about 25,000 strong; that of Porter (Morell, Sykes, and King) about 17,000.

A portion of Longstreet's command—seventeen regiments, one battery, and five hundred cavalry—had passed through Gainesville before 9 o'clock of the 29th, as was reported by Gen. Buford, thus showing that a considerable force of the enemy had already anticipated Pope in his occupation of that position.

On receipt of the verbal order to move on Gainesville, Gen. Porter set his troops in motion, Morell's division leading, and met Longstreet's advance about 11 or 11½ o'clock a mile and a half or two miles in a westerly direction from Bethlehem church and some six or seven miles from Manassas Junction.

Morell immediately formed his division along the course of a small stream (Dawkin's Branch) on the southerly side of the Manassas Gap Railroad, his line occupying the east side of a small valley and commanding the opposite slope. On the left the valley was open, debouching into a cleared country, but upon the other sides it was surrounded by timber and a thick growth of brush-wood.

The regiment to which I had the honor to belong [13th N. Y. Vols., 1st Brig., 1st (Morell's) Div.] was deployed as skirmishers as early as 12 o'clock, and advanced across the valley, passing over Dawkin's Branch and nearly up to the timber crowning the slope opposite to that upon which our troops were deployed. In the meantime a section of artillery had been run up by the rebels upon an eminence slightly to our right, near Carrico's house, and opened fire.

These guns were soon silenced by one of our own batteries, but subsequently they or some others were again opened on us farther to our right.

From our advanced position as skirmishers we were easily able to determine that we had in our immediate front a considerable force of the enemy; and Porter, knowing Longstreet to have passed the Gap, knowing that a large force of rebels had passed through Gainesville as early as 8½ or 9 o'clock that morning, at once judged the foe opposed to us to be a part of Longstreet's command.

The enemies of Gen. Porter have endeavored to secure credit for the story started by them that the only force we had in our front consisted of a few cavalymen galloping up and down and a number of mule-dragging brush along the roads to cause a dust. The falsity of that story is known to every man who was under Porter that day and who was in the vicinity of Dawkin's Branch. We had seen too much service on the Peninsula not to be able to distinguish between a regiment of infantry and brush heaps, or between the galloping of a few cavalry and the rumble of army wagons and artillery supplemented by

the tramp of armed men. Besides, we had ocular demonstration of the fact that the enemy were before us in force—we saw them.

It was about this time (noon of the 29th) when Gen. Porter received what is known as the “joint order” to himself and McDowell, and which is as follows:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF VIRGINIA,
CENTREVILLE, *August 29, 1862.*

[General Order No. 5.]

Generals McDOWELL and PORTER.

You will please move forward with your joint commands towards Gainesville. I sent Gen. Porter written orders to that effect an hour and a half ago. Heintzelman, Sigel, and Reno are moving on the Warrenton turnpike, and must now be not far from Gainesville. I desire that, as soon as communication is established between this force and your own, the whole command shall halt. It may be necessary to fall back behind Bull Run, at Centreville, to-night. I presume it will be so, on account of our supplies. I have sent no orders of any description to Ricketts, and none to interfere in any way with the movements of McDowell's troops, except what I sent by his aide-de-camp last night, which were to hold his position on the Warrenton pike until the troops from here should fall upon the enemy's flank and rear. I do not even know Ricketts' position, as I have not been able to find out where Gen. McDowell was until a late hour this morning. Gen. McDowell will take immediate steps to communicate with Gen. Ricketts, and instruct him to rejoin the other divisions of his corps as soon as practicable. If any considerable advantages are to be gained by departing from this order it will not be strictly carried out. One thing must be held in view, that the troops must occupy a position from which they can reach Bull Run to-night or by morning. The indications are that the whole force of the enemy is moving in this direction at a pace that will bring them here by to-morrow night or next day. My own headquarters will be for the present with Heintzelman's corps, or at this place.

JOHN POPE,

Major-General Commanding.

This order, like some of those which had preceded it, showed that Pope was determined to be upon the safe side of Bull Run in the event of a retreat becoming necessary. It was dated at Centreville, twelve or fourteen miles from Gainesville, as far away from the scene of action as possible without fixing upon its author the charge of cowardice.

When the order was received McDowell and Porter were together, and the former being the ranking officer, at once assumed command of the joint forces of Porter and King.

He at the same time informed Porter of Buford's report, already referred to, concerning the passage of rebel troops through Gainesville.

This information confirmed Porter's previous knowledge of Longstreet's movements, and satisfied him that it was the corps of that general now opposed to him.

It is to be observed that the “joint order” required Porter and McDowell to move forward with their commands towards Gainesville, establish communication with Heintzelman, Sigel, and Reno, then—halt.

It is also to be observed that 8,000 men—a small army—were knocking about the country somewhere under Gen. Ricketts, (at what point or in what direction Pope did not know,) and that for some time previous the whereabouts of Gen. McDowell himself had been unknown to the leader whose “headquarters” were “in the saddle,” and who should have kept his men in view, even though compelled now and then to lose sight of a general.

Comment upon such generalship as that displayed by Pope, as shown by his own admissions, is unnecessary, and would be an impertinence to the understanding of the commonest soldier in the ranks.

The "joint order" was directed to McDowell as well as Porter, and, if anything, was more imperative upon the former, as he was the ranking officer. But McDowell saw proper to disobey the order, or to interpret it in a manner to suit himself; and hence, after having directed a disposition of Porter's immediate command, withdrew, taking King and his 9,000 men with him.

This withdrawal left Porter in command of his two divisions, (Morrell's and Sykes') aggregating some 8,000 or 9,000 men, and devolved upon him the necessity of exercising his own judgment and discretion in further carrying out the order. One thing he was compelled to bear in mind, viz.: that he must hold himself in readiness to fall back behind Bull Run by that night or next morning; Bull Run and Centreville evidently being Pope's strong points—his *forte*, if he had any.

After McDowell left, Gen. Porter continued making his dispositions for attack, and sent word to Gen. King not to leave. Then came the following message from Gen. McDowell:

"Give my compliments to Gen. Porter, and say I am going to the right and shall take King with me. He [Porter] had better remain where he is, but if necessary to fall back, he can do so on my left."

This message was in all respects equivalent to an order. McDowell, the ranking officer, had abrogated the joint order by withdrawing himself and half of the joint command; and what else could Gen. Porter do besides using his own judgment in disposing of his own command, and conforming to the plan adopted by McDowell in withdrawing King and promising to put him on Porter's right, and thereby to complete the connections enjoined in the order?

McDowell's withdrawal set another considerable fragment of the Union army floating around loose until evening, and, paraphrasing a well-known saying, "put it where it would do the least good."

Gen. Porter's force being thus depleted, he, as a wise and experienced general, exercising the discretion vested in him when McDowell withdrew, (and by the "joint order" itself for that matter,) resolved to stand upon the defensive until ordered to do otherwise, or circumstances made a change necessary or desirable. He knew he had a large force of the enemy in his front (Longstreet's corps), and knew that to attack 25,000 with one-third that number would but court the disaster of defeat sure to follow.

I repeat, Porter *knew* the situation. It was no mere guess-work with him, as with Pope. He understood the situation and adopted the wisest and only proper course under the circumstances. The force in his front prevented Porter from marching toward Groveton except by retracing his steps—falling back, as did McDowell—and he could not, therefore, form a junction with Sigel, Reno, and Heintzelman, that duty having been assumed by McDowell; but at the same time his presence was a menace to the rebels, and kept Longstreet from uniting with Jackson. In fact, Porter's generalship delayed for a day the defeat of Pope's army by holding the reinforcements of the enemy in check.

Yet Porter is censured for his conduct on that day, the 29th of August. One of the charges made against him by Pope was, that he disobeyed the "joint order" to him and McDowell.

All I have to say upon this point is, that if anybody disobeyed that order it was McDowell, not Porter, and the respective movements of the two commanders establish that fact. As proof of Gen. Porter's wish to carry out the order of Gen. Pope, I will give one dispatch which the former sent to the commander of his first division after the departure of McDowell:

"GEN. MORELL: Push over to the aid of Sigel and strike in his rear. If you reach a road up which King is moving, and he has got ahead of you, let him pass, but see if you cannot give help to Sigel. If you find him retreating, move back towards Manassas, and should necessity require it, and you do not hear from me, push to Centreville. If you find the direct road filled, take the one via Union Mills, which is to the right as you return.

F. J. PORTER, Major-General.

"Look to the points of the compass for Manassas.

F. J. PORTER."

This order is of itself sufficient to relieve Gen. Porter of any charge of willful disobedience, and when the force of the enemy in his front is considered, he is deserving of commendation rather than blame for his conduct.

That he did not succeed in opening communication with Sigel was no fault of his, but was attributable to the conformation of the country and other physical obstructions, and to the fact that Longstreet with his army presented an obstacle too serious to be overcome by the troops at Porter's command, and just at that time (when the order was given) was threatening an attack upon him.

I now come to consider the famous 4.30 p. m. order, of which much has been said, and for the alleged disobedience of which Gen. Porter has been most strongly condemned.

As already stated, after McDowell withdrew, taking King's division with him, Porter remained with his troops in position confronting Longstreet, his skirmishers being continually engaged in feeling and pressing the enemy.

McDowell was kept informed, so far as practicable, of the condition of affairs and in the afternoon Gen. Porter sent word to Gen. Pope asking for information and orders, informing him at the same time that Morell would soon be engaged.

About 6 o'clock, information having been received from the right wing that the enemy were retreating up the Warrenton pike, Gen. Porter ordered an attack, which Gen. Morell began to execute, but at the same time expressing the conviction that the order, if carried out, would result disastrously, the enemy being so strong in his front and showing no signs of retreating or abandoning their position, but, on the contrary, were strengthening it.

The following is the order of Gen. Porter above referred to:

"GEN. MORELL: I wish you to push up two regiments, supported by two others, preceded by skirmishers, the regiments at intervals of two hundred yards, and attack the party with the section of artillery opposed to you. The battle looks well on our right, and the enemy are said to be retiring up the pike. Give the enemy a good shelling when our troops advance.

F. J. PORTER, Major-General."

This order was issued by Gen. Porter on receipt by him of a report that the enemy were retreating, and which, if true, showed that the

battle was looking well on the right, or, in other words, that Sigel and his supports were driving the rebels up the Warrenton pike past Morell's position.

A personal examination of the situation by Gen. Porter shortly after he issued the order to advance confirmed Morell's statements as to the danger and bad policy of a forward movement. He became fully satisfied that the enemy were not retreating, as had been reported to him, and, therefore, in view of the nearness of night (it was then about 6 o'clock) and of the facts above stated, he issued the following order placing the troops in position for the night:

"GEN. MORELL: Put your men in position to remain during the night, and have out your pickets. Put them so that they will be in position to resist anything. I am about a mile from you. McDowell says all goes well and we are getting the best of the fight. I wish you would send me a dozen men from the cavalry. Keep me informed. Troops are passing up to Gainesville, pushing the enemy; Ricketts has gone, also King.
F. J. PORTER, Major-General."

There is not a word in the above order that even hints at a retreat. On the contrary, it conveys the impression by its very language that Porter intended to remain there until forcibly driven back or ordered away by his superior officer. He had been sent to *stay*, and intended doing so, as his order to Morell clearly indicated.

We on the skirmish line did not fall back at all, but picketed the front until we marched the next morning. The rest of our force lay within easy supporting distance upon the high ground to our rear. Porter himself was on the field only a short distance from Morell, and thus matters were when Lieut. Weld, whom he had dispatched to Gen. Pope, returned.

This was between sundown and dark, or, to be more precise, a little after 6 o'clock p. m.

Lieut. Weld, as he informed Gen. Porter, had delivered the note to Gen. Pope near Groveton, but brought back no commands and but little information.

After his return, however, Gen. Porter received the following:

HEADQUARTERS IN THE FIELD,

August 29, 1862—4:30 p. m.

Your line of march brings you in on the enemy's flank. I desire you to push forward into action at once on the enemy's right flank, and, if possible, on his rear, keeping your right in communication with Gen. Reynolds. The enemy is massed in the woods in front of us, but he can be shelled out as soon as you engage their flank. Keep heavy reserves and use your batteries, keeping well closed to your right all the time. In case you are obliged to fall back, do so to your right and rear, so as to keep you in close communication with the right wing.

JOHN POPE,

Major-General Commanding.

Major-General PORTER.

This is the 4:30 p. m. order upon which so much stress is laid by Pope and his adherents, and it is for the alleged disobedience of this order, more than any other, that the hand of public censure has been most heavily laid upon him to whom it was directed.

There are two questions involved in the consideration of this order, viz.: 1st. The exact time of its reception by Gen. Porter; 2d. The exact situation of affairs at the time it was received.

And first, as to the date of its reception: Pope insists it must have been

delivered to Gen. Porter between 5 and half-past 5 in the afternoon, basing his belief upon the hour of its date and the statement of the person who carried it. Porter alleges that he received it after 6.30 P. M.

I believe the time fixed by Gen. Porter to be correct, and for the following reasons:

1st. The person who carried the note did not look at his watch or time himself, and in the then condition of the roads, blocked up as they were by moving bodies of troops, the messenger was more apt to be detained by the way, and, besides, he was not familiar with the country, and, judging from his testimony, could hardly have proceeded in anything like a direct course.

2d. It is clearly established that the order had not been received by Gen. Porter up to the hour of the return of his aid from Gen. Pope, which was after 6 o'clock.

3d. I remember distinctly the movements made about 6 o'clock, when Gen. Porter ordered Morell to advance and attack the enemy, and it was nearly dark when orders came for us to resume position for the night. It was after sundown.

4th. I remember also of having heard, while at the front, as soldiers will hear such news, that there had been or was to be another order for attack, but then it was already dusk and night close at hand. This rumor must have reached us on receipt by Porter of the 4.30 order; and as Gen. Locke was immediately dispatched to Gen. Morell with instructions to attack, the natural conclusion is that we got the news on the picket line within a few minutes, as there was constant communication between us and the main body.

The most important evidence, however, showing the hour when Gen. Porter received the 4.30 P. M. order, is this:

Gen. Porter, upon receiving it, and after having ordered Morell to attack with his *whole* force, acknowledged its receipt in writing, substantially stating that although he thought the order had arrived too late to be executed, he would do all that was possible to carry it into effect, &c.

Gen. Porter also stated in the acknowledgment of Gen. Pope's order, or upon the envelope containing it, the exact hour when he had received the one sent him.

This communication from Gen. Porter, although Pope admits having received it, or one substantially as set out, *has never been produced*, although Gen. Porter has earnestly sought by every means in his power to bring it to light.

This brief note would confirm the guilt of Gen. Porter, fixing upon him a lasting stain of dishonor and disgrace, or it would establish his innocence beyond the shadow of a doubt. Why has Gen. Pope withheld it? Of all the voluminous correspondence between him and Gen. Porter during the memorable last three days of August, this, the most important of all to the cause of justice, alone is missing. The conclusion is irresistible that Pope has either willfully destroyed or kept it back; and if such be the case, the only reason that can be assigned for his so doing is that it would prove himself a liar and Porter a deeply-injured person—injured through his instrumentality. And in the

absence of that little scrap of paper, or some more reasonable excuse for its non-production than has yet been given, the unanimous verdict of all just-minded persons must be that its production would be Porter's justification; and justification for Porter means condemnation for Pope.

From the facts coming personally to my knowledge, and after a full and careful examination of all the testimony, I am thoroughly convinced that the 4.30 p. m. order was not received until too late to be executed, and that Gen. Porter's failure to attack was through no fault or disobedience on his part.

The second important question to be considered is the situation—the positions of the troops of both armies at the time when the 4.30 p. m. order was issued by Pope, and subsequently when received by Porter.

The order says:

“Your line of march brings you in on the enemy's flank. I desire you to push forward into action at once on the enemy's *right flank*, and, if possible, on his rear, keeping your right in communication with Gen. Reynolds. The enemy is massed in the woods in front of us, but he can be shelled out as soon as you engage their flank.”

At the time Gen. Pope wrote the above order, Longstreet's right extended so far around as to almost envelop Porter's left flank, and Longstreet's left was within easy supporting distance of Jackson's right wing, which we were expected to attack. The gap between the two wings of the rebel army was held by cavalry and artillery.

And the above had been the situation since 12 o'clock in the day.

Porter's line of march, instead of bringing him in on the enemy's (Jackson's) right flank, led him against the right centre of Longstreet's 25,000, drawn up in line of battle across our front.

Pope's order presumed: 1st. That Longstreet had not arrived; 2d. That Porter was at least a mile and a half in advance of the position he really occupied.

Both of these presumptions were erroneous, and clearly showed that Pope either had no knowledge of the exact situation, or that he was not possessed of sufficient sense to be governed by it.

Indeed, it is now a matter of history that he assigned to Porter a position that day which, at the time, was actually occupied by Longstreet's line of battle. Such ignorance or stupidity, or both, on the part of the commander of 60,000 soldiers, is wholly inexcusable.

Between Porter's right and the left of Reynolds was a gap of some two miles, the obstacles lying between consisting of heavy forests and a rough country, difficult to pass over for want of roads.

To have united with Reynolds, Porter must have marched back on the route taken by McDowell earlier in the day; and had he done this he might have laid himself open to the charge of retreating in the face of the enemy, which Pope makes against him.

Had Porter not been hampered by the foe in his immediate front, the movement might have been made; but as matters were it was impossible. Besides, had not McDowell started off with 9,000 men ostensibly to fill the gap between Porter, remaining where he was ordered to stay, and Reynolds?

Porter could not have withdrawn without bringing on an engage-

ment disastrous to the Union arms. His 9,000 men, moving to the rear, could not possibly have withstood the onslaught of Longstreet's 25,000.

Porter could not have struck Jackson's rear, nor even his right flank, because to have done so he must have first overcome Longstreet, who protected it.

Pope, however, claimed then, and yet asserts, that there was no considerable force of the enemy in Porter's front that day, which only goes to show that a person may wear the uniform of a general and yet be a fool.

Porter maintained at the time that Pope entirely misunderstood the situation; and the evidence on his court-martial, which was sufficient to convince any but the most pig-headed that he was right, has since been amply confirmed by testimony not then accessible. (Longstreet, (a good republican now,) Wilcox, Hood, Ewell, and other prominent rebel officers, must certainly know what positions they occupied on the 29th of August, and they sustain Porter in every essential particular.

And that the enemy were in force in Porter's immediate vicinity, is amply shown by the testimony of his own officers and that of Gen. Buford, who had reported 17 regiments of rebel infantry, a battery, and 500 cavalry as passing through Gainesville before 9 o'clock in the morning; and these were some of Longstreet's men.

All these facts were known to Porter when he received the 4.30 p. m. order, and had been in his possession for hours previous; hence, while endeavoring to carry out faithfully the orders of Pope, he was obliged, as a careful commander, to consider things as they actually existed, instead of as they were supposed to be by one who was miles away and had no personal knowledge of the situation.

Porter was right; and for holding the foe in check, as he did, deserves praise, instead of the opprobrium sought to be cast upon him by his accusers.

But Pope insists on another statement, viz.: That there was a heavy battle progressing during the entire day of the 29th, and that Porter, instead of going to the assistance of his brethren in the field, marched to the rear to the sound of the enemy's cannon.

Comrades, this is a serious charge to make against an officer, but it becomes much more serious when one reflects that it casts the stain of cowardice or disloyalty upon a whole corps. We who were under Porter knew him to be brave and true; but yet we would not have permitted even him to stand idly by while our brothers in arms were being slaughtered and we within reaching distance.

And especially would we have put forth every effort to aid our brethren (if any stronger incentive than duty were needed) when, as in the instance referred to, they were a part of ourselves. The gallant Reynolds was Porter's friend, and he and his veteran heroes of the Pennsylvania Reserves belonged to the Fifth Corps. Think you, comrades, that it is probable—nay, is it possible—that we stood idly by while they, the men who did so bravely and succored us so gallantly in the fierce engagements upon the Peninsula, were being sacrificed? No; you

do not,—you cannot think us guilty of such a crime. And we were not.

We did not retreat to the sound of the enemy's cannon, because, as I have already shown, there was no falling back on our part. I, on the skirmish line, occupied the same position when darkness set in that I did at 12 o'clock in the day and subsequently, or, if anything, was more advanced.

We did not fail or refuse to go to the assistance of comrades engaged in a heavy battle, because there was no heavy battle in our vicinity during the time specified. We heard the sounds of artillery firing, as we had heard them for a week previous; and occasionally we could hear little spurts of musketry, both in our own front and from our own skirmishers, and off on the right toward Groveton; but there were none of the sounds of a battle came to our ears that day till just at dark.

Gen. Reynolds, who was two miles further to our right and that much nearer the alleged scene of conflict, testified that he heard no sounds of a battle. So did others. Who shall be believed, the peerless soldier Reynolds or the braggart Pope?

Just at nightfall—between, I should judge, 6 and 7 o'clock—there was a sharp but short engagement off some distance on our right.

We could distinctly hear the volleys of musketry and cheers of the opposing forces.

That engagement was brought on between Gen. Hatch and the enemy by McDowell's order to advance, on the supposition that the rebels were in full retreat.

Hatch moved ahead, and, instead of finding the enemy retreating, found them advancing. McDowell persisted in his first statement, that they were falling back, but his illusion soon disappeared when Hatch, with the loss of nearly half his men, was compelled to retire from a superior foe.

At the time of the above-mentioned engagement we were some considerable distance away, with a wary antagonist in our front. The fight was over long before we could have marched half-way to where it occurred, had we been able to have gotten rid of Longstreet. Porter did the only thing under the circumstances proper for him to have done—held to the enemy in his front—and thereby kept reinforcements from going to the aid of Jackson.

Regarding the above occurrences, I believe that I have only to appeal to my comrades of the Fifth Corps, and who were with me there and then, to show that I have not misstated the facts.

I now pass on to the events of the next day. Early on the morning of the 30th (about 3 o'clock) Gen. Porter received an order to march to the vicinity of Groveton, and reported to Gen. Pope soon after sunrise near the crossing of the Warrenton pike by the Sudley Spring road.

Old soldiers will remember the locality distinctly by the "Old Stone House" standing at the junction.

On the march, in the darkness and through some misunderstanding, but no fault of Gen. Porter's, Griffin's brigade and some 1,100 men

under Gen. Platt, (the latter only temporarily attached to Porter's command,) became separated, marching to Pope's great strategic point—Centreville—instead of turning at Bethlehem Church and marching to Groveton.

Thus Porter was able to report with only 6,000 troops for duty.

I shall never forget the magnificent panorama—magnificent but at the same time terrible—that burst upon my sight as I reached the high ground south of the Warrenton pike, on my way to the battle-field of the 30th of August, 1862.

You who were with me remember it; and now, as you read, there rises up before you a vision like this: Below you, winding sluggishly along on its way to Bull Run, a small stream; just beyond, parallel with its course and crossing the Sudley Spring road, in which you stand, at right angles, the Warrenton pike. Beyond this, and to your left a mile or little less, a cluster of buildings, or Groveton; and then, stretching from those buildings far around to the right and across your path, you behold a high, rolling, open plateau bounded on the farther side by a ridge dotted with cannon.

Beyond this ridge, about midway between Groveton and the Sudley Springs road running on straight before you, are seen the roofs and chimneys of Mrs. Dogan's house.

To the right of the Sudley Springs road, embowered in an orchard interspersed with a few forest trees crowning a lofty eminence, you see rising up the lonely chimneys of the Henry House—fitting monuments of the first battle of Manassas.

Here and there the prospect is varied and its beauty enhanced by solitary trees, or small clusters of them, lifting their leafy crowns in air, while life is given to the picture by moving columns of blue coats, glancing bayonets, galloping horsemen, and all the pomp and panoply of active warfare.

From the cannon on the crest beyond are shooting out sheets of flame and curling wreaths of vapory smoke; and yet farther away, just in front of the heavy timber whose lofty tops here and there show above the embattled heights of Groveton, are other guns from which the bolts of death come flying over the marching columns, bursting high in the air or falling down, mayhap, at your very feet.

Over all this inspiring and pulse-thrilling spectacle bends heaven's blue canopy, flecked with light fleecy clouds, through which the golden, burning rays of a midsummer's sun fall gently down, shimmering through the foliage of the trees, glancing lightly upon the rippling waters and gleaming with a feverish, fitful light upon the weapons of friends and foemen.

You remember, my comrades of the Fifth Corps, how we marched down into the valley, across the stream—some of us stopping to fill our canteens by the way—and up the opposite slope beneath the dropping shells from the enemy's guns.

You remember when we reached the line of our artillery. You can each doubtless see even now in your mind's eye our line of battle crossing the Warrenton pike in the vicinity of Groveton on the left, and

extending around in an irregular semicircle to the right until it crossed the Sudley Springs road.

If you do remember, I ask you to follow me closely as I attempt to describe what subsequently transpired, as I remember the events and as history has recorded them.

About 12 o'clock Gen. Pope issued the following order:

HEADQUARTERS NEAR GROVETON.

August 30, 1862, 12 M.

[Special Order No. —.]

The following forces will be immediately thrown forward in *pursuit of the enemy*, and press him vigorously during the whole day:

Major-General McDowell is assigned to *the command of the pursuit*; Major-General Porter's corps will push forward on the Warrenton turnpike, followed by the divisions of Brigadier-Generals King and Reynolds.

The division of Brigadier-General Ricketts will pursue the Haymarket road, followed by the corps of Major-General Heintzelman. The necessary cavalry will be assigned to these columns by Major-General McDowell, to whom regular and frequent reports will be made.

The general headquarters will be somewhere on the Warrenton turnpike.

By command of Major-General Pope:

GEO. D. RUGGLES,
Col. and Chief of Staff.

And Gen. McDowell the following:

HEADQUARTERS 3D CORPS, ARMY OF VIRGINIA,

August 31, 1862.

Major-General McDowell being charged with the advanced forces ordered to *pursue the enemy*, directs me to inform you that your corps will be followed immediately by King's division, supported by Reynolds, Heintzelman, with his corps, preceded by Ricketts' division, will move on your right, on the road from Sudley Springs to Haymarket. He is instructed to throw out skirmishers to the left, which it is desirable you should join with your right. General McDowell's headquarters will be at the head of Reynolds' division, on the Warrenton road. Organize a strong advance to precede your command, and push on rapidly in pursuit of the enemy until you come in contact with him. Report frequently. Bayard's brigade will be ordered to report to you. Push it well to the left as you advance.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

ED. SCHRIEVER,
Col. and Chief of Staff.

Major-General PORTER,
Commanding, &c., &c.

Both of the preceding orders, as a reading of them will show, assumed that the enemy were retreating. In fact, it seems that during all that momentous campaign Pope had but two ideas, viz.: One, that the enemy were continually falling back;—the other, that he ought to be at Centreville, which is doubtless the place meant when he fixed his headquarters "somewhere on the Warrenton pike."

From our elevated position on the high ground we could distinguish no movement on the part of the rebels indicating a retreat on their part; and Gen. Porter took a contrary view to that expressed in the orders.

He nevertheless set his troops in motion to "*pursue the enemy*."

Now, allow me to describe more particularly the situation at the time the above-stated movement was begun:

Jackson's corps of the rebel army occupied the line of the abandoned Independent railroad, his left resting in the vicinity of Sudley's Mills, and his right to the north and west of Groveton. Longstreet was march-

ing down to unite with him from the direction of Thoroughfare Gap, his column forming, with that of Jackson, an obtuse angle. Between Jackson and Longstreet, however, when the battle of the 30th began, there was a small gap, thus leaving the right wing of the army of the former exposed to a flank attack from the Union forces; but the rebel leader had foreseen his weakness and strengthened his position by massing his artillery at the point of threatened danger. The Union forces were within the angle thus formed and to the south and east of it, their lines facing west and north.

Jackson was endeavoring to push his way eastward far enough to enable him to intercept Pope's retreat on Washington, and Pope himself was endeavoring to recover the position he had lost by bad generalship and once more reconstruct his lines between the enemy and the capital. At the time of which I am writing his right wing was nearly parallel with and south of Jackson's, thus bringing the latter nearly across his line of retreat. We—that is, Porter's corps—occupied the left of Pope's line, which was a little to the eastward of and part of it facing Groveton. We of the 1st Brigade had the Warrenton pike at our backs and the Independent railroad line in our front.

Now for a more particular description of the ground upon which the battle was fought: The high ground to the west of Groveton was held by the enemy, (the extreme right of Jackson,) thus commanding the Warrenton pike. The railway to which I have alluded runs in nearly an easterly and westerly direction, and, like all graded roads, presents sometimes an embankment—sometimes a cut. Imagine, if you can, a heavy piece of timber, out of which emerges an embankment or "fill" of some twenty or thirty feet in height, flat on top, and which, running westward perhaps a hundred and twenty yards, terminates in a cut of from eight to ten feet deep and about the same width at the bottom, which cut continues on in the same direction for about two hundred yards and then tends slightly to the northward, debouching upon the open elevated ground. Now imagine yourself standing upon the southern edge of this cut, midway between the timber whence the embankment issues and the slight northward bend where the road-bed debouches on the open plain, and face the south. Upon your left you have woods crossing the railway at right angles and extending in a direct line for six hundred yards, forming one side of a parallelogram; in your front, running from east to west, another piece of timber, free from underbrush on the side nearest you, and say three or four hundred yards from left to right, forms the second side; and the railway line at your back makes the third side. The remaining side, to the west, is open rolling country, except that where the line of the road makes the bend toward the north there is, on the southern side, and at right angles to it, a small ravine fringed with bushes and stunted trees. From your feet, toward the south the ground falls slightly for five or six yards, and then drops away more rapidly till it forms an elevation or ridge, upon which you stand, of some fifty feet in height. From the foot of this declivity it stretches out into a level plain, crossing which you ascend a gentle, even slope to the timber which, as already observed, faces the cut. Now turn directly about, and you will perceive that on the oppo-

site side of the road-bed the ground slopes gently upward until it has attained an elevation of three or four feet above that whereon you stand, and then gradually and evenly falls away to heavy timber a couple of hundred yards distant, thus forming a ridge parallel with the cut, and a commanding position overlooking the ground described as lying to the southward. Upon this ridge, on the day of battle, about thirty yards in rear of the cut, the rebel batteries were planted. There were six guns—12-pounders—at a point where the embankment terminates in the open field, six guns—howitzers—of the same calibre the same distance in rear of the centre of the cut, (midway between the timber and the bend in the road,) and four guns just beyond the bend, but masked from troops approaching in front by the small ravine already mentioned. Behind these guns lay the main body of Jackson's army, and the cut and embankment in front of them were occupied by a heavy force of his infantry. Behind the timber, in rear of this formidable position, was stationed, on elevated ground, the remainder of the rebel artillery, which, when the Union forces advanced, shelled them over the heads of the Confederates.

I have thus hastily sketched the position of the right wing of Jackson, and will now briefly point out that of the left of our own line confronting him. In the strip of timber running parallel with and about six hundred yards distant from the abandoned railroad, lay the 1st brigade, 1st division of the Fifth Corps, composed of the 18th Massachusetts, on the left, extending westward to the open fields, the 13th New York, "Rochester regiment," next, then the 25th New York, 2d Maine, 22d Massachusetts, and 1st Michigan, the latter extending into the timber running north up to the embankment by about one company. This brigade numbered about 4,500 men. Farther to the west, but deflecting toward the south so as to face in the direction of Jackson's extreme right and from whence Longstreet was expected, and partly crossing the Warrenton pike, stretched the other troops of the corps, some 4,500 men.

I have been thus particular in describing the general situation in order that the movements following may be more clearly understood. Henceforth I will more especially follow the fortunes of my own regiment and brigade.

As we lay waiting for the order to attack, we could look into the black-throated muzzles of the guns crowning the crest of the ridge before us, except those of the four pieces screened from view by the ravine in our front and a little to our left. Just before us, along the edge of the timber, furnishing us a temporary shelter, was a rail fence, "staked and rided," about six feet high, and between it and us a wagon road.

But I will not dwell longer upon these details. The order came for us to advance. The 1st brigade was to open the conflict by storming the height. We left the timber and began climbing the fence. The rebel guns in sight opened upon us with grape and canister, while from beyond, the heavier batteries of the enemy sent a perfect tempest of shot and shell upon our devoted heads. We passed down the slope in splendid order, our ranks closed up and our alignment almost perfect

We lost men, it is true, but the gaps were filled. We kept our front, but a shortened line evidenced our losses. We reached the level ground, through the centre of which, parallel to our line, ran a ditch or dead-furrow. Across it we went, leaving many on the way;—on, on we pressed to the foot of the declivity, and all the while the heavens rained death from bursting shell;—all the while the rebel skirmishers and sharpshooters poured into our ranks the leaden hail. When we reached the level, the guns in our immediate front, no longer able to do us harm, ceased belching forth their deadly missiles, and as we began to climb the steep ascent we thought the day was ours. Half-way up, and onward with a rush and hurrah we dashed. But, alas! our hopes were short-lived. From our left, within a hundred yards of us, the guns hitherto kept concealed opened upon us. Entangling our lines, their fire swept down scores at every discharge; yet we did not falter. I doubt if any man thought of going back. We gained the high ground on a level with the top of the cut; then we saw the rebel infantry,—the trap into which we had fallen. For the first time during our charge our rifles rang their notes of death;—for the first time since we started from the wood we realized the fullness of our danger.

The rebel infantry poured in their volleys, and we were scarce a dozen feet from the muzzles of their muskets. Oh, it was terrible! Down went Galpin, Reese, Kiehle, Stewart, Benjamin—all from my own company of thirty men—killed; down went Bunnell, Hasler, Savage, Thomas, Jerrolds, Hertendorf, and scores of brave men until a perfect windrow of dead and wounded marked where valor had come to stay; down went your humble servant and many more until the 13th could count nearly half of its members lying beneath its flag. And the regiments to our right and left fared no better. For twenty minutes the shattered remnants of the 1st brigade held the slope swept by a hurricane of death, and each minute seemed twenty hours long. For twenty minutes the bullets hummed like swarming bees, and the parched herbage was nourished by streams of gore from gallant hearts, while the accursed railroad cut began to fill with rebel dead and wounded;—for twenty minutes, and then those yet alive and able to do so received orders to fall back. We who fell—the dead, the dying, and the disabled—held the field.

I lay near where I fell, partly supported by a huge rock jutting from the side hill at my back, and beside me Capt. Savage, who died before the combat was fairly over. And I thought then, as I do now, that had Pope, instead of making such cowardly and indecent haste to get to Washington, where there was no danger, supported Porter, we would have won the day. We would have crushed the right wing of Jackson's corps, interposed ourselves between him and Longstreet, who came up just at the close of the engagement, and, with our numerical superiority, have beaten them in detail. Porter's troops opened up the way, but were not sustained. Why they were not, let Gen. Pope answer.

After the retreat of the remnants of my brigade, (and how any of them escaped is a wonder to me.) I crawled up into the cut just at the bend, it being more sheltered from the fire of one of our batteries cov-

ering the retreat, and had lain there but a few moments when Jackson rode up to within six feet of me. His troops were already following on after the Union forces, who were making a stubborn stand in the timber whence they had issued at the commencement of the action.

The rebels came, helped me up, and bore me back a short distance, where all our wounded, some 1,800 men, were gathered under guard, and there, until the 3d of September, I lay in agony, men dying almost hourly for want of care. On the 3d I started for Centreville to be paroled, and crossed the fated field. Our dead boys lay there as they fell, stark and ghastly; and the tears came to my eyes as I passed along the line and recognized one and another and bade them good-by forever more.

That was long ago; but yet now, as I write, the old times come back to me in all their freshness, and through the long vista of eighteen years that fatal field rises up to view.

In my mind's eye I see the cannon-crowned crest, the long waving lines of blue as they advance to the charge, the flags, the gleaming steel, the smoke of battle. I hear the roar of cannon, the bursting shell, the screaming grape, the rattling musketry, the shrill commands, the groans of agony, the cries of pain, and, sadder far, I seem to behold once more the faces of comrades upturned to the blue sky, but into whose eyes the falling sunshine sheds no golden light. Ah! language cannot describe my feelings as the past returns, bringing with it the terrible, bloody scenes of that fateful day.

Out of my regiment of, as I now remember, 289 men, nearly if not quite one-half were either killed or wounded. In my own company of 39 men, as already stated, five were killed outright, one died shortly after from his wounds, and of the remainder scarcely half escaped without injury. And the history of my regiment was but that of every other in the command. You who were with me there can testify to the truth of my assertions.

You gallant men of Maine, the old 2d; and you of Massachusetts, the 18th and 22d; and you of Michigan, the 1st; and you men of New York, the 13th and 25th, all of the 1st brigade.—what say you? Did Porter's troops fight that day?

What answer have *you* to make, you men of Durvea's regiment, who followed the gallant Warren, and *you* of Pennsylvania, the Reserves, whom Reynolds and Meade and Seymour and Jackson led, when I ask the question,—Did *you* fight that day? And you heroes of the regular army, veterans of other fields and other wars, what say you? Did *you* fight that day?

Ah, comrades! our losses that day give the answer.—2,200 men killed and wounded out of 6,000! More than one-third of Porter's command during that battle left upon the field in testimony of the bravery, of all!

And those who were then our enemies, they too testify to our discipline and courage—to the vigorous strokes we dealt them along the line of the abandoned railroad, and further on our left, where Buchanan and Chapman and Warren held them at bay so bravely. And yet—and yet, comrades, we are told by Pope—we are told by others who would

make false history—that on the 30th day of August, in the year of grace eighteen hundred and sixty-two, *Porter's troops did not fight*, or that they made such a weak and feeble attack as to prove themselves of little worth in the battle fought!

Think of it, you men of the Fifth Corps! Think of it, you men of the Army of the Potomac! Think of it, brave soldiers everywhere! Think, and then make answer!

But allow me to repeat the language of Pope when referring to the part taken by General Porter and his troops in the action of the 30th.

In his official report, written months after the dreadful scenes I have but faintly described, he attempts to plant the cloven-foot of his own dishonor upon the graves of those of the Fifth Corps who died, and to cast the burden of his own shame not only upon *their* memory, but upon the name of every man who fought under Porter that day.

He says: "*The attack of Porter was neither rigorous nor persistent, and his troops soon retired in considerable confusion.*"

And this is the calm and deliberate statement of General Porter's accuser!

Men of the Fifth Corps—comrades of the Army of the Potomac—if there be one among all your thousands and tens of thousands having a knowledge of the facts who does not believe this statement of Pope to be a willful and deliberate *lie*, let him stand forth.

Let him visit the graves of his comrades from Maine and from Massachusetts, from New York, Pennsylvania, and from Michigan who perished at Groveton, and paint upon each headstone this inscription: "*Here lies one who, if not a coward, was disgraced to the cause for which he died. Let his memory remain only to be dishonored.*"

Let him who believes Pope's lying accusation inscribe upon the tattered and blood-stained remnants of our battle flags, this: "*These flags were dishonored by the more than two thousand men of the Fifth Corps who fell at Groveton, August 30, 1862, while making a weak and feeble attack upon the enemy.*"

Or let him write upon the discharge-papers of those who were wounded and maimed there, this legend: "*This man was wounded and made a cripple for life at Groveton, August 30, 1862, while making neither a rigorous nor persistent attack upon the foe. He charged, with his brigade, three times across an open field in the face of superior numbers and a murderous fire of artillery, and upon the fourth charge fell severely wounded, when he was within less than a dozen feet of the muzzles of the enemy's guns. Let him be dishonored!*"

Let it be whispered into the ears of the widows and orphans of the dead of Porter's corps, and into the ears of all the mourners who lost dear ones who fought under him that day: "*Shame! Shame! upon the name you bear! Shame! Shame! upon him whom you loved. The hero-idol of your hearts proved himself a coward and a traitor at Groveton. He was one of the ignoble two thousand out of six thousand men who fell in battle there—he was one of the hundreds who died—let his memory perish or live on and on through the bitter years, an object of contempt and loathing to all mankind.*"

Comrades, do you like the picture which springs into being as you

read that "the attack of Porter was neither vigorous nor persistent," and realize the fullness of the meaning which the words convey?

Are you ready, fellow-soldiers, for the time when it shall be considered only a deep disgrace to have belonged to the Fifth Corps, and more shameful yet to have served under General Porter?

If you are not, then you must act. Tell General Pope, in language too plain to be misunderstood, that you are proud of your old commander and of the organization to which you belonged. Say to the members of the packed and partisan tribunal, by courtesy styled a military court of justice, that the day has gone by when right can be controlled by partisan hate or malice. Say to them that Truth, the handmaiden of Justice, has proclaimed it broadcast over the land that Porter and his troops did fight at Groveton vigorously and persistently, and that there is no longer excuse for them if they persist in upholding their unrighteous judgment, based, as it is, upon falsehood and party bias;—based, as it is, upon one man, and that one, General Pope.

Ah, what must be the heart of that man who, in face of the record as truth has written it—in the very presence of the noble dead who died that day under the command of Gen. Fitz John Porter, under the lustre and glory of our flag—can stand up and say that the Fifth Corps proved false to country, to honor, and to itself on that occasion!

If Porter did not fight, then were we cowards all, or traitors to the cause we all had sworn to serve.

If Porter did not fight, then were we, his soldiers, recreant to the high trust our country imposed in us when she gave us the blue to wear and placed in our hands weapons to use in her defense!

If Porter made a weak and feeble attack, then were we who hailed him as our chief false to the nation, to honor, and to ourselves!

Comrades, we *did* fight! You of the grand old Army of the Potomac will believe us; for you know full well the stuff of which our corps was made.

You saw us on the Peninsula—you stood shoulder to shoulder with us during the "Seven Days"—you were with us at the last at Malvern. You know we never flinched; that we would no sooner yield than would you. Judge us by yourselves, and we can ask no more.

It is hard for us who fought and suffered at Manassas—who gave our limbs and poured out our blood like water there, to have it continually rung in our ears that we failed in duty. And if our leader failed, we failed. We were both one then in spirit, as I believe we are to-day. An aspersion cast upon his good name and fame is a stain upon those who served under him. To impeach his loyalty is to impeach the loyalty of the Fifth Corps—of every one who then had the right to wear the cross of Malta.

Never has a man in this our land been so grievously wronged as Gen. Porter.

Never has a man in this our land suffered injustice so patiently.

It is high time that justice be done him. It is time that the originator of the charges against him—his persecutor—be shown up in his true light for the execration of every honest man.

And who was his accuser—who has been his persecutor? Gen. John Pope.

What order of man—what kind of a general is John Pope? I will endeavor to answer. Doubtless some who have taken the trouble to read the history of his campaign in Virginia will be inclined to the opinion that he is an ignoramus by right of birth and a fool from instinct.

Those more charitably disposed, however, will possibly conclude that when he issued his “headquarters-in-the-saddle” manifesto he somehow changed ends with himself, relegating his mental faculties to the level of his seat. It matters not which view is accepted, if either: the fact of his utter incompetency and worthlessness remains, and will remain while the story of his career lives in history.

His unfitness for command is shown by his own orders and the result of his campaign. It was not the fault of his subordinates, nor was it the fault of his men, that he failed. No better or braver soldiers than his ever carried musket or faced a foe in battle. Their honor was and is stainless. Their loyalty and gallantry was and is assured. He alone was to blame. Let him bear the burden.

The idea of a commander, educated to the profession of arms, having two generals of division with from 9,000 to 15,000 men—a small army—floating around him within a radius of from five to eight miles and he unable to find them for half a day or more, and that, too, at a time when, according to his own admissions, he needed every available man that could be mustered!

But incompetency is not the only charge that can be sustained against Gen. Pope. He has no clear perception of truth in matters in which he is deeply interested.

There is an obliquity in his mental vision which causes him to see things and events other than they really are.

He saw the enemy in full retreat when there was no retreat save by himself.

He saw Gen. Porter in a position where Gen. Porter was not and could not have been without first having defeated Longstreet.

He saw a battle where there was no battle, and where there was one of the most sanguinary conflicts recorded during all the war he saw no battle at all—only a weak and feeble attack—an attack in which every third man of the 6,000 engaged was either killed or wounded.

In regard to this same battle, and in order to, if possible, convince the people of Porter's alleged guilt, he placed the 2,000 and more men of the Fifth Corps who fell on the 30th of August to the credit of the engagement and losses on the 29th, and by such a despicable trick sought to rob us as well as our commander of whatever of honor we had earned.

Gen. Pope saw a heinous offense in Gen. Porter because of his saving, by his generalship, the Union army from utter overthrow both on the 29th and 30th days of August, but saw nothing to condemn in the two officers who fell back from Thoroughfare Gap without orders, and thus permitted Longstreet with his 25,000 men to march through unmolested on the 28th.

And it is doubtless to Gen. Pope's efforts more than for any other

reason that those two generals, who should themselves have been court-martialed, were made a part of the court which tried Gen. Porter; and tried him for what? Why, because he held Longstreet in check on the 29th of August and prevented him from adding his force to that of Jackson. Simply for doing exactly what Ricketts and King had been ordered to do, and in the accomplishment of which they had signally failed. Simply because he had shown himself a better soldier than his superior officer.

With regard to the composition of the court that tried Gen. Porter, I have little to say. It was partisan throughout politically and to some extent personally. Two of its members, as I have already intimated, were themselves delicately situated, their conduct in withdrawing from Thoroughfare Gap having laid them open to censure. To shift the burden upon Gen. Porter would relieve their own shoulders. Is it strange, then, that Porter was convicted?

Gen. Pope, Gen. Porter's real accuser, was even more deeply interested. With him, blundering had been the rule and military foresight the exception; and after the termination of the campaign he began to see, after his stupid fashion, that somebody would be blamed for his misconduct. He looked around for a victim and saw the commander of the Fifth Corps. Porter was a democrat, and democrats were then considered lawful game by all good republicans, and it was resolved that Porter should be "brought down," and he was;—not in the opinion of his old companions in arms; not in the opinion of those who knew him well; not in the estimation of the men he had led to battle. He was "brought down" only in the eyes of the faction who deposed him from his high command and made him the victim for another's guilt and blunders.

Looking over the proceedings of his court-martial and reading the history of the events that caused the court to be held, it is difficult to arrive at but one conclusion: that the real question at issue was not who is the guilty man, but whose friends are strongest with the party in power.

Pope held the winning hand. It is true he sacrificed his manhood to win success, and bartered his honor for the uniform of a major-general; but he succeeded. That fact satisfied him, for the time being at least. But he was not long to remain satisfied with that, the first victory he had ever won. When General Porter sought a rehearing it was opposed by Pope. Honorable men and able statesmen, stalwart republicans like the lamented Vice-President Wilson and Governor and General Chamberlain of Maine, thought the commander of the Fifth Corps ought to be reheard in his own defense; Pope thought otherwise, and so for fifteen years the verdict stood.

President Hayes—and all honor to him for the gracious act—took action in the matter to the end that justice might be done. After a report based upon a long and patient investigation by the military board, consisting of Generals Schofield, Terry, and Getty, each of whom you all know or know of, the matter was referred to Congress.

The military board fully acquitted General Porter, and Congress was called upon to decide upon the means for reparation.

It was hoped by General Porter's friends that when the matter came

up for consideration it might be discussed and acted upon in that spirit of fairness which should actuate all just-minded men. But such was not to be the case. Hardly had the President's reference been received when the political ball was set in motion and the drawing of a partisan line began.

In politics, as in boiling brine, the scum rises to the surface, and hence the fire of debate brought Logan and Carpenter into view.

These two individuals about equally distinguished themselves; the former, by artfully concealing the truth; the latter, in his usual erratic manner, by distorting it. Both seemed to agree in one respect, viz., that Porter would serve the purpose of a bugaboo to frighten the people into voting a third term to General Grant. But the people proved not to be children, and the third-term project met a disastrous defeat in the home of the very Senator who delivered a campaign document four days long to aid the "boom."

The remarkable effusion of Mr. Logan holds up a truly pitiable spectacle to public gaze. It shows a great government of a great nation pleading, like any petty thief or common criminal, the statute of limitations in bar of justice. If Logan is the mouth-piece of America, she says, substantially, that "Porter may be innocent, he may have suffered unjustly, but the time for redress has gone by. He must live on and suffer on under the unmerited burden of a deep disgrace, for there is no power upon the earth to relieve him of his load." And this shameful story, if it be true, is proclaimed abroad to the listening ears of foreign nations, who would not dare, despotic as they may chance to be, to make such an admission to their own people and to the world.

Great God! Is it true that here, in this land of freedom, if the government through its officers and servants commits a wrong, there is no way of righting it? Is it true that here, if injustice is visited upon a citizen there is no remedy?

I am no military critic, nor am I a close student of the art and laws of war, but this I will say: All the fine-spun theories and arguments advanced against legislative action upon the case of General Porter are the merest bosh. The will of the people is supreme, and if they, through their Senators and Representatives, decide to mete out justice or amend a wrong, the object aimed at may be easily and lawfully reached.

But I do not believe that the sentiments expressed by Senator Logan, and by Carpenter, his henchman, are the sentiments of the American people.

Nor do I believe them to be the sentiments of the respectable element of the republican party. Demagogues like the Senator from Illinois may preach them, but those who love truth and justice will pay little heed. The friends of Pope may scatter them broadcast, but the baleful seed will find no lodgment in honest hearts. Our people are too jealous of their rights to permit any man or set of men to force upon them a theory that may some day put them in the same or a similar position to that which Gen. Porter occupies at present.

I say this not only as an American, and one who fought under Gen. Porter, but as a republican.

At the age of twenty-one years, I voted for the first time, in 1864,

and voted for Mr. Lincoln; I voted for Gen. Grant; and, had I been possessed of a vote in the last canvass, should have voted for President Hayes.

But although a republican, I nevertheless repudiate such sentiments as are expressed in the speeches of Senators Logan and Carpenter to which I have referred.

I repudiate their attempt to make political capital out of the matter.

I believe in doing full justice to even a political antagonist, and regret to see any disposition on the part of republicans to make it appear that Gen. Porter's only hope for success rests in the sympathy his case may excite in the breasts of the "rebel brigadiers," as they are styled by some, in Congress.

I think that, inasmuch as the republican party is primarily responsible for the wrong done Gen. Porter, the republicans should be the first, or among the first, to undo that wrong.

And I should exceedingly regret to have it become a matter of history that the great republican party was less just to one whom it had injured deeply than were those against whom that one had bravely fought upon many a bloody field. I should very much dislike to have it said that Gen. Porter, after nearly eighteen years of suffering, received at the hands of his former foes that justice which was denied him by those in whose behalf he fought.

Such a record would be shameful to the republican party—shameful to every honest republican in the land.

The case of Gen. Porter should be inquired into and disposed of, not with a view to benefiting this or that political party, but simply for the purpose of doing equity.

The question of his restoration should be considered judicially by those who have to deal with it, and ought not, in any sense, to be made a party measure.

If Gen. Porter has been wronged—and that he has, the truth now makes plain—every honest man, without regard to party affiliation, should join with his friends to see him righted, and especially should the members of his former command come to the front and sustain him now as vigorously and bravely as they were wont to do on the field of battle. So should his fellow-soldiers of the Army of the Potomac.

A united effort on our part exerted in his behalf will accomplish much. We may assist greatly in restoring Justice to her proper throne in the hearts of those who make our laws and rule over us; and this accomplished, the restoration of Gen. Porter to the Army and the wiping away of the stains so cruelly put upon his good name and fame are sure to follow.

I ask you, then, men of the Fifth Corps, and I ask you of the Potomac Army who served in other corps, to assist in bringing about such a happy result.

It is due to Gen. Porter; it is due to us, the survivors of his old command; it is due to the memory of our dead.

I ask you, therefore, to arise in the majesty of your strength and pluck down the hateful partisan idols worshiped in the past, signaling

the event by crowning your brave deeds with one noble act which shall outlive and outshine all others in the years to come.

Arise and say to Gen. Porter's accusers that a partisan spirit shall no longer be permitted to inflict a never-ending penalty upon an innocent man, a brave soldier, and one ever found loyal and true!

Say to them that the unholy sentence of nearly eighteen years ago must be revoked because justice requires it, and it is your will that justice be satisfied. Such an expression from you must have great weight, for the will of the Army of the Potomac cannot be lightly disregarded.

Do but this much, and in the days yet to come your hearts will be cheered by the recollections of the part you had in restoring to the Army one of its brightest intellects and to the country one of her bravest and most loyal defenders, and to the Fifth Corps of the Army of the Potomac and of the Union its honor and good name.

Do this, and I for one shall ever remain your debtor.

Firm in the belief that you will not remain silent, and with expression of my sincere regard for each and every one to whom this is addressed, I remain, very truly, your friend and former companion in arms,

JNO. S. SLATER,

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