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CAMPAIGNING WITH THE SIXTH MAINE.

A PAPER A BEFORE

THE IOWA COMMANDERY
MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION
OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY

BREVET-LIEUT.-COLONEL CHARLES A. CLARK.

DES MOINES:
THE KENYON PRESS.
1897.

Chas. A. Clark

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CAMPAIGNING WITH THE SIXTH MAINE.

BY BREVET-LIEUT.-COLONEL CHARLES A. CLARK.

PERSONAL experiences and recollections have perhaps a greater charm than abstract discussions, or the most accurate and methodical history. Autobiography, as a rule, charms more than biography. Some one has called a daily journal a "human document," and such it is. No doubt it is this "human" element which gives personal reminiscences of the war time their principal attraction. It is impossible to write them, however, without putting the narrator directly to the front. One cannot eternally go through the circumlocution of speaking of one's self as one who wonders what one is to do when one is surrounded by such perils that one's head is in a whirl, and one is frantic to know what one is to expect, until one loses one's self in one's utter oneness. It is better to come to the first person singular direct. The semblance of egotism, which is the result, is not intended on this occasion. The unconscious sarcasm of the small boy who asked his father if it wasn't mighty hard work for him to put down that great rebellion all alone without any help, may as well be anticipated. The writer of this article is not the man who did it, and does not pretend to be. He served in a humble and obscure position; simply tried to do his duty, with varying success; and will try to tell some of the things that he saw with his regiment, "The Old Sixth Maine."

The regiment was enlisted early in 1861. Of the ten companies, half were from central Maine, and half from the coast. It was a happy combination of the sailor, the lumberman, the student, the farmer, the merchant, and the laborer, with a

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lucky absence of the politician, who, even at that early day seemed to divine that in the service he would be in the plight of the tourist who met a grizzly bear in the Rocky Mountains, and who closed a subsequent narration of the event by declaring to his breathless friends that he never felt so bashful in all of his life.

We were all young. The most of us had seen nothing of the world. At the time I was a student at Foxcroft Academy, one of the many admirable educational institutions of the Pine Tree State. I was fairly well fitted for college, and would have entered that summer. I did not do so. Recently I was asked from what institution I graduated, and I was compelled to answer, "From the Army of the Potomac."

Let me speak of myself as a type of the New England soldier. My people came to Massachusetts in 1640. My paternal grandfather was a calvinist baptist minister ; my maternal grandfather was a physician ; my father was a lawyer, then, most unhappily, a few years deceased, leaving a family of nine children to be watched over by a devout mother of the deepest religious convictions. Four brothers of us enlisted ; two at once, and two later ; all were severely wounded ; one died from his wounds in front of Petersburg.

An uncle, my father's only brother, Major Atherton W. Clark, served in the Twentieth Maine. Two cousins, Captain Wm. A. Stevens, and Lieutenant Edwin Clark Stevens, officers in the Sixteenth Maine, were both killed at Petersburg. These all seemed like members of the same family circle. Many an American family contributed in like manner to the country's cause in her hour of need. Such was the pervading patriotism of that day. If the records of family groups could be adequately written, no one would be at a loss to understand why the slaves were set free, and why the cause of the Union triumphed.

On the 24th day of April, 1861, I piled up my Greek and Latin books and enlisted. My fellow students very generally did the same. The classes in the old academy were broken up. For ten days our recitations had been a farce. When the news of firing on Sumter came, we went to Captain Paul's woods by night and felled two of his tallest pines. We hauled them by hand to the academy grounds, and all night long we wrought to splice and raise them. They made the liberty pole of that town for the war, and with the first gleam of dawn in the east, we ran up the stars and stripes with hurrahs which waked the sober citizens. On that very spot now stands a beautiful monument surmounted by the granite statue of an American soldier with arms at parade rest, forever telling of my comrades of that night, who sealed with death their devotion to the cause for which our hearts then throbbed so hotly.

I tossed a coin with Gray, my chum and room mate, to determine who should have the honor of placing his name at the head of the first enlistment roll of Piscataquis County in that mighty war, and I won first place. His name followed mine, and as captain of Company A he died like a hero in our charge upon Marye's Heights, at Fredericksburg, in May, 1863. Alas, and alas! He was one of the many young fellows who went to the front with us to return no more.

"When I remember all
  The friends, so linked together,
I've seen around me fall
  Like leaves in wintry weather,
I feel like one who treads alone
  Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead,
  And all but him departed."

We did not become soldiers at one jump. Our first enlistment was for three months. We did not get in on that call. We then enlisted for one year, with no better success. Finally, we enrolled for three years, or during the war. At each new signing a number dropped out; they were not numerous, and they served a good purpose in furnishing fun for those who did not falter. They were awfully sorry without exception, but they could not stand camp fare ; their stomachs were uniformly weak, and all agreed that they had no stomachs for what might be in store for us. One poor fellow lost his voice. He was told to sign "in a whisper," and when he refused,— the picture of despondency,— some one said, "Yes, 'his voice is *still* for war '— mighty still — let him go." And he departed from our midst.

We were at last mustered into the United States service at Portland, on July 15, 1861. We had then devoted nearly three months to faithful drill and camp duty, and when we got our muskets, old flint-locks, changed over for percussion caps, we fondly imagined ourselves soldiers. And indeed the regiment was of admirable stuff. The men were of the sturdy old New England breed. The foreign element was next to nothing. If called upon to furnish anything from a blacksmith to a brigadier-general, it could fill the bill at a moment's notice. We could make a good right-wheel, and when we saw each other do this and keep a good alignment by company front, we knew that we were going to put down the Rebellion, and do it the first chance we got.

We started for Washington, July 17. I well remember how one fourth or fifth corporal felt as he marched through Boston. His enormous knapsack became a mountain, in which each testament given him by dear friends became a granite boulder in weight, and provoked a tumult of wild thoughts which must have been the emanation of several personal devils, of a pronounced type. Lord ! but he blessed, and he blesses to this day, Boston Common, where we were marched for a a cold collation, and where several keepsakes were accidentally rattled out of his knapsack, and were never seen more by him.

We arrived at Washington the night of July 19, having been fed royally at Philadelphia, as were all soldiers going and coming during the whole war. The next day was the day before the battle of Bull Run. The city was full of all sorts of rumors. The fight at Blackburn's ford had not been satisfactory, and there were some forebodings and murmurings. We marched out through Georgetown and up the Potomac to Chain Bridge. On the way our column took its course through the half circle at the north front of the white house, and President Lincoln came out and reviewed us. He looked wan and worn, but there was a gleam of hope in his eyes, and of resolute faith and determination in his rugged face which endeared him to all. After these many years, whenever I am in Washington, I still stroll past the north front of the white house and recall that scene. In the same spot I see the sainted and immortal man who inspired us with such love and veneration. And here comes the old regiment passing in review, a thousand strong, myself a youth of twenty, with a knapsack still too heavy. The cadenced tramp of resolute feet comes back to me, and thrills me through and through.

> "Pride in each port, defiance in each eye,
> I see these lords of human kind pass by."

Ah, if I might see them again in very truth, and muster with them as of yore, I would gladly go through the hardest battle of the war for that high privilege.

At Chain Bridge, on Sunday, July 21st, we listened to the thunder of cannon at Bull Run, and at the first rumors of success we assembled for religious exercises. Devout thanks were returned by the chaplain in his prayer, and a large amount of ecstatic information was volunteered to Deity as to how the cause of truth and right had on that day triumphed over the wrong, as it always had done in the past, and always would do in the future. That night and the next morning quite a different state of affairs became painfully evident. All who came back from the front joined in one wild outcry of "masked batteries," and "black horse cavalry." That was about all we could learn from them of that celebrated historic race called Bull Run.

Chain Bridge is across the Potomac, six miles above Washington. For several days after the battle our one raw regiment held this important approach to the National Capital. Here we saw our first picket duty. I was out Monday night after the battle on Sunday. The Rebels were supposed to be swarming upon us, as, indeed, there was no reason why they should not have been. We were stationed in timber. Every bush wore a slouch hat, and stealthily crept up to our sentinels if *it was only watched close enough.* I saw Rebels enough that night to have taken us all to Richmond, but the spectral foemen did not attack us.

Here we were put into a brigade with some of the afterwards celebrated Vermont regiments, and were under the command of Colonel W. F. Smith, who was afterwards the distinguished General "Baldy Smith," of Lookout Mountain fame, and of other historic achievements. He came one day and reviewed us. Lieutenant-Colonel Burnham was in command. He was a bluff old lumberman who had served in the thirties in Maine's Aroostook war. The regiment was duly formed and ordered to "present arms." Turning to Smith, Burnham said, "Well, Colonel, what will you have next?" Baldy Smith was nonplused for once in his life, but finally stammered out, "Well, Colonel Burnham, there is a very good form laid down in army regulations." Colonel Burnham at once furnished his own "regulations" and put us through the most unique review ever witnessed in the military service of our Uncle Samuel. Here we were shortly after reviewed by General McClellan, accompanied by President Lincoln, and Secretaries Seward and Chase. Meanwhile, army regulations and tactics had been looked up and the pageant proceeded without any inquiries addressed to the reviewing officer as to what we should do next. And here one evening at dress parade, rode up President Lincoln and General Scott, in an open carriage. The contrast between the President and General Scott, was very remarkable. The one, thin, spare, awkward, and plain of features, yet dominated by an indescribable radiance of goodness, greatness, and genius ; the other, portly, erect, handsome, in the glory of a major-general's uniform and epaulets, to our eyes a very god of war, and a magnificent representative of all the pomp, pageantry and circumstance of armies in the field. None who saw the two on this occasion can ever have forgotten the scene.

It was not until about the middle of September that we crossed the Potomac and entered upon the permanent occupation of the Virginia side of the river. Here we erected earthworks, the outlines of some of which are still to be seen, and here the Sixth Maine was put at work felling the timber along the Potomac to give range for artillery from the forts, and to form abatis to resist an attack. About this time there came to us General Winfield Scott Hancock, and we were put into a permanent brigade under his command, together with the Fifth Wisconsin, the Forty-ninth Pennsylvania and the Forty-third New York. It is related that one day while chopping was being done by our state of Maine lumbermen, General Baldy Smith, who at this time was our division commander, was calling upon General Hancock, and inquired what the uproar meant. "Oh," replied Hancock, "that is my Sixth Maine regiment 'axing' its way to Richmond." On another occasion when inquiries were made of General Smith how far to the front his troops had advanced, he replied : "That's uncertain ; but if you want to know, go out and pass the picket line and go as much farther to the front as you think it safe to do ; then climb the tallest tree you can find, and off in the distance you will still see men from the Sixth Maine in the corn fields stealing corn." Roasting ears at this time were in undoubted demand at all of our company mess fires.

About the first of October we advanced to the vicinity of Lewinsville and there went into camp for the winter. We had plenty of drilling, plenty of picket duty, and plenty of hard work, but no fighting. The latter part of October our camp was thrilled by the tragic fight at Ball's Bluff and the death of General Baker. His was a familiar figure to all of us, and sorrow for his death was universal. The following lines, which were published in the Washington Republican of November 15th, were an effort of the writer of this article to express the prevailing sentiment over his death :

COLONEL E. D. BAKER.

The gallant old man of the eloquent tongue
  Has nobly his life laid down ;
In the hearts of all freemen his praises are sung,
  He has won him a living renown.

And ever, from out of the dark abyss of time,
  Till the moon and the stars are grown dim,
In full sounding chant, and in musical chime,
  Shall honor be meted to him.

And justly ; for statesman, he brooked not repose
  When treason waxed deadly and strong,
But sought the wild conflict, a Brutus to those
  Who plotted the foulest of wrong.

Where thundered the battle, where sounded the fray,
  Where flowed the bright torrent of blood,
There smote he the foeman, a lion at bay,
  Scorning fear with the scorn of a god !

Forsaken by hope in that terrible time
  Whose horror no language may tell,
He moved to his fate with a mien so sublime
  That weeping we cry, "It is well !"

For each true example of man, at the last,
  Moves man in the way he should go ;
Bear witness, oh deeds of the many-hued past,
  And deeds all the future shall know !

And Baker ! All ages succeeding shall tell,
  What thou in thy manhood did'st dare ;
To defend the great cause thou defending hast fell,
  We swear ! By thy manes, we swear !

Camp Griffin, Va., Oct. 26, 1861.

In the latter part of November I was acting as quartermaster sergeant of the regiment. At the request of the quartermaster, who was himself under arrest, I took to the tent of Colonel Francis L. Vinton, of the Forty-third New York, who was judge-advocate of a general court martial then in session, a letter giving the names of witnesses whom he desired to have summoned on his behalf at his approaching trial. I rapped at Colonel Vinton's tent. Some one cried "Come in." I pulled the tent fly aside, made my best free American military salute, and said: "Colonel Vinton, I have a letter for you," which I passed in to his orderly. Colonel Vinton was a young and very meritorious officer, a graduate of West Point. He yelled at me vociferously to take off my cap. I stood upon my rights as a free American citizen to wear my cap when I was out of doors, and undertook to explain that I had made the regulation salute, which was all that could be required of me. The colonel came out and performed an Indian war dance in my immediate vicinity. There was an exchange of lively profanity between a colonel and an enlisted man, and the soldier finally walked off with the proud consciousness that he had not come off second best in that interchange of courtesies. Colonel Vinton, however, preferred charges against me for contempt and disrespect of my superior officer in not taking off my cap when reminded that I ought to do so, and for disobedience of orders in refusing to take off my cap when *ordered* to do so. I remember that it was specified among other things that I "did fold my arms in a contumacious manner, and decline to remove my cap," and I believe that specification was probably accurate and correct. At any rate, I was promptly tried before the general court martial, was convicted, and got my sentence before the quartermaster for whom I took the letter to Colonel Vinton got his trial and acquittal.

In due time, published in general orders on the 19th of January, 1862, this sentence was promulgated. I was found guilty of all charges and all specifications. I was sentenced to be reduced to the rank of private soldier ; to have my chevrons torn off in front of the regiment ; and I was fined $10 a month for two months, to be deducted from my pay proper, which left me $3 per month to go on, as nearly as I can now remember the pay and emoluments of the private soldier. This sentence was carried out on dress parade. My chevrons were torn off by Doctor Eugene F. Sanger, surgeon of the regiment. With each recurring annual reunion of the regiment, whenever I am there and the doctor is there, he still narrates with a fiendish chuckle, this surgical feat, and declares with vigorous emphasis that it was the most salutary and successful operation of his whole career in the service.

I embraced that occasion to "drop into poetry," as Silas Wagg would say, and I sent the following lines to my old home paper, the "Piscataquis Observer," where my versified woes made their appearance in the "poets corner."

I am not proud of this or any of my rhymes. They are given to show what the young Union soldier of 1861 was like.

ALL ABOUT CAPS.

(A Sergeant reduced to the ranks for declining to take off his cap to a Colonel.)

Ye pious, grave, and learned men,
  Come forth from every nation,—
Think over all the horrid crimes
  Committed since creation ;
And say if one be found so black,
  (When ye have looked and sought all,)
As that a mortal should decline
  To doff his cap to mortal.

I know the trouble is not new,
  But that it has existed
Since tyranny and all its ills
  Were first by man resisted ;
That low-born fellow, William Tell,
  Whose insolence was ample,
In pure contempt of Gesler's power
  First set the bad example.

Since when, full many a stubborn wight,
The vicious act applauding,
Has followed closely in his steps,
And "been and done according";
And so the custom has progressed
In public estimation,
Until at last, 'tis common to
The entire Yankee nation!

'Tis very plain this monstrous ill
Cannot go on forever;
To bring it promptly to an end
Let all in power endeavor;
That cry of nature from the soul,
Which says we all are human,
And all may wear our caps alike,
Most surely will not do, man!

The marked importance of this truth
Is very great and vital,—
That freemen all must bow and cringe
To those who've rank and title;
And first it must be learned, (say Pride,
And Power in close communion,)
By those who've left their homes, their all,
To battle for the Union!

And so, let fighting go awhile;
Convene a grave court martial;
Submit this unexampled case,
For their decree impartial;
Arraign the "contumacious"* wight,
Who hath some soul and spirit,
And let his sentence be severe,
For such his crime doth merit.

Remove the stripes from off his arms,
And send him to the ranks,
For there he'll find him time, no doubt,
To con his evil pranks;
And thinking, he perchance may say,
"I need not much be pitied,
To fight the foe with COVERED HEAD,
I'll surely be permitted!"†

Camp Griffin, Va., January, 1862.

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* "Did fold his arms in a CONTUMACIOUS manner, and decline to take off his cap," say the specification against the sergeant in question.

† And he was!

The trouble was, that this occurred at a period when, in the language of Artemus Ward, "one man was as good as another, and a little better." I was not slow to see the necessity of subordination and discipline. After that, if my superior officer had ordered me to take off my shoes, or my coat, I think I should have obeyed without waiting to discuss the propriety of the order with him. I ought to say, in passing, that Colonel Vinton was afterwards promoted to brigadier-general, and in the fall of 1862, after the battle of Antietam, and after I had been promoted myself, I was detailed to aid in inspecting his brigade at Clear Springs, Maryland. There were several funny incidents connected with this inspection which I shall not attempt to rehearse. He had not forgotten me, and I certainly had never forgotten who he was. He was afterward wounded at the first battle of Fredericksburg, where, with reckless courage, he needlessly exposed himself before his brigade was brought into action. He was thus disabled from further service, and, resigning his commission, he went to South America on some great engineering enterprise, and there died before the war was ended.

In two weeks from the time I was thus reduced to the ranks I received my commission as second lieutenant. Colonel Burnham announced with vigorous emphasis that he did not propose to allow Colonel Vinton of the Forty-third New York to administer discipline in his regiment, or tell his soldiers when to take off their caps. The episode had rather a happy termination for me after all.

On the 10th of March, 1862, McClellan put the army of the Potomac in motion. No matter what that unfortunate general may have done, or may have failed to do, he has been relentlessly criticised by a certain class of hostile writers. The army of the Potomac was never put in motion so early in spring by any other general, and it never saw so many fighting days during any year as in 1862 under McClellan, with the exception of

1864 under Grant, when enormous reënforcements kept up the equally enormous losses which were sustained.

An advance to Manassas showed that the enemy were in full retreat, whereupon McClellan organized the Peninsular campaign. On the 25th of March we arrived at Fort Monroe. On the 27th we made a reconnoissance up the James river as far as Warwick. Returning from there, we camped for a few days at Newport News, and saw the ill-fated Cumberland and Congress lying near the beach, where they had been sunk in the fight with the Merrimac. We also saw the little Monitor, which has been most aptly described as a "cheese box on a raft." The Merrimac lay back of Crany Island, over in the Norfolk waters, with steam up, apparently ready to renew the conflict, but her doom was sealed; she never fired another gun.

On the 5th of April we were before the enemy's works at Warwick, that being the right of his line which extended across the Peninsula from Yorktown, substantially to the James river, and on that day we were engaged in our first skirmish with the enemy. On the next day, with the Fifth Wisconsin, we reconnoitered the enemy's lines and lost our first man, a private in Company E. On the 9th we made a reconnoissance of the enemy's lines under the direction of Captain Comstock, afterward a distinguished officer of the engineers, and were engaged in another skirmish with the enemy. For the excellent behavior of the Sixth Maine on this occasion it received the thanks of the commanding general in general orders issued the next day.

From this time on we were under fire continuously. On the 16th of April we were engaged in the battle of Lee's Mills, where some of the Vermont regiments were so decimated in their gallant charge across Warwick Creek. It was our first experience under heavy artillery fire, and it was marvelous to see how the men adapted themselves to the perils of the situation. Said one of our company cooks to a private in the ranks, as we moved out of camp that morning, "George, where are you going?" "Going a-gunning, Asa," responded the ready private. There was mighty lively "gunning" that day before nightfall. Skirmishing and fighting were incessant until Yorktown was evacuated, and the enemy retreated up the Peninsula. There has been great uproar over McClellan's delay at Yorktown. We were in front of the works there just a month, and we started forward on the march to Richmond on the 4th day of May. It was the 4th day of May, 1864, that General Grant started on his march through the Wilderness. He has not been criticised for tardiness, but at that date in 1862, McClellan had already been in the field six weeks, and had driven the enemy from a strongly entrenched position. So in 1863, Hooker did not move until early in May, and he never has been called a laggard.

The next day after the evacuation we came up with the Confederates and fought the bloody battle of Williamsburg. That battle raged in a pouring rain all day long. We were in Hancock's brilliant and justly celebrated charge on the right. We had crossed Queen's Run over a narrow causeway on the top of a dam, and had advanced close up to Fort Magruder, the enemy's principal work. There we were subject to both musketry and artillery fire, and lay upon our faces in an open field to escape somewhat from the enemy's missiles. As second lieutenant of Company A I felt called upon to show the men that I was not afraid, and got upon my hind legs for that purpose. In the twinkling of an eye I was struck by a spent bullet from a target rifle, in the immediate vicinity of my watch-pocket, at the waistband of my trousers. I laid down suddenly, under the impression that several good-sized grape shot had passed through me. I picked the bullet up and preserved it as a relic of that day. For several days I carried upon my person discolorations which embraced all the hues of the rainbow, but escaped without any serious results.

Shortly after this episode, the enemy charged us with their terrific "rebel yell", which, on that occasion, was nothing less than blood curdling. They were led by General Jubal A. Early, afterwards so well known for his raid upon Washington, and his campaign and contests with Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864.

The right of our brigade line rested on a belt of timber which extended up to Fort Magruder. The remainder of the line lay in an open field, and our attention was first directed to a heavy Confederate force which moved to attack us directly in front. In an instant, however, a lively fusillade of musketry was heard from our skirmishers, whom Hancock, with his accustomed vigilance, had posted in the woods to protect our flank. Hancock saw in a flash that this meant a force of the enemy advancing through the timber to strike our line in flank, while we were being attacked in front by another heavy column. He was equal to the emergency. He at once "about-faced" the line, and fell back about five hundred yards to a point where a square earthwork had been constructed by the enemy, and which then stood unoccupied. Here he made his stand. His orders to the Sixth Maine were, "Colonel Burnham, put five companies of your regiment into this earthwork, and five companies to the left of it, and fight like ——! Fight like ——!" Just at this instant, as half our regiment double-quicked into the earthwork, the Confederate force which had been designed to flank us on the right in our first position, poured out from the timber, and struck its own lines which were coming down on our front. Instead of harming us, Hancock's manœuver had resulted in the two columns of the enemy pouring in together, and forming one confused mass. This did not delay their forward movement. They came on with renewed and frenzied yells, and shouts of "Bull Run and Ball's Bluff." The situation was most critical. Hancock's brigade, with one or two additional regiments assigned to him, was detached from all of our other forces. In our rear was Queen's Run, with no avenue of retreat except the narrow causeway across the dam where from six to eight men only could move abreast. If our lines were broken, destruction or capture was the sure fate which awaited us. Every private in the ranks understood this, and our little force fought accordingly. I think we had a single section of artillery from Mott's battery, which, of course, could do very little execution in repulsing such an attack. Our fire was held until the Confederates were close upon us, and then it was poured in with deadly effect, volley after volley. As the enemy wavered under this withering fire, the command of "forward" rang out along our lines, and a counter charge was delivered with wild hurrahs which drowned out the rebel yell, now growing fainter and fainter as we rushed forward. The whole attacking force was driven from the field, and fell back on Fort Magruder in wild confusion. Early was seriously wounded. His regiments were decimated ; many of their field officers lay killed or wounded upon the bloody field. Everywhere the ground was strewn with Confederate dead and and dying. The loss which the enemy had sustained was something marvelous. I doubt if at any time during the entire war our forces inflicted such amazing destruction with such little loss to themselves. During this contest the rain had fallen in torrents. It was a fight in a cloud-burst. This repulse of the enemy ended the battle of Williamsburg. We slept on the field that night. I very well remember that I succeeded in securing two rails from a Virginia fence in front of us, and, spreading my woollen blanket on these, with a rubber blanket over me, I slept the sleep of utter fatigue and exhaustion. It made no difference that the rain poured in torrents, and the victims of the battlefield lay thickly around us. Only those who have slept upon a battlefield can know the deep and dreamless sleep which comes, when the conflict is ended which has tried mind and body alike to their utmost.

The next morning the enemy had departed from our front. Hancock's force on his left flank, which was heavily reënforced during the night, had made the Confederate position untenable. Hancock and his men were thanked in general orders. The fact was, that this was the one episode which fairly entitled us to claim Williamsburg as a victory. The second day after the battle, General McClellan, at our dress parade, addressed our regiment, and personally thanked us and complimented us in the highest terms. He did the same with the other regiments in Hancock's command.

From Williamsburg we marched on to Richmond unhindered, until we approached its immediate vicinity. On the 14th of May, with my company, I was on guard over the White House, on the Pamunkey river, some eighteen or twenty miles from Richmond. This was the beautiful and romantic spot where Washington wooed, won, and married Mrs. Curtis. It was then the property of General William Henry Fitz Hugh Lee, a son of General R. E. Lee. His wife and family had departed that morning on the last train for Richmond. In the hall was posted a notice in feminine writing, which besought the Yankee vandals and invaders to respect and hold sacred the spot around which clustered so many memories of Washington. In the dining room was a like notice on the dining table, which contained the information that it was the table from which Washington had eaten his wedding breakfast. My orders were to admit no one to the grounds without a pass from the provost marshal-general of the Army of the Potomac. Before I was relieved I was compelled to wheel my guard with fixed bayonets across one of the approaches, to arrest the visit of inspection of a distinguished Union general and his staff, who desired to enter the grounds without the necessary credentials. Everything about the place was religiously cared for while it was in my charge. In my pocket diary of May 15th I find this entry: "I was relieved from guard over the white house at about noon. I brought away some simple flowers as mementos of the place which the courtship of Washington made so famous."

Afterwards, as the army surged back and forth over this historic ground, the White House was burned. When I last saw the spot, in 1864, it was a place of desolate ruin. It was claimed, and seemed to be conceded, that some tramps from the Confederate army were responsible for this vandalism.

On the 31st day of May, we listened to the battle of Fair Oaks, or Seven Pines, across the Chickahominy, and not very far to our left. Just two years afterwards, in the immediate vicinity of where we then camped, on ground not quite so far in advance and not so near to Richmond by several miles, General Grant was forming his legions for the unfortunate and disastrous attack at the battle of Cold Harbor. McClellan, at the battle of Seven Pines, repulsed the enemy with heavy slaughter. Grant at the battle of Cold Harbor lost practically 10,000 men before breakfast, in a general assault upon the enemy's lines which had not been even reconnoitered to determine where, if at all, an attack would be warranted. The storm of villification which pursued McClellan through his entire career, still finds its echo in all attempts of a history of those days. Grant, in his own memoirs, is candid enough to admit that the battle of Cold Harbor was a mistake, for which he offers no excuse.

McClellan has been, and is, persistently attacked for his alleged delay in reaching Richmond, after opening the campaign of 1861. He advanced up the Peninsula, and reached the immediate vicinity of Richmond by the latter days of May, with comparatively little loss, and fought the battle of Seven Pines, inflicting such losses on the enemy that he has been arraigned with great vigor for not marching his army into Richmond the next day after the battle. Grant advanced through the Wilderness, sustaining the most dreadful losses, always compelled to move by the flank around positions which he could not carry by assault, finally arriving near the rebel capital, also in the latter days of May, where he fought the unsuccessful battle of Cold Harbor, after which he was unable to place his army within striking distance of Richmond on the north bank of the James river ; and yet it is assumed by all historians of the war that McClellan's was the unsuccessful, and Grant's the successful campaign up to this point. I yield to no man in my admiration of Grant, or in my devotion to the memory of his magnificient achievements as commander of the Union armies. But I cannot reconcile myself to the persistent, ceaseless, and undying villification of my old commander, General McClellan, which had its origin in mere angry and unreasoning clamor, and which so far as it has a place in history, is the echo and reverberation of that clamor from the skies, come back to fill the ears of later writers.

A day or two after the battle of Seven Pines, we crossed the Chickahominy, and from that time until the beginning of the seven days battles, our brigade, now in the Sixth Corps, formed the right of McClellan's lines on the Richmond side of that river. We were almost incessantly skirmishing and under fire. The shells from the Confederate artillery reached our camps. We were here reviewed by the Spanish General Prim, who was afterwards president of the short-lived Spanish republic. We were in the lines here until the 25th of June, when the seven days battles commenced well around towards Hanover Court House, in a conflict between Fitz John Porter and detachments of Lee's forces. On the 26th was the battle of Mechanicsville between the same contending forces. The roar of these battles was in our ears, and there was corresponding venom in the skirmishing along our own front. These two days were victorious for the Union forces. On June 26th was fought the battle of Gaine's Mills, on our immediate right and rear, between Fitz John Porter and Stonewall Jackson. We witnessed this bloody contest across the valley of the river, but the atmospheric condition was such that no sound of artillery or musketry reached our ears. It was like a phantom battle as it appeared to us. Just at dark, Porter's lines were broken, and our communications with our base of supplies at the White House on the Pamunkey river, were destroyed. Having achieved success on the left bank of the Chickahominy, the enemy at once advanced and attacked us on the right bank, just across the river from Porter's forces. Our line of battle had been formed in advance of our camp, and all day we had pressed the enemy's lines quite vigorously as a demonstration apparently in aid of Porter's forces. When the assault was made upon us by General John B. Floyd's brigade, we were prepared for it. My own company was out on the skirmish line in a wheat field between the two lines of battle. When the Confederates charged us we promptly fell back upon our line of battle. There was one exception to this. Old Ed Richards, of Company A., (he was in fact *young* like the rest of us), a man who was extraordinarily tall, and always on the right of the company ; red headed and freckled, his hair so brilliantly carmine that he was almost a pillar of fire by night wherever we marched ; old Ed, I say, didn't obey the order quite promptly enough. Before he made his break to the rear, a terrific fire of musketry had broken out between the contending forces. He lay down in the wheat field, flat upon his face, and remained there until the attack was repulsed. Then he came in, literally plastered with Virginia soil, which had been thrown upon him by the bullets striking the ground all around him, and his red locks had the appearance of having been bleached by some mysterious process akin to that which made the prisoner of Chillon cry out —

> " My hair is gray, but not with years,
> Nor grew it white in a single night
> As men's have grown from sudden fears."

We welcomed him back with cheers, and took a unanimous vote that he was not born to be killed by bullets. Neither was he. He is now a sturdy farmer at Kingsley, Iowa, one of the few members of the old Sixth Maine who made their way west after the war.

A soldier of like stature in Company I, woefully lacked the nerve of old Richards. When the first volley came, he made a wild break for the rear. A lieutenant who was exceedingly diminutive of stature, attempted to stop this giant lumberman, but was knocked over a log and had his ribs broken. As some of the men drew up their rifles and were about to shoot at the fleeing coward, General Hancock rode up and taking in the situation at a glance, he shouted, "Shoot the other way! Shoot the other way! that coward is running so fast no bullet will ever catch *him!*" The men obeyed the order and joined in the fire upon the Confederates. After a hot fight with severe losses on both sides, the enemy was repulsed. This was the battle of Golding's farm.

The next morning we awoke to find that Porter's forces had crossed the Chickahominy and lay in our immediate rear, having destroyed the bridges across the river behind them. That day, the 28th, we held position a little in rear of that of the day before, and when the enemy attacked us about ten o'clock in the morning, he was easily and handsomely repulsed. This was the fight at Garnett's farm. Captain James D. Campbell, of the Forty-ninth Pennsylvania, was the hero of that hot affair.

The next day, Sunday the 29th, we fell back to Savage's Station, and there just at dark we participated in the battle fought at that point, where the enemy were repulsed with heavy losses.

Our own losses were now telling upon us. Captain Gray of my company had been wounded by a shell at Golding's farm. At Savage's Station, Lieutenant Morrill suffered a severe sunstroke, and I never expected to see him alive again. This left me in command of Company A. The night after the battle at

Savage's Station, we fell back until three o'clock in the morning, when we crossed White Oak swamp and destroyed the bridges in our rear. Halting on the ascending ground beyond the swamp, we all fell where we stacked arms, and were asleep in an instant.

The next morning, June 30th, the battle of White Oak swamp opened around us with a salute from forty pieces of Confederate artillery, which had been posted in a belt of timber across the swamp within easy range of us, and it is certain that the Sixth Maine never listened to such a reveille during its three years of service, as greeted our ears when these pieces opened with shell and shrapnel. A battery of our own artillery, which had been posted to command the crossing, was absolutely demolished without firing a shot. Guns were dismounted, caissons were blown up, horses were killed, the artillerymen were annihiliated almost in the twinkling of an eye. A regiment in our immediate rear, which we had greatly admired for its magnificent drill and discipline, broke and fled, and never halted until it reached Harrison's Landing. It is narrated that one frantic officer in this command ordered our baggage trains out of the way with the cry, "Get these tam mule teams out of the road! What is a mule team to the lives of one t'ousand men?" This regiment was deprived of its colors by order of the general commanding, and was not again permitted to carry the stars and stripes until it redeemed itself by magnificent fighting at the battle of Antietam. It was an illustration of panic which may overtake really brave men under trying circumstances. Probably there is nothing more trying than to be awakened from sound slumber by such an infernal salute from forty pieces of artillery.

There was lively skirmishing along our lines that day, but the infantry did not come to close quarters. In our rear raged the battle of Glendale and Charles City cross roads, where the enemy were repulsed, or our one line of retreat would have been cut off. I believe that it was on this day that our chaplain, who had discovered that the Confederates were on all sides of us, burst out with the whimsical, not cowardly, exclamation, "My God! My God! Why didn't I go to the rear while there was a rear to go to?"

It was Stonewall Jackson who attacked us in the morning so vigorously with his artillery. He has been criticised sharply by Longstreet and other Confederate officers for not following up the attack with his infantry. They accuse him of inertia on an occasion when they claim he might have aided in the annihilation of McClellan's army. My own impression has always been that his judgment was better than theirs. Our position seemed to be such that we could have repulsed any assault which he might have made, although it may be true that our extreme right was somewhat exposed.

That night we resumed our march to the James river. It was so dark that our men wore strips of white cloth around their left arms for identification. The battle in our rear had raged along the road we were passing over, and the groans and moans of our wounded and dying filled the night as we marched past them. The men by this time were very much fatigued. They almost slept as they marched along. Whenever we halted they fell to the ground and were asleep in an instant. We were the rear guard of the army. Along towards morning there was a brief halt and the men were instantly wrapped in deepest slumber. Suddenly something seized us like a cyclone; it was one blind impulse which took possession of officers and men in their unconscious condition, and swept them out of the road, over the fence and into the adjacent fields, before anybody knew what had occurred. The first thing that I knew of, I was in this field with the rest of my comrades, and heard the voice of Colonel Burnham ring out like a clarion, "Attention, Sixth Maine; prepare to receive cavalry!" Then we heard a clatter and rattle come down the road upon which we had marched, and a half dozen sumpter mules galloped past with a great uproar of frying pans, coffee pots and other camp equipage, and we recognized at once the foe which had routed us. As far as the eye could reach down the road, these mules had everything to themselves. There was not a musket to dispute the passageway with them. One of my brother officers lost his sword in this blind scramble, and in some way I picked it up. Like everybody else, I was very much worn out and exhausted, but enough spirit of fun remained in me to impel me to carry it all night, while I guyed and joked this unfortunate victim upon having surrendered his sword to the heroic mules who had routed the old Sixth Maine.

The march that night was memorable for its severity in our exhausted condition. Just at daybreak on the morning of July first, we arrived on the battlefield of Malvern Hill. There we formed our lines, and held the extreme right during that sanguinary engagement. We were posted to hold a road along which the enemy might have advanced to turn our position and render it untenable. We were not attacked in force, and listened to the uproar of artillery, musketry, yells, and cheers on our left, with feelings of the utmost interest. The repulse which Lee's forces there sustained, ended McClellan's "seven days' battles" in front of Richmond. During this entire series of contests the enemy had been everywhere repulsed, except when Porter's lines were broken, and the official returns show that the losses of the Confederates were much heavier than our own.

McClellan has been been attacked and villified for not marching upon Richmond after his army had heroically endured the shock of battle for so many days. It is easy to prophesy that such a movement would have been successful, but what the result would have been in fact, is none the less shrouded in mystery; and it is certain that our army was in need of recuperation and new materiel of war.

The next day, through a heavy rain, we marched to Harrison's Landing. As we came into camp there, I well remember how the regiment sang "The red, white and blue," and rounded off with that magnificent anthem, "John Brown's body lies mouldering in the ground." Who was the author of this refrain, or where it came from nobody can tell. It made its appearance among our troops as we marched up the Peninsula, and at Harrison's Landing the regiment chanted "We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree," with all the faith in that supposititious execution which the men had felt when they repulsed Floyd's brigade at Golding's farm.

McClellan's plan undoubtedly was to strike the enemy at Petersburg, as General Grant did in his terrific campaign of 1864. But the authorities at Washington did not sleep well o' nights. Instead of reënforcing McClellan, they determined to withdraw his entire army, and interpose it directly between Washington and the enemy as a reënforcement of Pope's forces, who were being driven back from the line of the Rapidan. The equivalent of this in 1864, would have been to withdraw Grant's army from Petersburg to shield Washington when Early made his advance directly up to the fortifications of the national capital. In 1862 McClellan might have held Lee's forces in the immediate vicinity of Richmond and Petersburg as Grant did in 1864, if he had been permitted to do so, and had been reënforced in any such measure as Grant was.

Our corps, the Sixth, under General Franklin, reached Pope's forces at the second battle of Bull Run, just in time to cover their retreat from that field. We marched out to the stone bridge which had seen the retreat of our forces from the same field in 1861. As we pushed to the front, a staff officer rode back and asked excitedly, "What troops are these?" "Franklin's Sixth Corps," was the reply. "Why didn't you come sooner?" he shrieked in a voice of anger. "Why didn't you stay later?" thundered a private from the ranks; and that ended the colloquy.

From the stone bridge we were withdrawn to the heights of Centerville. There the next day we saw Phil Kearney move out with his troops to fight the battle of Chantilly and protect our communications with Washington. As he made his appearance, riding through our forces, the men began to cheer wildly. He was idolized by the whole Army of the Potomac. Regiments, brigades, divisions, the whole army, arose *en masse* and shouted themselves hoarse. The men poured from all directions and surrounded him by thousands, impeding his way and making his progress impossible. From time to time he would, with his one hand raise his hat, a picture of grace, chivalry and bravery ; a very god of war, such as it is not often given human eyes to look upon. Then the men would open a way for him, only to repeat the frenzy over and over again. From that magnificent and spontaneous ovation, Kearney rode to his death. While the plaudits of his fellow soldiers must still have been ringing in his ears, he fell, pierced by Confederate bullets leading his columns on to victory.

Hardly had Pope fallen back upon Washington, when, McClellan, restored to command, set the army in motion to meet Lee's forces who were crossing into Maryland. On September 14, we fought the enemy at Crampton's Pass, while the greater struggle at South Mountain was carried on at the same time, two or three miles to our right. Both positions were carried by our forces, and pouring over this mountain barrier we pushed on to Antietam.

We arrived on the battlefield at about ten o'clock, and were thrown forward towards the right of our lines where a fierce conflict had already been waged. Hancock rode at the head of our brigade, handsome and gallant, inspiring courage in every breast by his magnificent bearing and sharp, nervous commands. The Confederates were advancing through a corn field to seize our batteries as we marched up to their support. Hancock threw his forces into position and saved that portion of the field. Hardly was this attack repulsed, when he was taken from command of our brigade and put in command of Richardson's division of the Second Corps, Richardson himself having been mortally wounded in a successful charge upon the enemy. It was on this battle-swept field that Hancock was first associated with that corps of which he was given the command the following winter, and with the heroic deeds of which his name is linked in undying fame.

Colonel Cobb, of the Fifth Wisconsin, commanded our brigade during the remainder of the battle. I was at once detailed to act upon his staff, and slept under the same blanket with him that night. We expected to attack the position of the enemy in our front, and made every disposition to do so. About four o'clock General McClellan rode along our lines, a circumstance which I mention for the benefit of those who imagine that he never was near the actual field of battle. The storm of battle raged along our lines all day. Further advances were not made by our forces, except that Burnside in the evening carried the bridge which he had been ordered to cross with his corps at ten o'clock in the morning. If he had effected this movement more promptly, undoubtedly the result at Antietam would have been of a more decisive character. The next day the enemy remained in our front; on the morning of the 19th they had disappeared. It would require a separate paper to attempt to describe this field, which was contested on both sides with the most reckless courage, and desperate daring. I read from my pocket diary of the day following the battle: "The carnage yesterday was awful on both sides, but the advantage was with us. I slept last night beside a pile of forty-six dead Confederates, who lay just as they fell. All around the ground was black with the dead and dying."

After the battle, President Lincoln visited the army and reviewed us. On the 31st of October McClellan put his army in motion and crossed the Potomac into Virginia. We advanced along the eastern base of the Blue Ridge until he was relieved on the 10th of November, and the command of the Army of the Potomac was turned over to Burnside. Then we deflected to the left and marched upon Fredericksburg. This change of the plan of campaign, in its midst, and in the face of the enemy, was not a fortunate one. No pontoons were forthcoming to enable us to cross the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg, and by the time they arrived Lee had concentrated his entire army upon the heights opposite to us. The battle of December 13th was unmitigated disaster. Hancock's repeated and gallant charges upon the heights in the rear of Fredericksburg were fruitless. The "slaughter pen" at the base of these heights was filled with dead, dying, and wounded Union soldiers, who were sacrificed in vain. Colonel Mitchell, who was Hancock's adjutant-general, related to me at Governor's Island, that as Hancock rode along his lines a bullet passed through his uniform, just grazing his person. "It was lucky I hadn't a full dinner," remarked the General, as he continued the perilous inspection of his forces.

Repulsed all along the lines, we recrossed the river and went into camp near Acquia Creek. On the 20th of January, in mid-winter, Burnside again put the army in motion and attempted to cross the Rappahannock above Fredericksburg, to force a battle with General Lee. When we started out the roads were like granite, being frozen solid. The first night it rained in torrents, and this continued for many hours. When the storm was over, the whole country was one vast morass. The Army of the Potomac was stuck in the mud. Almost in sight of the camps we had left, the men suffered severely for want of rations. We were compelled to build corduroy roads to get back to our base of supplies. We returned hungry as wolves, and thoroughly disgusted with our experience. This was Burnside's celebrated "mud campaign." No other commander ever attempted to move a great army in Virginia in mid-winter.

The result of this one effort is a striking commentary upon the wisdom of the order which was issued in the winter of 1862, for McClellan to advance upon the enemy on the 22d day of February. It is doubtful if even Washington's birthday would have converted the mud of Virginia into roads, over which thousands of men with their immense parks of artillery and supply trains could have advanced successfully.

After the defeat of December 13th, at Fredericksburg, Burnside procured the removal of Franklin from the command of our corps, of Baldy Smith from the command of our division, and of General Brooks from the command of the old Vermont brigade. General Sedgwick succeeded to the command of the corps, and General Wright to the command of the division.

Shortly after these changes, Burnside was superseded by Hooker. Whatever else may be said of this latter general, who was certainly unfortunate as commander of a great army, he brought that army to the highest state of efficiency it had ever seen. His reörganization of the cavalry was especially admirable ; the saying "who ever saw a dead cavalryman," was not repeated after the campaign of 1863 opened.

In the latter days of April, 1863, Hooker marched on Chancellorsville. Our Sixth Corps remained in front of Fredericksburg, and forced a crossing just below the city. We advanced up Deep Run, skirmishing continuously for an entire night, and on Sunday, May 3d, we arrived in front of Marye's Heights (mistakenly called by us the Heights of St. Marye), which Hancock had unsuccessfully charged again and again at the battle of the preceding December. We made our dispositions to carry these heights by assault. They were well equipped with artillery, and were held by General Jubal A. Early, with a force, which compared to our own, was relatively stronger than the that opposed to Burnside when he attempted to carry them by assault.

As to this, General Longstreet in his book, "From Manassas to Appomattox," page 330, gives the undoubted historical facts as follows:

"It was probably a mistake to draw McLaws away from his position at Marye's Hill where he and Ransom had successfully held against six or seven attacks of the Burnside battle, *with three brigades*, two of his own, and one of Ransom's. General Early was assigned to that position with *five brigades.* He was attacked by about *one fourth the number* of McLaws' assailants, the position was carried, and Early was driven off in confusion, losing, besides large numbers of prisoners, many pieces of artillery."

It was against this strong position and superior force that our small but determined numbers were about to be hurled. Half of our twin regiment, the Fifth Wisconsin, were deployed along our front as skirmishers. The other half was drawn up in line of battle at our left. The Sixth Maine in line of battle extended from a point a little to the left of the old Marye mansion where the plank road winds down the hill, over near to the present location of the national cemetery. At this time we belonged to a picked organization known as the "Light Brigade," commanded by Colonel Hiram Burnham of our own regiment. The other regiments of the brigade were placed for participation in the assault. We lay down behind a little crest which protected us from the enemy's fire, and waited for the order of attack to be given. Between us and the base of the heights was the "slaughter pen," made ghastly by the losses of the Union army in Burnside's disastrous battle. Just beyond this was the famous old stone wall which the Confederates had converted into a strong rifle pit. Beyond the stone wall and further up the heights was another line of rifle pits, while at the top were the enemy's strongest works, consisting of redoubts and earthworks upon which engineering skill had been lavished.

It was eleven o'clock before we received the order to charge. Lieutenant-Colonel Harris, who commanded the regiment, had previously made all of the men uncap their guns, and had given strict orders against firing a shot until the entrenchments at the top of the heights were reached. The men rushed forward at double-quick, with arms a port. When the order came I was lying upon a blanket with Major Haycock. We sprang to our feet, shook hands, each cried, "God bless you," and went forward with our line of battle. The instant we reached the crest in front of us Haycock was shot down and killed. I saw him fall before the warmth of his pressure had left my hand, or his words had died out from my ears. Across the "slaughter pen" we went with a terrific yell Artillery and musketry poured a fire upon us which seemed to make the whole atmosphere hot and lurid. Men fell on every hand. As we reached the stone wall my old schoolmate, Captain Gray, of Company A, was shot and instantly killed. Further to the left Captain Young, of Company G, also went down, to rise no more There was a hand to hand fight at this point of short duration, and the enemy was routed. It is not true that bayonets were never crossed during the war. They were used at the stone wall by our men, and after the battle it was found, by actual count, that forty of the enemy had been bayoneted here.

We pushed on with a shout of triumph, and carried the rifle pits higher up, which now swarmed with the enemy. Here I saw Captain Ballinger, of Company C, fall headlong, with a bullet through his brain. His curly head seemed to glisten with a halo of glory as we rushed passed him, still pushing forward to the enemy's last entrenchments. We had now reached a point where the artillery in the works above us could not be depressed sufficiently to sweep through our ranks with grape and shrapnel, and our losses seemed perceptibly smaller from this point forward. Without firing a shot our line pushed ahead with a wild and indescribable frenzy, and swarmed over the last and strongest redoubts and fortifications at the summit, capturing seven guns of the celebrated Washington Artillery, and numerous prisoners who fought with a frenzy equal to our own, and with a grim determination to hold their position to the last. I do not think that the Sixth Maine fired a single musket until we were inside the enemy's last line of works. Our success was glorious, but we had paid for it dearly. In the less than five minutes which elapsed from the time we started upon the charge until our flag floated in victory over the heights which had been thought impregnable, we had lost more than one-third of our officers and men in killed and wounded.

We had not even time to bury our dead, or care for our wounded, but were pushed rapidly to the front in pursuit of the retreating enemy. The entire Sixth Corps now swarmed up the heights and deploying over the broad open plains in the rear of Fredericksburg, marched on toward Salem church. This was the rear of Lee's position who confronted Hooker at Chancellorsville. Here we met a heavy force detached by Lee to arrest our onward march. Sedgwick attacked smartly, but was in turn repulsed, and we advanced no further than about four miles from Fredericksburg. That night the enemy marched a brigade of troops under General John B. Gordon around our left flank and reöccupied, without firing a shot, the works at Fredericksburg which had cost us so dearly.

The next morning found this hostile force in the fortifications in the rear of the Sixth Corps ; in front the enemy was further reënforced, and, as shown by his official report, General Lee, thinking he had pushed Hooker sufficiently so that he would remain quiet at Chancellorsville, now came in person to superintend the effort to capture or destroy Sedgwick and his men. This great commander formed his corps above Fredericksburg like an ox bow, with each flank resting upon the river to protect a single pontoon bridge at Banks' Ford, over which the withdrawal of his command was possible.

We were vigorously pressed along our lines throughout the day, but no break was made in them anywhere. That night Sedgwick planned and executed his retreat.

The position of the Sixth Maine was at the extreme right, on a bluff which overlooked Brooks' Ford across the Rappahannock. This ford gave its name to the engagement. The spot was important. A battery of artillery stationed on this bluff would command our pontoon bridge. There was a full moon and an unclouded sky, hence our movements were fairly well open to the observation of the enemy, and they crowded us closely. After night-fall we were once withdrawn and started in the direction of the bridge. Then we were counter-marched and returned to our position, with orders to hold on as long as possible, and then, if cut off from the remainder of the corps, to make our way to the bridge if we could. We all understood this to mean that a desperate enterprise was confided to our hands, and we were not mistaken. We were posted in a belt of timber which screened us from the enemy. The corps was retired from its center, which in time left us detached and upon the right flank without support. About eleven o'clock the enemy moved between us and our picket line, the pickets on our left, towards the center, having been withdrawn, and our pickets were captured without firing a shot. At this time I was adjutant of the regiment. Hearing a confused noise, with Lieutenant-Colonel Harris I rode to the edge of the timber, and we discovered in the moonlight the enemy forming his lines and coming on to attack us. Riding back hastily, the alignment of the regiment was somewhat changed to conform to the direction from which this attack was about to be delivered. This was hardly done before the enemy were upon us. There was a sharp fight of ten or fifteen minutes, and the night was filled with wild outcries and uproar. The result was a complete repulse. We held our position, but the extent of our force having been discovered, and it being demonstrated that we were entirely cut off from the remainder of the corps, our situation was more critical than ever. Riding again to the front to see what was going on, I discovered that the open space in front of us was filled with augmented forces whose lines were drawn around us, and that an immediate renewal of hostilities was to be anticipated. Sewall, of Company A, just then captured a Confederate officer who was attempting to reconnoiter our position. I put him in charge of private Crockett, of Company A, and told Crockett to take him over the bluff, down to the water's edge, and if he could do so, to make his way to the pontoon bridge and turn his prisoner in to any force he might find there. Crockett started away with him, but the officer persuaded him that it would be impossible to descend the bluff it was so steep, and that what was meant was to follow the edge of the bluff down towards the pontoons. Taking this line of march, Crockett in two or three minutes found himself in the Confederate forces which surrounded us and cut us off from the bridge. The tables were turned. He was the prisoner, and his prisoner was now the captor.

Meanwhile, a further examination showed the enemy in readiness to make an immediate assault. Lieutenant-Colonel Harris in his efforts to ascertain the situation, and if possible to open communications with Colonel Burnham, commanding the Light Division, had been cut off from the regiment by the cordon which was drawn around us. I tried to explain the situation to the senior captain, and to have him take command and withdraw the regiment. He naturally hesitated, thinking the responsibility very great, and that Colonel Harris might reappear at any moment and take such action as was imperative. There was no time to be lost. I rode along the line, cautioned the men to maintain perfect silence and not to rattle their canteens or accouterments, then left-facing the regiment I led them over the bluff. It was a sheer descent of fifty to sixty feet. I started over on horseback. When part way down my horse lost his footing, and I found myself falling with him through the air. I caught in the branches of a tree as we descended, slid down the tree, and on foot made my way to the base of the bluff, with the other men of the regiment. I expected to find a horse with a broken neck, but old "Jim" stood there waiting for me, apparently a good deal dazed and confused, but still ready for faithful service, although strained and sore for days afterwards. The men came on over the bluff helter skelter, but as silent as possible. Directly over our heads and a few rods down the river towards the bridge, was the Confederate force into which Crockett had been marched by his wily prisoner, and which was waiting to assault us and insure our capture. Fortunately, we were in deep shadow as we passed under the bluff along the the water's edge. When directly under the enemy, who reached to the edge of the bluff above us, some of our men became noisy. Crockett, whom I never saw until more than thirty years afterwards at a regimental reunion, told me that he heard me cry out vigorously, "Dry up," and that he recognized my voice and knew the Sixth Maine was making its escape. Just at this time the enemy again advanced upon our now abandoned position, and in the uproar which ensued we passed down the river undiscovered, and made our way in perfect order to our pontoon bridge. On approaching this, masses of troops were visible in the moonlight. Whether Confederate or Union forces it was impossible to tell. Even if Union forces, they might open fire upon us, taking us for the enemy, if we advanced without warning. Riding forward, it was a great relief to find blue uniforms and the stars and stripes. Giving these forces the caution that the Sixth Maine regiment was coming in, we joined the rear of the Sixth Corps after it was supposed that every man of us was captured or disabled in battle. When I found Colonel Burnham and told him that the old regiment had come in all right, he cried like a child. We passed over the bridge with the rear guard, and got across just in time, for as we went over the enemy opened fire with a battery from the bluffs above us. Not having the range accurately, his shelling did little harm, and the Sixth Corps reached the left bank of the Rappahannock intact.

Our wounded in this night conflict, whom we were compelled to abandon as we withdrew down the river, were treated with the utmost kindness, and returned to us on parole in a few days. They reported that when the enemy attacked our position a second time in overwhelming force, and found that we had disappeared, they could not comprehend by what infernal Yankee trick their expected prey had escaped. The official reports of our regimental and brigade commanders, give these details as I have narrated them.

In view of the official recognition which was subsequently given my services in this affair, I quote from the official reports made at the time by my commanding officers, as follows;

From report of Lieutenant-Colonel Harris, commanding Sixth Maine Volunteers, dated May 6, 1863.

"During my absence the services of Adjutant Charles A. Clark were invaluable. While the fight continued he rode back and forth along the lines fearlessly exposing his person and encouraging the men by all the means in his power. His excellent conduct did much toward insuring the success of which I have spoken. The enemy at once rallied his forces and prepared to renew the attack with overwhelming numbers. Annihilation and capture stared the regiment in the face unless it could be withdrawn in pursuance of orders previously received. This was successfully accomplished by Adjutant Clark, who led the regiment through almost impenetrable underbrush to the bank of the river and then over a precipitous bluff to the water's edge,— riding his horse down this bluff which it seemed impossible for any mounted man to descend alive.

"Having arrived at the water's edge, the regiment was led by him down the river to Banks' Ford and here rejoined the Light

Division. I cannot praise the behavior of Adjutant Clark on this occasion too highly. His gallantry and presence of mind extricated the regiment from a most perilous position, after it had repulsed a superior force of the enemy in a handsome manner."

From report of Colonel Burnham, commanding Light Division, to Major-General Sedgwick, dated May 12, 1863.

"The following are deserving of special mention, and I take great pleasure in bringing them to your notice. * * * Adjutant Charles A. Clark, Sixth Maine Volunteers, should also be specially commended. His coolness, gallantry, and presence of mind in the engagement at Brooks' Ford contributed in a great measure to saving his regiment from annihilation and capture."

From special report of Colonel Burnham, to Major-General Sedgwick, dated May 23, 1863:

"In pursuance of General Orders No. 55, Headquarters Army of the Potomac, I have the honor to submit the following list of officers, non-commissioned officers and privates of this command, who deserve special mention for distinguished and gallant services in the face of the enemy during the recent campaign.

* * * * * *

"Lieut. Charles A. Clark, Adjt.—Is commended for distinguished and conspicuous bravery at the Heights of St. Marye. He was in the first group which entered the works of the enemy. He is also commended for most conspicuous bravery and daring at Brooks' Ford on the night of May 4, where he exposed his person fearlessly, and by his own personal exertions extricated the regiment from the most perilous situation in which it has ever been placed; to do this, he rode his horse over a precipitous bluff unmindful of personal peril. He is deserving of brevet, medal, or mention in general orders.

"He has been honorably mentioned heretofore for distinguished services at Williamsburg, Golding's farm, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862."

Thirty-three years afterwards, for my services at Brooks' Ford, the war department issued to me a congressional medal of honor, and forwarded it with the following letter of transmittal:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON CITY, May 13, 1896.

COL. CHARLES A CLARK, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Sir,—I have the honor to inform you that by direction of the President, and in accordance with the act of Congress approved March 3, 1863, providing for the presentation of medals of honor to such officers, non-commissioned officers and privates as have most distinguished themselves in action, the Assistant Secretary of War has awarded you a medal of honor for most distinguished gallantry at Brooks' Ford, Virginia, May 4, 1863.

In making the award the Assistant Secretary used the following language:

"This officer, then being Adjutant of the Sixth Maine Infantry Volunteers, having voluntarily taken command of his regiment in the absence of its commander, and at great personal risk and with remarkable presence of mind and fertility of resource, led the command down an exceedingly precipitous embankment to the Rappahannock river, and by his gallantry, coolness and good judgment in the face of the enemy, saved the command from capture and destruction."

Very respectfully,
(Signed) F. C. AINSWORTH,
Colonel U. S. Army.

My brother officers and the enlisted men who served through the perils of those days, all deserve the same recognition of their services.

The following lines were written by me as a testimonial to the gallantry of our color bearer. His valor was typical of the whole regiment.

JOHN GRAY AT ST. MARYE.

John Gray! Brave John Gray! How he fought at Saint Marye,
Where the rebel host at bay rather chose to die than flee!
On the frowning height they waited, wary, vigilant and grim;
In the valley we were posted, near the Rappahannock's brim.
Ghostly was the landscape round us with the manes of our slain,
They who fell when Burnside's forces charged again and yet again!
There, in gray and bleak December, gallant cohorts had gone down
Unto fate without a murmur, unto death without a groan!

Where they fought with god-like valor, where they fell as god-like
men,
There the very earth was ghastly, fated spot, the "slaughter-pen!"
Now had come the sunny spring-time, and again the battle's flood
At the dawn of day had brought us to this place baptized with blood;
All along the heights before us gloomed the earthworks of the foe,
There where Early watched and waited to return us blow for blow;
Well we knew the work before us was to drive him from his lair,
And we knew that this was almost more than man might do or dare;
So, that sunny Sabbath morning, in the balmy month of May,
With a fixed, unchanging purpose, by the slaughter-pen we lay;
In our front, from stone wall olden, rifle pit, and strong redoubt,
In derision and defiance was the southern cross flung out;
And the southrons e'en reviled us, shouting out to us amain,
"So you come as last December, you are welcome back again!"
Then John Gray, who bore our colors, man of gaunt and stalwart
frame,
Slow unfurled his starry banner, and, with bosom all aflame,
Answered back in tones of thunder, "We are come, ye men of gray,
To avenge our martyred comrades who were slain that hapless day!
Look ye to it! Blood of thousands from this slaughter-pen cries out,
Thrilling all our hearts, and nerving all our arms with purpose stout;
And we'll drive you from your fastness ere the setting of the sun!"
Thus he thundered back defiance, and we swore it, every one!
After this we watched and waited, all our forces at a halt,
Watched and waited for the order to begin the wild assault;
Morning wore away to noontide, and with quick, convulsive breath,
But with purpose never changing, looked we in the face of death.
Sometimes from far off New England seemed to come a Sabbath bell,
Sometimes mother's prayers seemed o'er us, holier than words can tell;
Sometimes sweethearts stood before us, gentle-browed, with eyes
divine;
Sometimes little children prattled all adown our war-worn line!
Thus we watched, and thus we waited, for the signal to be given,
Which upon the foe should set us 'neath that quiet Sabbath heaven.
Hark! At length our cannons' thunder with the musketry combines,
And our batteries rain their shot and shell upon the rebel lines!
Up we leap, at this, the signal, we have waited for so long,
And the shells around us bursting sing a dismal funeral song;
Oh, the rebel hosts baptize us with the very fires of hell;
Who shall fall in that wild tempest, God, and He alone, can tell!
But we hear our brave commander cheering as he leads us on,
Crying, "At them with the bayonet, and the frowning height is won!"

Well we know his daring spirit, well we love his clarion tone,
And it nerves us with a courage wild and stormy as his own;
Never halting, never faltering, rush we on the foe amain,
Shot, and shell, and grape, and shrapnel, plow and thin our ranks in vain;
Stone wall, rifle pit and redoubt belch their hissing bullets forth;
All the air is hot and lurid; red with blood is all the earth;
Men appear as men no longer, they are changed to warring fiends;
Groan of wounded, plaint of dying, wailing for their far-off friends;
All these horrors swim around our small and smaller growing band,
Ere we reach the old stone wall and fight the foeman hand to hand;
Short and bloody there the struggle, quick our northern steel prevails,
And before our gleaming bayonets all their southern frenzy fails!
"Forward!" cries our leader; "Forward! only half the fight is done;
Halt not till the strongest bastion on the upper height is won!"
And our serried ranks move forward with a wild and thundering cheer
Which rings out above the battle its defiance strong and clear;
And with purpose never changing, still we climb the blazing steep,
Till the counterscarp and glacis in our course we overleap;
There we fall upon the foeman, and we drive him from his ground,
And the bloody storm of battle falls to silence all around.

John Gray! Brave John Gray! What of him this fearful time?
Ever where the fray was deadliest, most his courage shown sublime'
Ever where the fight was hottest, there our starry flag he bore,
And its folds the screaming missiles of the rebels rent and tore,
As they hated flag and bearer for that answer in the morn,
When he silenced their revilings with a patriot's honest scorn.
Ever in the van we saw him, daring them to do their worst,
And the thickest of the battle round about our hero burst;
But, thank God! no harm befell him, and he leaped the bastion high,
Planting there his tattered banner — happy sign of victory!
There triumphantly it floated o'er the foe's defeat and shame,
While John Gray, our iron hero, greeted we with loud acclaim;
And although his deeds of prowess have not won a place in story,
Yet he earned that bloody day a wreath of never-fading glory;
Long his comrades will recite it; when their hearts in death are cold,
Still unto their children's children let the simple tale be told.

Afterwards, still bearing the colors of the regiment, John Gray bravely and gloriously met his death, pierced through and through by Confederate bullets. In the deadly fray at Rappahannock Station he went down to rise no more.

We remained in camp opposite Fredericksburg until June 7th, when we were detailed as "foot cavalry" to accompany Pleasanton with half a dozen other regiments of infantry, and support him in his movement against the Confederate cavalry in the vicinity of Brandy Station. Brigadier-General David A. Russell now commanded us, and he marched us with the energy which characterized all of his military movements. On the 9th of June we participated at Brandy Station in the greatest cavalry contest of the war, crossing the Rappahannock at daybreak at Kelly's Ford, and recrossing higher up at Beverley's Ford at nightfall, after covering the withdrawal of the cavalry. The fight between the contending squadrons was magnificent to behold, and was spirited and desperate on both sides. We could not, however, resist the wish that the like amount of fighting might be done by infantry with such a relatively small number of casualties. This fight demonstrated that Lee was moving northward, and we turned our faces in that direction.

From June 10th to July 2d, when we arrived on the battlefield of Gettysburg and took position on Little Round Top, we were marched and counter-marched through intolerable heat and dust. Our last tramp before arriving on the battlefield was some thirty miles, without a halt long enough to make coffee. None the less, the men came into position in buoyant spirits and faced the Confederates with a resounding yell of defiance, as our lines were formed just in time to repulse the attack which was surging up against Little Round Top after driving Sickles back from his ill-fated position at and near the peach orchard. Good luck was with us. We were not engaged on the last day of the battle, and from the crest of Little Round Top, riding out to the right and front of the regiment I beheld, as a panorama, Pickett's celebrated charge, his bloody repulse, and knew instinctively, as his broken lines melted away, and as the few who escaped being killed, wounded or captured, straggled back to the rear, that the battle of Gettysburg was over, and that a glorious Union triumph had been achieved. Along the road in rear of our regiment, Hancock, desperately wounded, was taken from the field. Our men recognized his horse led in the rear of the ambulance in which he was conveyed, and at once rushed to see what casualty had befallen their former commander, whom they literally adored. As Hancock, white and faint, raised his head, they greeted him with wild hurrahs. The old fire came into his eyes, and he said affectionately, "Why, this is my old Sixth Maine." The meeting and greeting were long remembered on both sides.

On Lee's retreat from Gettysburg we came up with him at Funkstown, in the immediate vicinity of the battlefield of Antietam, where one of our companies, under Captain Furlong, greatly distinguished itself in a skirmish, in which it captured many more prisoners than there were men of its own engaged in the affair. At five or six o'clock in the evening Colonel Harris and myself were detailed to take command of a line of skirmishers in our front, and lead them in an attack upon the enemy's outposts, which consisted of a long line of detached rifle pits. Why we were assigned to this duty neither of us ever understood. The skirmishers did not belong to our regiment, nor even to our brigade or division. Harris said to me as we started forward, "This is not our funeral, Charley, but it may be before we are through with it," and we rode into the fray. Captain S. W. Russell, of General Russell's staff, went in with us purely on his own account. The skirmish line was half a mile long. The advance was through open fields without a bush to screen our movements. The men were lying down in a wheat field, and naturally did not like to move forward under such unpleasant circumstances. Riding up and down the line, however, until all had received the word of command, all went forward with a rush, and after a hot skirmish we captured the coveted position from the enemy. I am free to confess that the bullets whistled around me in a very nasty way. It seemed as though Lee's whole army had singled me out for a target, and as though most of them would probably lodge some lead in my person. My blanket was shot from the pommel of my saddle, but neither Harris, Russell, myself, nor our horses, were injured.

From the captured position the enemy's hastily constructed field works were plainly visible, and his position seemed to be one of great strength. It was understood that we would attack in force the next morning, but Lee decamped during the night and recrossed the Potomac into Virginia. This was the termination of the Gettysburg campaign.

The wise critics attacked Meade, as they did McClellan after Antietam, for not annihilating the Confederate army. Count de Paris, in his history of the Gettysburg campaign, shows where there were 65,000 seasoned troops who might have been, and ought to have been, in Meade's column in this campaign. If they had been there Lee would have been attacked soon enough when we came up with him. An equal force ought to have been added to McClellan's army in the Antietam campaign, instead of being scattered about, detached here and there to prevent possible raids upon Washington. In the absence of the forces which ought to have been concentrated under their banners, but which were not, the ultimate verdict of impartial history will undoubtedly be, that neither McClellan nor Meade would have been warranted in a general assault upon Lee's positions, with forces which, in both cases, certainly did not exceed those under the command of the great Confederate general, and which probably were numerically weaker than his.

Meade again put his army in motion on the 7th of November, 1863. We were encamped at that time in the outskirts of the beautiful village of Warrenton. We marched from there to Rappahannock Station, a distance of a dozen miles or such matter, and promptly attacked the forces of the enemy who were entrenched on the north bank of that river. Half of our regiment were deployed as skirmishers, and we advanced over a broad and open plain. The enemy were steadily pressed back toward their entrenchments. Riding out to rectify the alignment of the skirmish line, at the direction of General Russell, my horse was shot under me, and I was only too glad to make my way back on foot after accomplishing my mission.

Just at dusk, General Russell, who commanded the brigade, received orders to assault the entrenchments in our front. The other wing of our regiment was deployed with those already on the skirmish line, making a double line of skirmishers, and the order for the attack was given. Led by Lieutenant-Colonel Harris, the regiment in this formation rushed forward to the assault. Probably so small a number of men never before made such an uproar. We were joined by a small force of skirmishers on our left from the Twentieth Maine, under Captain, afterwards Colonel, Walter G. Morrill, formerly of ours, who went into the fight without orders simply because they saw us start on the desperate venture, and thought we needed help, and we were supported by our twin regiment, the Fifth Wisconsin. General Russell and his staff went forward with us, and were in the thickest of the fray throughout. The entrenchments in front of us contained more than two thousand infantry, and four field pieces, under the command of our old adversary, General Jubal A. Early. The fire which was opened upon us as we swept forward was simply terrific. It is impossible to describe it. The sensation with me was, that the air was so filled with bullets that it was heated to a high degree of temperature, and scalded my throat and lungs when inhaled. Men were seized with the wildest transports of rage and frenzy. We seemed to me marching against a blind, inscrutable force, which defied all of our efforts to reach it or grapple with it. The only relief seemed our continuous yell, which every man kept up until the fortifications in front of us were reached. As at Marye's Heights, the guns were uncapped, and not a shot was fired while the men were rushing to the assault. We entered the enemy's lines attenuated and scattered, a handful here and there, among swarms of the enemy. Why they recoiled from their entrenchments none of us have ever been quite able to understand. One of their prisoners, a private soldier, said afterwards: "We all allowed that the whole Army of the Potomac were coming, you'uns kept up such a wicked yelling." Bayonets and butts of muskets were used in the melee which ensued as we scaled the earthworks. The official report records that Adjutant Clark "drove his sword into his adversary before he fell." At the point where I entered there seemed to be a Confederate army to two or three of us. A sudden reënforcement for us appeared in the gigantic form of one of the sergeants of the regiment, who was the most devout Christian I have ever known. He was our "praying sergeant," and every night before he slept, no matter where he might be, or who might be present, he never failed to address the throne of grace in solemn and earnest prayer. On this occasion he came up with an infuriated yell, and with profanity which was fierce and appalling, he aided with bayonet and clubbed musket in speedily dispersing the enemy around us. The next day he came to the field hospital, where I was lying wounded, and in a spirit of deep contrition, implored me to forget the awful frenzy that had taken possession of him when he fought the foe at such close quarters.

It seemed an age after we entered the works before the troops which were hurried up from the rear came to our support. Meanwhile, the Confederates covering their pontoon bridge and their works further to the right, kept up a furious contest. It is impossible to record the many individual acts of valor among our men. Three Confederate battle flags were captured in a hand-to-hand contest. The Confederate guns were defended with desperate bravery and determination. The "rebel yell" mingled with our cheers of victory, and the musketry on both sides continued sharp and furious. Just before the firing ceased a minie bullet struck my left leg, and I rolled from the rifle pit on which I was standing, with a confused feeling of rage and utter helplessness.

When our supports finally came up, the Confederates, without further contest, surrendered to the number of more than two thousand. His artillery and battle flags also became the spoils of war. General Early with his staff made his escape across the pontoon bridge in rear of the fortifications, after we were in possession of the works, as he had escaped us from Williamsburg and at the Heights of St. Marye.

The losses in our regiment were terrific. I quote from that historical authority, Fox's "Regimental Losses," as follows:

"There was no more brilliant action in the war than the affair at Rappahannock Station, Virginia, November 7, 1863. * * * The Sixth Maine, with uncapped muskets, supported by the Fifth Wisconsin, stormed the works, and springing over them, were engaged in a desperate struggle, some of the fighting being hand to hand; bayonets being freely used, and in one case an officer thrust his sabre through an antagonist. * * * The brunt of the fight fell on the Sixth Maine. It lost thirty-eight killed, and one hundred and one wounded out of three hundred and twenty-one present in action; and of twenty-one officers engaged, sixteen were killed or wounded. This was not the first time that the Sixth had leaped the enemy's breastworks against the blazing muzzles of a line of rifles. In the successful assault on Marye's Heights, May 3, 1863, the flag of the Sixth was the first to wave over the enemy's works. The regiment was then in the famous "Light Brigade" of the Sixth Corps and did not fire a shot during the charge, but carried the works with the bayonet; and mention is made of one man in the Sixth Maine who bayoneted two adversaries, and then brained a third with the butt of his musket. The loss of the regiment in that battle was twenty-three killed, one hundred and eleven wounded and thirty-three missing. Major Haycock and four captains were among the killed."

On page 77 of the same book, it is said:

"At Rappahannock Station, Captain Furlong, of the Sixth Maine, leaped over the enemy's works, and after emptying his revolver, fought with a clubbed musket, swinging it around his head until he fell dead. After the battle, his body was found among a pile of dead, several of whom had been killed by the blows of a musket stock."

In this book, Fox, referring to the "Light Brigade" of the Crimean war, in its famous charge at Balaklava, says: "The Light Brigade took 673 officers and men into that charge; they lost 113 killed, and 134 wounded, total 247, or 36 7-10 per cent." The Sixth Maine at Rappahannock Station lost more than 43 per cent of the entire force which it took into action, while among the officers of that regiment engaged, the loss was more than 76 per cent, a mortality among officers in battle which it is believed has no parallel in modern warfare. Sergeant Otis O. Roberts, of Company H, was awarded a congressional medal of honor, for distinguished valor in the capture of a battle flag, in a hand-to-hand conflict with several of the enemy.

General Russell, who commanded the brigade, was wounded slightly, while Captain S. W. Russell, of his staff,—now Colonel Russell of Salem, New York,— was wounded most seriously and dangerously. That morning before leaving Warrenton, I had been with Captain Russell to call upon a fair Virginia maiden, a member of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in the vicinity of that town, with whom he was deeply in love. We had a narrow escape from Moseby's men, one of whom in a blue uniform, stood looking into our faces as we rode away. After the fight was over, as I was being carried from the field on a stretcher, we accidentally came across Russell in the dark, and I recognized his voice. Finding how desperately and fearfully wounded he was, and realizing that my own was what the boys called, "just a good furlough wound, anyway," I made the men take me from the stretcher and carry my comrade and friend to the field hospital. Speedy and skillful succor, and a good constitution, brought him through all right. In October, 1896, for the first time since the war, I met him once again. It was at his present residence in Salem, New York. I found the Virginia lady whom we called upon on that eventful morning, his beautiful and accomplished wife. Around them was a family of charming daughters, while two bright young men, the eldest of their family, had left their roof tree and gone forth to battle for themselves. Our reunion was a delightful one, and it is needless to say, that another thirty-three years will not elapse before it is repeated, if we shall live.

Rappahannock Station concluded my campaigning with the Sixth Maine. The following February, I was honorably discharged for my wounds, against my desire, under a general order from the war department which provided that officers whose wounds disabled them from rejoining their commands within sixty days, should be honorably discharged from the service.

In March, however, my old commander, Colonel Burnham, was promoted to the rank of brigadier-general, and I reëntered the service commissioned captain and assistant adjutant-general by the President, for duty upon his staff.

The old regiment, somewhat recruited, suffered again most dreadfully in the Wilderness campaign, and especially at Spottsylvania Court House. The fragments which were left of it were consolidated with some of the other early Maine regiments, as the First Maine Veteran Volunteers. In this organization the survivors served under Sheridan in his celebrated Shenandoah valley campaign against Early, and saw our distinguished and revered commander, Brigadier-General Russell, instantly killed by a solid shot at the battle of Winchester.

With General Burnham, the old regimental commander, I served in Baldy Smith's Eighteenth Corps under General Brooks as our division commander. We participated in all of Butler's movements around Bermuda Hundreds and Richmond, including the desperate fight of May 16th at Drewry's bluff. We joined the Army of the Potomac at Cold Harbor, and on that familiar ground participated in the general assault. So far as our own killed and wounded were concerned, the horrors there were more dreadful and indescribable than at Gettysburg.

We returned to City Point in advance of Grant's army, and successfully assaulted the works at Petersburg on June 15th. The entire fortifications were in our possession by seven o'clock in the evening. It was a bright, moonlight night. Why General Smith did not advance and seize the town, the railroad and the bridges over the Appomattox has always been a mystery to all who participated in that grand and successful assault. The next morning the heights in front of us were swarming with Confederates, and the fruits of our victory were lost.

I shall not recount my experience with General Burnham in the operations in front of Petersburg. On the 29th of September our brigade, as the advance of the Eighteenth Corps, charged Fort Harrison, the strongest Confederate work on the north bank of the James, and carried and held it, capturing sixteen pieces of artillery. Details relating to this gallant assault will be found in the June, 1897, number of the Century Magazine, by General Horace Porter. Our losses were very severe. Ord, commanding the corps, was seriously wounded. Stannard, commanding the division, had his arm shot off. Burnham, commanding the brigade, was killed shortly after we entered the works. Every field officer in the brigade was killed or wounded. There were two or three in each regiment when we went into the fight. When I took the remains of my dear old commander from the field after the fight was over, I left the remnant of the brigade in command of a captain. The end of General Burnham was worthy of the end of the old regiment. Fort Harrison was re-christened Fort Burnham in honor of his memory.

The last entry in my diary relative to the old regiment, was made on the battlefield in front of Cold Harbor, under date of June 9, 1864, and reads as follows:

"The General and myself rode over to see our old regiment, the Sixth Maine, this afternoon. We saw many of the officers, but most of the men were out as sharpshooters, so we didn't see them. There are only ninety men left in the old regiment. Dear, dear! it is awful."

The following are the final entries in the same diary relating to General Burnham, who led the old regiment so long and loved it so well:

"Thursday, September 29, 1864. General Burnham is dead. As I write the dreadful words I do not myself realize their truth, but alas, so it is. Our brigade took the advance this morning; attacked the enemy in their outer line, drove them briskly three miles, when we came upon their heavy works at Chapin's farm, which we at once assaulted and carried after a severe fight. After we entered the works, the General was leading his men to the right to finish driving the enemy out, when he was struck by a minie ball, and lived less than an hour. I was with him and received his last words. Have carried his body to Bermuda Hundreds to be embalmed, and hope to accompany it home."

I was detailed for that purpose, and at Cherryfield, Maine, on Friday, October 7, 1864, I find this entry:

"We have laid the noble old hero away to rest among the peaceful hills which he knew and loved so well. An immense throng of people were gathered together from all parts of the country. The services were solemn, impressive and grand, and every possible demonstration of respect in honor of the noble deceased was made; but how little it seemed to me who had known the dear old General so well! Many of the old regiment were gathered together to pay the last tribute of respect to their old commander."

Grand old regiment — noble commander — their highest eulogy would be that their deeds might be more fittingly recorded than it has been possible for me to do in this paper.

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