



GETTYSBURG TO THE RAPIDAN

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

JULY, 1863, TO APRIL, 1864

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A. A. HUMPHREYS

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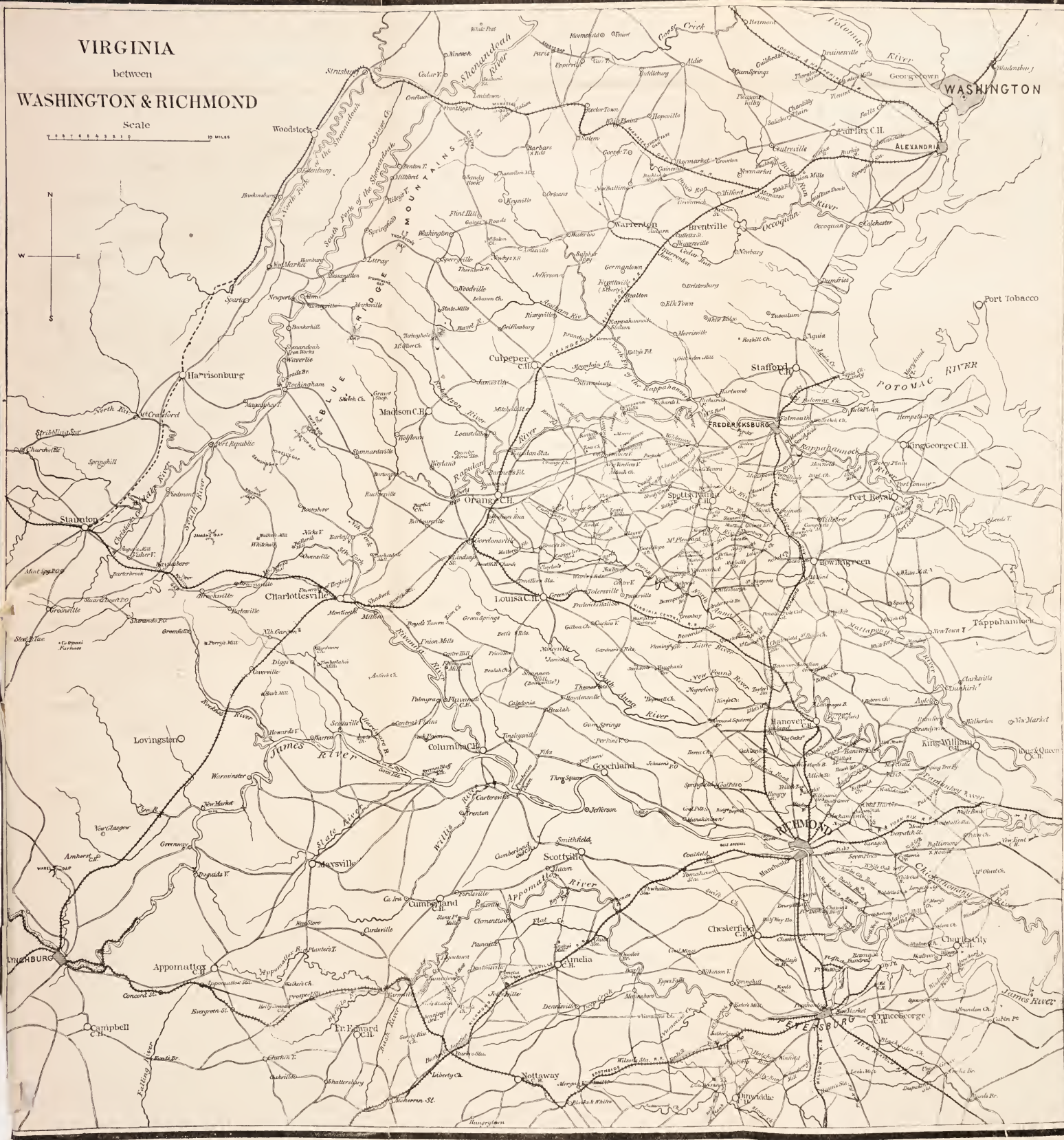
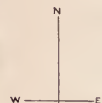
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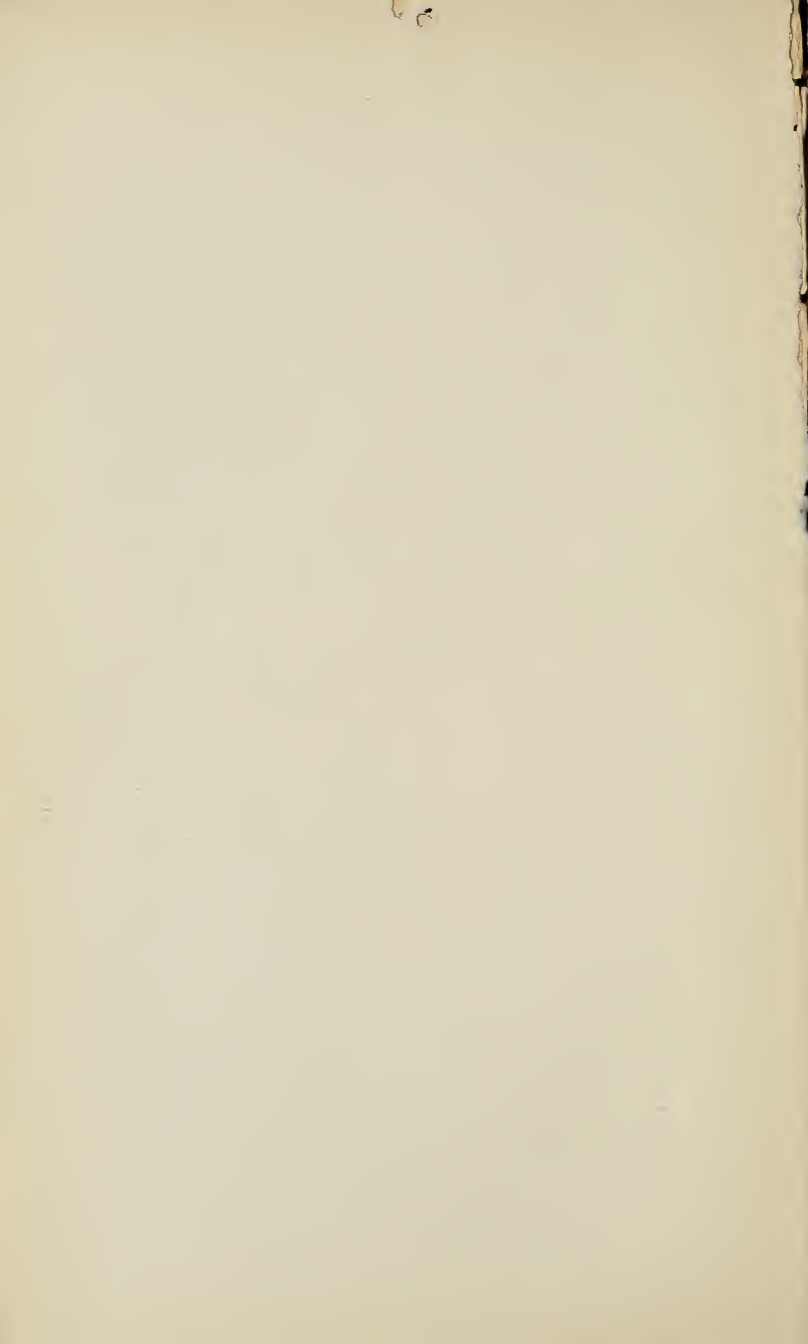
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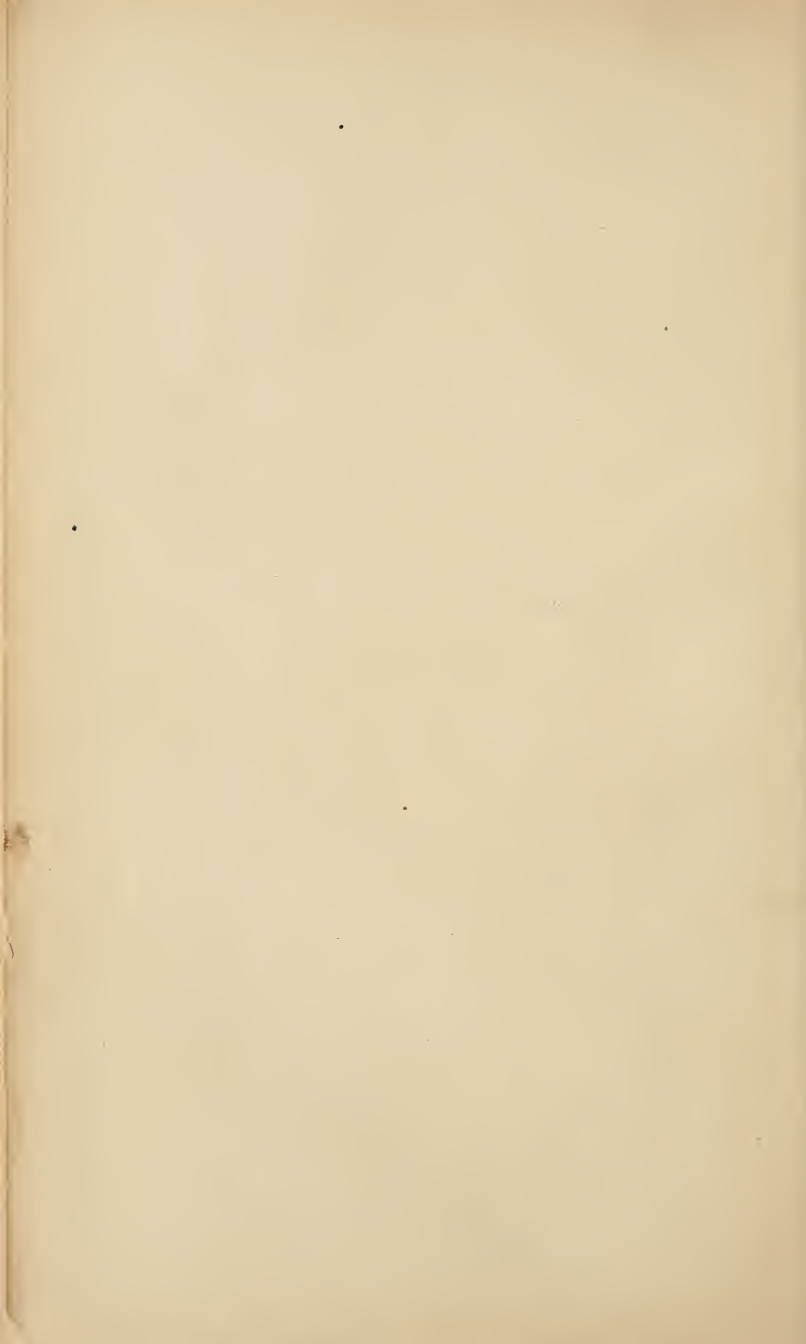








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BY

ANDREW A. HUMPHREYS

BRIGADIER-GENERAL, CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, AND BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL U. S. A.;  
MAJOR-GENERAL VOLS.; CHIEF OF STAFF ARMY OF THE POTOMAC;  
COMMANDING SECOND CORPS, ETC., ETC.



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## P R E F A C E .

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THE contents of this volume were intended to form the first part of Vol. XII. of the Scribner Campaigns of the Civil War. But they were necessarily excluded from that volume by its bulk.

The brevity that characterizes Volume XII. will also be found in this narrative, for I have had no time to change its character. Properly, its publication should have preceded that of Vol. XII.

The information needed for the preparation of these chapters was fuller and more readily obtained than that required for Vol. XII.

I am under obligations to the Secretary of War for making accessible to me all the papers of his Department relating to the War, and to Genl. Drum, Adjt.-Genl. ; and to Col. Scott, in charge of the preparation of the "Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," for publication, and to the gentlemen having charge of the sub-offices of the Adjt.-Genl's Department.

A. A. HUMPHREYS.

*June, 1883.*



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# GETTYSBURG TO THE RAPIDAN.

FROM JULY, 1863, TO MARCH, 1864.

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## CHAPTER I.

General Lee retreats from Gettysburg and crosses the Potomac at Williamsport, intrenching his position to cover the crossing—General Meade follows in pursuit by his left flank—Finds Lee covered by intrenchments too strong to attack without careful examination ; but his reconnoissance in force is too late to prevent the crossing—While covering Washington, Meade forces Lee to abandon the Shenandoah Valley, with its large food supplies, and to take position between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan.

THE evening of the 3d of July closed the fighting at Gettysburg. The 4th and part of the 5th were occupied by the Army of the Potomac in attending to the wounded and burying the dead.

A field return of the army on the 5th of July showed that its seven infantry corps had, on an average, the numbers usually found in a division, four of them having about 5,000 enlisted men each, the total of the seven amounting to 47,087 enlisted men armed and equipped.

On the night of the 4th of July the Army of Northern Virginia began its retreat, leaving behind a large number of its wounded. Preparations for

this were begun on the night of the 3d, and continued during the 4th, the trains being sent forward. Their route was by way of the Fairfield Pass, through the Blue Mountains to Hagerstown and Williamsport on the Potomac, the shortest road from Gettysburg to that place, where there is a good ford except in flood-stages of the river, and in the close vicinity of which, at Falling Waters, General Lee had had a ponton bridge. A part of the trains moved by way of the Cashtown Pass, north of the Fairfield, guarded by General Imboden's brigade of cavalry and mounted infantry.

As soon in the morning of the 5th as it was ascertained that Lee was in retreat, Major-General Sedgwick, commanding the Sixth Corps, 11,000 strong—the strongest corps in the Army—was ordered in pursuit on the Fairfield road, taking a brigade of cavalry with him; a brigade of cavalry was also dispatched on the Cashtown road to harass that column. Buford, commanding the First Cavalry Division, was sent by way of Frederick to endeavor to capture or destroy the enemy's trains at Williamsport; and Kilpatrick, commanding the Third Cavalry Division, by way of the Monterey Pass (south of the Fairfield Pass) to intercept the trains and harass the retreating force. The Fairfield and Cashtown passes were known to afford naturally strong positions, and it was stated they had been intrenched so that a small force could hold a large one in check some time. This information concerning the Fairfield Pass, which is midway between Gettysburg and Hagerstown,

being about 15 miles from each, was confirmed by General Sedgwick on the morning of the 6th, at which time he also reported that the main body of the enemy was in the vicinity of the pass, and that an engagement might be had with them.

This information led to holding the First and Third Corps ready to move to Fairfield Pass, and to suspending the flank movement through Middletown and South Mountain toward Hagerstown and Williamsport, which had already been commenced by the other corps of the army; for General Meade had concluded that, considering the delays he might meet with in the passes, he could follow the enemy more rapidly by the flank route than by direct pursuit. In the afternoon General Sedgwick reported that, although the pass was a strong one, he could take it, but that it would involve delay and waste of time to endeavor to push the enemy further on that road. Accordingly, on the morning of the 7th, the whole army moved by the flank routes through the Catoctin Mountains by the Hamburg and High Knob passes, and by way of Frederick. The heavy rains of the night of the 7th and all day of the 8th caused delays in these passes, and the army was not concentrated at Middletown until the morning of the 9th. By the evening of that day it had passed the Blue Ridge and halted for the night with its right at Boonsboro' and its left at Rohrer'sville, on the roads leading to Hagerstown and to Williamsport, and from twelve to fifteen miles from them. A brigade of cavalry, supported by one of infantry, had

been left to follow the enemy through the Fairfield Pass.

General French, with a division of 6,500 men, joined the Army of the Potomac on the 8th, and was assigned to the command of the Third Corps, his division uniting with it.

In the meantime General Kilpatrick had, on the 5th, broken into and destroyed a part of the enemy's trains, and afterward had encountered their cavalry.

Late in the afternoon of the 6th he had attacked the enemy at Hagerstown, while Buford attacked at Williamsport, but both without success, the enemy's cavalry being there in force, together with some infantry.

The leading troops of the Army of Northern Virginia arrived at Hagerstown on the afternoon of the 6th, the rear of the army reaching there on the morning of the 7th. The Potomac was found to be much swollen from the heavy rains that had fallen almost incessantly from the 1st of July. The Williamsport ford was too deep to be used, and the ponton bridge had been partially destroyed by a cavalry detachment sent for the purpose by General French from Frederick during the battle of Gettysburg.

The Confederate Army took up a good position selected to cover these two crossing places, the right resting on the river near Downsville, and the left in the vicinity of Hagerstown, covering the road from that place to Williamsport. Owing to the proximity of Conococheague Creek—which,



coming from the north, empties into the Potomac at Williamsport—and the stone fences of the roads leading to it from the left, through a very open and comparatively level country, a movement against that flank could be readily met.

The position taken by Lee ran along a range of high ground, and was strongly intrenched. The crossing-places were also suitably prepared for covering the passage of the river. Part of the ponton bridge was recovered, boats were built, and every preparation made for reëstablishing the bridge as speedily as possible.

The road Lee had taken from Gettysburg to Williamsport was about half the length of the route taken by the Army of the Potomac, and Lee had the advantage, always possessed by the army that withdraws under the cover of night, of gaining several hours.

On the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th of July, the cavalry of the two armies had spirited engagements that preceded the advance of the infantry columns of the Army of the Potomac. By the night of the 10th of July the Twelfth, Second, Fifth, and Third Corps of that army were across Antietam Creek, and in front of the enemy's right; the Sixth, Eleventh, and First Corps were near Funkstown and Hagerstown on the pike from Frederick.

On the 11th of July all the corps were thrown forward, and sent out strong reconnoissances to feel the enemy and ascertain how he was posted; and on the 12th these were continued close up to the enemy's position, and Funkstown and Hagers-

town were occupied by the Sixth and Eleventh Corps.

General W. F. Smith, with a force of four or five thousand men, who had just entered the service temporarily, joined the army on the 11th and was posted at Boonsboro.

General Meade, with the Chief of Staff and the Chief Engineer, had examined the enemy's position and intrenchments as closely as practicable soon after coming up with him. Wherever seen, the position was naturally strong, and was strongly intrenched; it presented no vulnerable points, but much of it was concealed from view. As already described, its flanks were secure and could not be turned.

In this condition of affairs General Meade determined on the evening of the 12th to move forward the next morning, make a reconnoissance in force, supported by the whole army, feel the enemy, and attack him where weakest if it should give any promise of success.

In view of an attack upon the enemy, some intrenchments had been thrown up, as, in the contingency of a repulse and serious loss, they would be useful. The corps commanders were sent for on the evening of the 12th to ascertain what further information they had obtained, to give them instructions for the next day's operation, and to afford them an opportunity for a full understanding with each other concerning it. But their opinion was found to be so adverse to the proposed operation, that General Meade postponed it until he could examine the position of the enemy more closely.

That examination, so far as it was practicable, was made on the 13th, and the order for the reconnoissance in force to be made on the morning of the 14th was issued, and suitable preparations made for it. On advancing, it was found that the enemy had withdrawn on the night of the 13th, crossing the river chiefly on the ponton bridge, Ewell's Corps using the ford. The advance was continued to the river, but the infantry of the Army of the Potomac was unable to overtake the enemy. Buford's and Kilpatrick's divisions of cavalry overtook and attacked the rear guard at Falling Waters, and brought back two guns, three battle-flags and many prisoners, a large part of whom were, doubtless, stragglers.

A careful survey of the intrenched position of the enemy was made, and showed that an assault upon it would have resulted disastrously to us. Nevertheless, General Meade was, at the time, greatly blamed for not attacking it,\* and he was also criticised for not following Lee more rapidly, probably with the idea that by doing so Lee would have been overtaken before he had intrenched or before his intrenchments were formidable.

Possibly a prompt, vigorous, direct pursuit by the whole army on the morning of the 5th of July by the Cashtown and Fairfield passes would have brought on a general engagement before the Army of Northern Virginia had taken up the position covering the crossing-places of the Potomac; but

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\* On the other hand, General Burnside was severely criticised for attacking at Marye Heights, Fredericksburg, where the intrenchments were not more formidable than those of Williamsport.

probably it could not have reached Hagerstown before the evening of the 7th, and Lee would have had the few hours needed to make his intrenchments too strong for successful attack.\*

The other criticism adverted to was probably materially modified before the war closed.

On the 14th of July Gregg's division of cavalry was sent across the Potomac at Harper's Ferry on a reconnoissance, and on the 15th moved to Shepherdstown, in the vicinity of which on the 16th it was attacked by General Fitzhugh, Lee with his own and Chambliss's brigades supported by Jenkins's, but maintained its position. The fighting ceased at night, and Gregg fell back to Harper's Ferry unmolested, his rear leaving Shepherdstown at daylight on the 17th.

On the 15th of July Lee marched to the vicinity of Bunker Hill, where his army remained several days.

In view of the question of supplies, the Army of the Potomac marched on the flank of the enemy, crossing the Potomac on the 17th and 18th at Harper's Ferry and a few miles below, at Berlin, on ponton bridges, and, moving up Loudoun Valley, occupied the passes through the Blue Ridge with cavalry and infantry, while it covered the piked roads leading from the position of Lee's army through Snicker's Gap and Leesburg to Washington, and through Ashby's Gap and Aldie to the

---

\* A column sent through the Cashtown Pass would have opened the Fairfield Pass at once. The distance from Gettysburg to Hagerstown by the Catoctin Pass is not less than forty miles.

same point. Buford's cavalry division was sent, on the 21st, to occupy Manassas Gap and watch Chester Gap, and was followed by the Third, Fifth, and Second Corps, which entered Manassas Gap on the 23d.

When Lee recrossed the Potomac he had intended to move into the well-cultivated farming region of Loudoun County, but the Shenandoah was then impassable, and these dispositions of the Army of the Potomac not only cut him off from Loudoun, but made him apprehend being cut off from the railroad to Richmond. He therefore ordered General Longstreet on the 19th to move to Culpeper Court House by way of Front Royal. Longstreet moved on the 20th, and succeeded in passing through Chester Gap without interruption on the 22d, followed by Hill, and arrived at the Court House on the 24th.

General Ewell had been sent on the 21st to capture a force under General Kelly that was protecting the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad west of Martinsburg; but General Kelly eluded him. Following Longstreet and Hill, Ewell, with Rhodes's and Johnson's divisions, passed through Front Royal on the 23d, and entered Chester Gap, which, in its western portion, is close to and but little separated from Manassas Gap. Here, in the afternoon, he found Wright's brigade of Anderson's division, Hill's corps, which had been left to hold the pass until he (Ewell) should come up, and at once supported it with Rhodes's division; for he also found there the head of the column, composed of the

Third, Fifth, and Second Corps advancing through the gap. A brief, spirited encounter between the advanced forces of the opposing columns ensued, the Excelsior brigade, General Spinola commanding, charging and driving its opponent back upon its main force, inflicting a severe loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners.

General Ewell, finding so strong a force in his front, fell back to Front Royal, and the next morning moved up the south fork of the Shenandoah to Luray, crossing the Blue Ridge by Thornton's Gap, and going to Madison Court House. General Early, who was following far in the rear, was obliged to move up the north fork to join Ewell.

The Army of the Potomac moved to the Rappahannock River, where it was directed from Washington to take up a threatening position, but not to advance against Lee, who was in position in the vicinity of Culpeper Court House, between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan.

On the 1st of August General Buford, on a reconnoissance with his cavalry division, advanced to Brandy Station (between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan), driving in the enemy's cavalry, Hampton's brigade, until they were supported by infantry. Subsequent to this, Lee withdrew his infantry to the south bank of the Rapidan—a better position for his purposes than that along the Rappahannock or at Culpeper Court House.

By the middle of August a considerable number of troops had been withdrawn from the Army of the Potomac for duty elsewhere.

It having been ascertained \* that General Longstreet's Corps had been withdrawn from the Army of Northern Virginia and sent West, except Pickett's division, which remained on the south side of James River, the cavalry and the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac were thrown across the Rappahannock on the 13th of September, and drove the enemy's cavalry over the Rapidan, the crossing-places of which were found to be well intrenched. The army followed, and took position about Culpeper Court House, the Second and Sixth Corps being thrown forward near the railroad crossing of the Rapidan.

Buford was sent on a reconnoissance to the upper Rapidan, and a movement by the right flank to cross that river was about being made, when it was suspended by orders from Washington, and the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps were withdrawn from the Army of the Potomac and sent West.

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\* By Col. George H. Sharpe, Chief of the Secret Service Department of the Army of the Potomac.

## CHAPTER II.

The movement to Centreville—Meade advances against Lee, who is forced to withdraw beyond the Rapidan.

By the 9th of October some of the troops sent away in the summer were returned to the army, and a good many recruits had been sent to it, so that the subject of a movement by the right flank was resumed.

On the afternoon of the 7th a signal despatch from General Stuart to General Fitzhugh Lee was read by our signal officer on Pony Mountain, directing him to draw three days' hard bread and bacon, which indicated a movement of some kind, supposed to be a cavalry operation on our right; and Prince's division of the Third Corps was ordered to James City to support Kilpatrick's cavalry division. On the 8th General Sedgwick reported indications of a movement of the enemy on our right. On the 9th General Meade and myself rode to Cedar Mountain to have a better look at the country in the direction of a certain pass through Southwest Mountain, having in view the movement by the right flank. Soon after we reached the mountain information was received from the Sixth Corps pickets that there was infantry among the troops moving on our right, and before we left the mountain columns of infantry, as well as calvary,



were seen by us across the upper Rapidan, moving in the direction of Madison Court House.

General Pleasonton, commanding the Cavalry Corps, was strongly impressed with the idea that the Confederate Government intended to abandon Virginia, and that this movement on our right was a feint, under cover of which the Army of Northern Virginia was to be withdrawn from the Rapidan to Richmond, so that the Confederate authorities could abandon that city under its protection. General Lee, in his report of this operation, states that it was made with the design of bringing on an engagement with the Army of the Potomac, and that his "army crossed the Rapidan on the 9th instant and advanced by way of Madison Court House," that his "progress was necessarily slow, as the march was by circuitous and concealed roads, in order to avoid the observation of the enemy." As yet, however (on the evening of the 9th), the character and object of the movement were undeveloped, and in this state of uncertainty, while Kilpatrick was ordered to watch the movements of the enemy in the direction of the roads from Madison Court House to Woodville, and Thornton and Chester gaps, and Warrenton, as well as to Culpeper Court House, Buford was ordered, on the evening of the 9th, to cross the Rapidan at Germanna Ford, move up that river, and follow the enemy to Orange Court House. General Newton, commanding the First Corps, was directed to cross at Morton's Ford when Buford arrived there, and Sedgwick to cross at the fords in his front simultaneously with Newton; and Sykes,

commanding the Fifth Corps, to unite with them, and as preliminary to it, to mass his corps near them, screened from observation. They were all informed that the movements ordered were based upon the supposition that the enemy was retiring from the Rapidan, though that might prove to be erroneous, and it might be found that he was really moving to turn our right flank. General Benham, commanding the Engineer Brigade, was ordered to Washington to procure a bridge equipage sufficient to build two bridges across the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg.

When the Army of the Potomac crossed the Rappahannock in September, a position in front of Culpeper Court House was selected to be taken up in the event of the Army of Northern Virginia advancing to Culpeper Court House to bring on an engagement. The right of this position covered the Sperryville pike; the left extended across the direct road to James City and Madison Court House. On the morning of the 10th the Third and Second Corps occupied the right of the position, and the three infantry corps on the Rapidan were advised to be ready to occupy the left.

During the day the information received from General Kilpatrick, whose cavalry were active in forcing a disclosure of the true character of the movement, rendered it certain that Lee's army was moving on our right, either to advance directly upon Culpeper Court House or toward Warrenton, or to the Valley of the Shenandoah, by Thornton and Chester gaps. The three infantry corps on the

Rapidan were therefore ordered to move up as soon as it was dark, and take position on the left of the Second Corps. But by night it was ascertained that Lee's army was moving toward Woodville, some fifteen miles north-west of Culpeper Court House, and General Davies, of Kilpatrick's cavalry division, reported that the head of the enemy's column was already on Hazel River, in the vicinity of Turkey-hole Mountain.\* This evinced a design on his part not to advance upon Culpeper Court House, but to turn our right, and by placing himself on our lines of communication with Washington (the Warrenton pike and the railroad), to bring on an engagement in a position selected by himself, or, perhaps, again to enter the Shenandoah Valley.

Respecting these designs, it is to be observed that General Lee states in his report that "when the movement of the army from the Rapidan commenced, General Imboden was instructed to advance down the valley [of the Shenandoah] and guard the gaps of the mountains on our left." This would have been an entirely useless operation on the part of General Imboden if the object of General Lee's movement was merely to bring on an engagement at Culpeper Court House.

As General Lee was already as near to Warrenton as we were, General Meade decided to move at

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\* The advance to the vicinity of Turkey-hole Mountain may have been merely preliminary to the movement to Culpeper Court House by the Sperryville pike, but it had every appearance of a movement around our right flank. The shortest and quickest advance to the Court House for Lee's army was by the road leading directly to it from James City.

once to the vicinity of that town and attack Lee while crossing the Rappahannock at the Waterloo and Sulphur Springs crossings. The movement of the troops began from the vicinity of Culpeper Court House at 3 o'clock in the morning of the 11th of October, and by night the army was across the Rappahannock, extending from Freeman's Ford to Kelly's Ford, and covering the railroad. The trains preceded the movement. The cavalry—Buford's and Kilpatrick's divisions, with one brigade of Gregg's division, under General Pleasonton, supported by the Third and Fifth Corps—covered the movement, Pleasonton having a sharp engagement with the whole of the enemy's cavalry—Fitzhugh Lee's and Hampton's divisions, under General Stuart.

To return to General Buford, who crossed the Rapidan at Germanma Ford early on the 10th and moved up to Morton's Ford by night. General Fitzhugh Lee, with his division of cavalry and a detachment of infantry, had remained to hold the Confederate lines south of the Rapidan, while General Stuart, with Hampton's division, moved on the right flank of Lee's army. On the morning of the 11th General Buford received orders to recross the Rapidan and move to the Rappahannock River. Crossing at Morton's Ford, he was attacked by Lee's division, supported by the infantry detachment, which attack he repulsed, as he did a second attack near Stevensburg, where he remained to cover the withdrawal of a wagon train, and then slowly withdrew, followed by the

enemy to Brandy Station, where he joined General Pleasonton, and took part in the engagement with General Stuart. The presence of this infantry detachment with General Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry gave rise, I think, to the unfortunate misapprehension, on the part of the commanders of the rear guard of the Army of the Potomac, that General Lee had moved his whole army to Culpeper Court House. General Lee says that his main body arrived *near* that place on the 11th of October, but he does not specify where they halted that night, and all the information I have obtained goes to show that no part of their main infantry columns came nearer to it than the direct roads from Madison Court House and James City to Warrenton; that is, from five to ten miles distant.

General Gregg, with his cavalry division, was sent on the 11th to the vicinity of the Sulphur Springs, on the Rappahannock, to watch the roads Lee would take leading to Warrenton and to the Shenandoah Valley by Chester and Thornton gaps through Sperryville and Little Washington. It was enjoined upon him that it was information of Lee's movements solely that he was sent after, and that it was important that any he obtained should be received at headquarters at the earliest moment. General Meade states that upon the arrival of the rear guard on the evening of the 11th, the representations of General Pleasonton, commanding its cavalry, and General Sykes, commanding its infantry, gave him the impression that General Lee had moved to Culpeper Court House

with his whole army to attack there, and that he then occupied that place. This led to a suspension of the movement toward Warrenton the next morning.

Up to midday of the 12th no information of any kind concerning the enemy had been received, and under the belief that Lee must be in his rear at Culpeper Court House, General Meade, between twelve and one o'clock in the afternoon, ordered the Fifth, Sixth, and Second Corps, with Buford's cavalry, back to that place with a view to give Lee battle. As they approached it toward sunset the cavalry had some skirmishing with small parties of the enemy's cavalry, but Lee's army was not there, nor was any information concerning it gained.

Near ten o'clock at night a dispatch was received by me from General Gregg, stating that about noon he had encountered the head of Lee's army on the west bank of the Rappahannock moving to Warrenton by way of the Sulphur Springs and Waterloo crossings; that, after a persistent resistance (which was well managed) he had been driven across the Rappahannock River and forced back six or eight miles from the roads to Warrenton, and that Lee's army had been crossing the river for several hours. Its leading troops were, therefore, within a few miles of Warrenton. No sound of this engagement had reached us, although there had been heavy artillery-fire. Shortly after this information was received by General Meade, the pickets of the Third Corps

farthest up the river began to be driven in. The army was at once got in motion, and by ten o'clock on the night of the 13th of October the right of the Third Corps was at Greenwich, some two miles from the Warrenton pike at Buckland Mills; the Second Corps at Auburn; the Fifth Corps at Catlett's; the Sixth Corps on the railroad between Catlett's and Bristoe stations, and the First Corps near Bristoe Station. Kilpatrick's cavalry division was on the Warrenton pike at New Baltimore in contact with that of the enemy, supported, it was said, by their infantry. Gregg's division was near Auburn on the left of the Second Corps, and Buford's guarding the trains moving to Brentsville.

General Lee states in his report that on the morning of the 12th of October his army marched in two columns, with the design of reaching the Orange and Alexandria Railroad north of the river and interrupting our movement.\*

The actual position of Lee's infantry on the evening of the 13th was not known to General Meade. The head of one of its columns was believed to be on the Warrenton pike, near New Baltimore, and the other on the road from Warrenton through Thoroughfare Gap, Gainesville, and

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\* The First Maine Cavalry of General I. Irvin Gregg's brigade of the Second Division, in returning from its reconnoissance to Sperryville and Little Washington, on the evening of the 12th, ran into the infantry of General A. P. Hill's corps, between Gaines's cross-roads and Amissville, showing that Hill's corps had moved by way of Woodville, as indicated by our information of Lee's movements on the evening of the 10th.

Groveton. Some of his cavalry was at New Baltimore, some in the vicinity of Auburn. Our pickets were reported to be in contact with those of the enemy's cavalry from Greenwich to Auburn, and staff officers of the Second and Third Corps, carrying orders from the headquarters of the army to their corps during the night, ran into the enemy's cavalry, though escaping capture.

When the army was established for the night, the question what should next be done was the subject of long examination and discussion by General Meade and myself. The country between Cedar Run and Broad Run, the Warrenton pike and the Alexandria Railroad, was almost unknown to us. The pike and the railroad were here seven miles apart, and from the information then had, confirmed by all subsequently obtained, the disadvantages of any position in the area mentioned were too great to admit of its being adopted, supposing Lee's army had not advanced farther than Warrenton. Any position at or in the near vicinity of the Manassas or Bull Run battle-fields was objectionable because of the former operations there; and with great reluctance General Meade concluded to take up the position of Centreville, which he believed General Lee was moving to get possession of.\*

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\* Halting on Broad Run, near Milford, until the position and movements of Lee's army could be exactly ascertained, was considered; but the information had, up to the night of the 13th, indicated plainly that Lee was trying to turn Meade's right flank (as he says he was in his letter of the 15th of October to the Secretary of War at Richmond), and might accomplish his object by moving on



At a late hour of the night the order for the movement was issued. The corps upon the railroad were to march on either side of it until they reached the road diverging from it to Mitchell's and Blackburn's fords of Bull Run. The Third Corps was to move from Greenwich to Milford, on Broad Run, a mile above Bristoe Station, and thence along the railroad; the Second Corps to move along Cedar Run to Catlett's, and thence along the railroad; General Kilpatrick along the Warrenton pike and to Sudley Springs on Bull Run; General Gregg to cover the rear and flank of the Second Corps. The corps commanders were directed to keep up constant communication with the corps in front and rear, and mutually support each other.

The information General Meade had as to the position of Lee's army on the evening of the 13th of October was, however, erroneous; and the movement of our army on the 14th, based upon that information, was wrong. Lee's army had not moved as quickly as ours, and his two infantry corps, commanded by General A. P. Hill and General Richard Ewell, were halted for the night of the 13th in the vicinity of Warrenton. Had General Meade known the position of General Lee's infantry on the night of the 13th, and been correctly informed before midday of the 14th of the character of Hill's move-

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the pike and through Thoroughfare Gap, if we delayed on Broad Run. For that reason, the proposition was not adopted. It would have been fortunate for Meade if he had adopted it. Both leaders would then have had what they sought—a general engagement.

ment on the pike, he could have disposed his army on the 14th so as to assemble it on Broad Run, near Bristoe Station, and attack Hill's corps before Ewell's arrived there, as we shall presently see; and then have directed his whole force on Ewell. As it was, Lee was equally ignorant of the disposition and movement of our army, and failed in securing the simultaneous arrival of his two corps at Bristoe Station.

General Lee states that early on the 14th of October a portion of his army [Hill's corps and some cavalry] moved by way of New Baltimore toward Bristoe Station, and the rest [Ewell's corps], accompanied by the main body of the cavalry, proceeded to the same point by Auburn Mills and Greenwich. On the evening of the 13th General Stuart, with a brigade of Confederate cavalry, found himself in the midst of our troops of the Second Corps and Gregg's cavalry, and remained concealed all night in a dense thicket of old-field pine along the road from Auburn to Catlett's. He managed, during the night, to communicate his situation and the position of our troops there to General Lee. Just before daylight Caldwell's division, with its artillery facing in the direction of Warrenton, made fires, which disclosed their exact position to General Stuart, who opened upon their rear with his battery of artillery at short distance; and immediately the enemy's main cavalry force, coming from the direction of Warrenton, attacked Gregg's cavalry division on the south side of Cedar Run; an attack met successfully by Gregg and Kilpatrick.

*the First Division + 12-24-81*

Caldwell faced about, and Rickett's battery opened upon Stuart. At the same time, General Alexander Hays, commanding the second division, promptly detached two regiments to attack Stuart's cavalry, which was handsomely done; Colonel Thomas Ruffin, charging furiously upon these regiments, was mortally wounded. General Stuart escaped from his entanglement, and Ewell's corps now approaching, General Caldwell's division resumed its former facing, its artillery opening upon Ewell. General Hays and General Webb (commanding the second and third divisions), with the train, moved according to the order of march toward Catlett's, while General Caldwell kept the enemy in check, retiring when the road was clear, the enemy at first advancing with lines of battle, but in a short time moving off to the left on the road to Greenwich. General Gregg's division had been incessantly skirmishing with the enemy from daylight, and united with Caldwell's division in covering the rear. *En route* to Bristoe Station, Webb's division led on the north-west side of the railroad, Hays's division followed on the south-east side, Caldwell's division brought up the rear, and Gregg's cavalry covered the left flank. Every precaution was taken to move the troops in a proper disposition for battle.

At midday, when General Meade reached Bristoe Station, General Sykes, with the Fifth Corps, had crossed Broad Run, above the railroad bridge. The Second Corps was to cross below the bridge. As it was expected that some force of the enemy would make its appearance at Bristoe, coming from Green-

wich, on the road the Third Corps had taken, or from Gainesville, General Sykes was now directed not to move until the Second Corps came up, and orders were sent to the Third Corps (next in advance of the Fifth) to halt until the Fifth Corps began to move. By this arrangement it was expected to have three corps available, if required, to meet any force of the enemy that might be encountered here. General Warren was advised of these instructions, and was also informed that General Kilpatrick, at Buckland's Mills (on the Warrenton pike, where Broad Run crosses it), reported that the enemy's infantry were on the Warrenton pike at that place, and also that Kilpatrick would leave there at twelve o'clock. General Warren was directed to move as rapidly as possible, as the enemy would probably send a column to Bristoe.

But as soon as the head of the Second Corps came in sight, General Sykes set his corps in motion, and the Third Corps began at the same time to move forward.

General A. P. Hill, leaving his camp near Warrenton at five o'clock in the morning, moved on the Warrenton pike to Broad Run Church (New Baltimore), and then took the road by Greenwich to Bristoe Station, with Heth's and Wilcox's divisions, sending Anderson's division on the pike to Buckland Mills, as he had received information from several sources that a portion of our army was moving there from Greenwich. Anderson, finding only our cavalry at Buckland Mills, and General Fitzhugh Lee with his cavalry having come up, re-

joined Hill at Greenwich, following Heth's division, which led. Wilcox's division brought up the rear, detaching Scales's brigade and a battery to guard the train at Buckland Mills. Upon reaching the hills near Bristoe, overlooking the plain on the north side of Broad Run, the rear of Sykes's Fifth Corps was discovered about moving off. Poague's artillery was put in position, and opened upon them; and Heth's division was formed in line of battle and directed to cross the run and press them; but before it could do so, the head of Warren's Second Corps, Webb's division, appeared, issuing from the woods along the railroad near Broad Run, and Heth's division was directed against that; Anderson's division now beginning to come up, at half-past two was formed on the right of Heth.

General Webb says that at two o'clock two brigades of his division (the other brigade being detached with the train) debouched from the woods close to Broad Run, and found artillery of the enemy in position on their left flank, a force of infantry preceded by skirmishers coming down on the same flank, and a line of battle of the enemy, Walker's brigade of Heth's division, apparently following the rear of the Fifth Corps, which was just disappearing in the wood beyond Broad Run. As the Second Corps was to cross Broad Run below the railroad bridge, Webb's division had crossed to the south side of the road. General Hays's division was following Webb's closely. General Warren had just arrived at Bristoe. With the utmost promptitude the two divisions were faced to the

left into line of battle, and ran forward under the fire of the enemy to the railroad embankment and cut, both forming excellent intrenchments. Webb's right rested on a commanding hill near Broad Run, which had been intrenched in the summer to protect the railroad bridge. The artillery, at a gallop, took up commanding positions in rear of the infantry, and opened on the enemy—Brown's battery on the north side of Broad Run, without support, Ricketts' on the south side. The leading troops of Heth's division, Cooke's and Kirkland's brigades, attacked at once with a strong line of battle, preceded by a very strong skirmish line, and charged up to the railroad. The flankers of General Webb's division were the first encountered, and they suffered heavily. The attack fell mainly upon the first and third brigades of General Webb's division, commanded respectively by Colonel Heath and Colonel Mallon—the latter killed in the action; and on the third brigade of General Hays's division, commanded by General Owen. Brown's battery enfiladed the enemy's line when it attacked. Under the fire of this force, and the artillery supporting it, the enemy was soon repulsed, and 450 prisoners, two stands of colors, and five pieces of artillery were captured. Generals Cooke and Kirkland were wounded.

General Heth states that this contest was over before General Walker's and General Davis's brigades could be brought into action, though they were formed to cover the right and left flanks.

While Cooke and Kirkland were engaged, Posey's

and Perry's brigades of Anderson's division advanced against the left of Hays's division, but without engaging it heavily; and Anderson being notified that Ewell's corps was coming up on his right, formed his other brigade to connect with it; then Posey's and Perry's brigades advanced against the skirmishers of Hays's, and perhaps Caldwell's, division, to enable General Long to put some artillery in position.

General Caldwell was near Kettle Run, about a mile and a half from Bristoe, when the firing began, and moved up at double-quick. His division was formed along the railroad, on the left of Hays, Miles's brigade being sent to support Brown's and Ricketts' batteries.

Gregg, at Catlett's, hearing the firing at Bristoe, moved up promptly to the scene of action, and formed on the left; afterward he was held in reserve.

About four o'clock in the afternoon the enemy threatened another attack, forming a line of battle in front of Webb and Hays, but the artillery fire caused it to be abandoned. Late in the afternoon a heavy column moved to the left of Caldwell and partly crossed the railroad track, but did not attack.

It is inferred from General Anderson's statement respecting Ewell's corps, that it arrived before four o'clock, and skirmishing continued along Warren's left during the arrival and deployment of that corps; at dusk some batteries opened against Warren's left, replied to by his own, but the artillery fire ceased soon after dark. At dusk the head of

General Sykes's force came to the support of the Second Corps, General Warren having urgently requested it. As soon as General Meade received intelligence of the enemy's appearance at Bristoe, and that the Fifth and Third Corps were not in connection with the Second, those corps were ordered back to its support. It was too late, however, to concentrate the whole army there in time for a general engagement.

General Hill does not state when Wilcox's division came up, but as he followed immediately after Anderson, who was upon the ground at half-past two, Wilcox's division must have arrived not later than half-past three. All that Hill says bearing upon this is: "Dark came upon us before new dispositions could be made to attack, and during the night the enemy retreated."

General Lee does not state when General Ewell's force arrived, but in referring to the repulse of Hill's attack adds: "Before the rest of the troops could be brought up, and the position of the enemy ascertained, he retreated across Broad Run." It appears from General Anderson's report that he was notified of Ewell's near approach not long after the repulse of Cooke's and Kirkland's brigades. At Greenwich, Ewell gave up the road to Hill, and moved across the country through fields and woods, or by obscure farm-roads, as it was a section of country well known to him, or to those with him. But it was found difficult for artillery, and caused serious delay. Yet the whole of Ewell's corps must have arrived while daylight lasted, as additional



troops of the enemy were observed to come up and take position opposite Warren's left, and prisoners taken said these were Ewell's troops. Their march was not longer than that of the Second Corps. The march of Hill's corps was only three or four miles longer than that of the Second Corps, and was on a good and unobstructed road. The Second Corps, on the contrary, was delayed in the morning by the encounter with Ewell's troops and the cavalry at Auburn.

The numerical strength of the Second Corps, according to the return of the 10th of October, was 8,243 enlisted men of infantry present for duty. At Bristoe, two brigades were detached with the train, and General Warren states that his force on the field *at the time of the engagement*, was about 3,000 infantry, and three batteries of artillery. The strength of Hill's corps by the return of the Army of Northern Virginia of September 30, was 15,073 enlisted men of infantry present for duty, but this does not include Cooke's brigade, which was separately returned at that date, and which had 2,150 enlisted men. This would make the strength of the three divisions of Hill's corps, 17,223 enlisted men. Ewell's corps by the same return had about 15,000 enlisted men present for duty.

It is apparent from this statement that General Warren had before him a greatly superior force of the enemy—a fact of which he was well aware—and that he could not withdraw securely in daylight in the presence of such a force. He says that his

position was good, except on the left, and such that the enemy could not ascertain what force he had unless they made a heavy attack.

At nine o'clock in the evening General Warren crossed Broad Run, taking with him his wounded and his captures, and, marching all night, crossed Bull Run at Blackburn's Ford at 4 A.M. of the 15th, having in the course of the twenty-four hours twice successfully encountered the enemy in superior force, and marched over twenty-five miles.

The handling of the Second Corps in this operation, and the promptitude, skill, and spirit with which the enemy were met, were admirable, and might form an excellent model for the conduct of a rear guard.

The loss of the corps at Auburn and Bristoe was thirty officers and 403 enlisted men killed and wounded. The Confederate loss in both actions was 782 officers and enlisted men killed and wounded. [*Medical and Surgical History of the War.*] Generals Cooke, Kirkland, and Posey, of Hill's corps, were wounded at Bristoe.

The losses of Buford's and Gregg's cavalry divisions in the movements from the Rapidan to Centreville were 335 officers and enlisted men killed and wounded, and 478 missing; Gregg's missing being 432. Of those reported missing from his division at Sulphur Springs, many were killed and wounded.\*

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\* The 1st Maine, Colonel Smith commanding, detached at Sulphur Springs on the morning of the 12th, to Sperryville and Little

The casualties of Kilpatrick's (third) division, which were slight, are not given separately for this period.

It will be noticed that in the operations following midday of the 10th, most of the troops were marching during the night of the 10th, and during the 11th until night, twenty-eight hours; that they were marching during the afternoon, and all night of the 12th, and continuously on the 13th, to nine or ten o'clock at night—that is, thirty hours. These day-and-night marches averaged at least thirty miles for each corps. The Third, Fifth, and Second Corps, beginning their marches about daylight of the 14th, did not complete them until the morning of the 15th. This severe marching and loss of rest was borne cheerfully by officers and men, all of whom responded with alacrity to every call made upon them.

On the 15th of October the army remained in position at Centreville, resting; the enemy's cavalry and artillery skirmishing with the Second Corps at

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Washington, returned to General Gregg at Bristoe, after a circuit of 90 miles, having encountered the enemy's cavalry and infantry at several points in endeavoring to return.

Lieutenant Harris and twelve men, carrying a despatch to General Gregg from Colonel Smith on the 12th, ran into the enemy's infantry near Amissville, and charged through them; then met them at Jefferson, and returning toward Amissville, ran into Hill's corps; escaping, he hid his party in a dense pine wood; succeeded in getting to New Baltimore, and there running into Mosby's troops, lost two men; then he ran into two squadrons of White's command, when the party were captured and taken to Sulphur Springs. Lieutenant Harris, however, escaped.

Blackburn's Ford, and with the Third Corps at Liberty Mills.\*

As it was evident on the 16th that Lee would not advance further,† preparations for our advance were made, but a severe rain-storm set in that day, rendering Bull Run unfordable, and our pontons

\* On the 15th General Meade issued the following order :

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

*October 15, 1863.*

The Major-General commanding announces to the Army that the rear guard, consisting of the Second Corps, was attacked yesterday while marching by the flank. The enemy after a spirited contest was repulsed, losing a battery of five guns, two colors, and four hundred and fifty prisoners.

The skill and promptitude of Major-General Warren, and the gallantry and bearing of the officers and soldiers of the Second Corps, are entitled to high commendation.

By command of

MAJOR-GENERAL MEADE,

S. WILLIAMS.

*Asst. Adjt.-General.*

† On the morning of the 15th, the day after the affair at Bristoe Station General Lee wrote to the Secretary of War at Richmond that, after his letter of the 13th instant, his army continued its movement with the view of turning the right flank of the enemy, who was marching by a number of parallel roads, leading directly toward Washington, while it was necessary for them to make considerable detours. They were consequently unable to do him any considerable damage. It was easy for him to retire under the fortifications of Washington and Alexandria, and they would be unable to attack him advantageously : that it was impossible for them to remain where they were, the country being destitute of supplies, and the railroad bridges over the Rappahannock River and the streams north of it having been destroyed.

were in the rear at Fairfax Station, and the roads blocked with supply trains. On the 17th the bridge train was ordered up to Blackburn's Ford, but General Sedgwick, on our right, reported the enemy's infantry as well as cavalry to be on the Little River pike, near Chantilly—a report that was repeated at midnight. This information put a stop to our advance, preparations for which were resumed when, by midday of the 18th, the force in Sedgwick's front was reported by him to have withdrawn.

On the 19th the army advanced to Gainesville on the Warrenton pike, and to Bristoe Station. Kilpatrick, in advance on the pike, met the enemy's cavalry at Groveton, which fell back slowly to Gainesville. Buford and Gregg guarded the trains.

Information received from General Kilpatrick in the evening indicating that both Ewell's and Hill's corps were at Warrenton, our army was concentrated in the vicinity of Gainesville early on the morning of the 20th, and Kilpatrick sent forward toward Warrenton at daylight to discover the movements of the enemy. Stuart, with Hampton's cavalry division, retired slowly before Kilpatrick on the Warrenton pike. At Buckland Mills the passage of Broad Run was forced by Custer's brigade. Here Kilpatrick halted for an hour, to hear from the scouts he had sent toward Greenwich and Auburn, and also toward Haymarket. Upon their return they reported no enemy on either flank; and Davies was ordered to follow the enemy to New Baltimore, which he did cautiously, Stuart falling

back slowly beyond New Baltimore, as agreed upon between himself and General Fitzhugh Lee, who was at Greenwich with his cavalry division, waiting the opportunity to attack Kilpatrick in flank and rear. Kilpatrick remained at Buckland Mills with Custer's brigade, and, by the time Davies reached New Baltimore, was informed by scouts of the advance from Greenwich of Lee's cavalry, which soon after became engaged with Custer's. Davies was at once recalled, and he fell back fighting, closely pressed; for General Stuart, upon hearing Lee's guns, at once attacked him vigorously. Stuart says that Davies at first resisted stubbornly, but when once broken the rout was complete, and that he pursued at full speed to Buckland (about four miles).

Custer recrossed Broad Run at Buckland Mills, and endeavored to keep Lee from Davies. Davies succeeded in crossing higher up, and moved across the country to the Haymarket road, pursued by Stuart up to and within the pickets of the First Corps, some of whom were captured, owing to the disorder caused by our own cavalry suddenly riding through them, followed pell-mell by that of the enemy.

Custer fell back to the infantry at Gainesville, likewise closely pursued by Fitzhugh Lee, who also picked up some prisoners from the infantry picket line.

The whole of the enemy's cavalry were engaged in this affair; their return of October 20 gives 6,867 as the number of enlisted men present for duty at

that date. Kilpatrick's division, on the return of September 30, had 3,500 enlisted men present for duty.

The loss of the cavalry in this affair, according to the Medical and Surgical History of the War, as taken from the official reports of Generals Meade, Stuart and Lee, was twenty killed, sixty wounded, and 100 missing in Kilpatrick's division; and ten killed and forty wounded in Stuart's cavalry.

The casualties of our cavalry corps, from the 9th to the 23rd of October, were: seventy-three officers and enlisted men killed, 312 wounded and 866 missing, giving an aggregate loss of 1,251.

General Lee claims to have captured from us in these operations, from the 9th to the 23d of October, 2,002 prisoners. Deducting the prisoners taken from the cavalry, whose operations rendered them peculiarly liable to such loss, and the prisoners captured from our pickets, nearly all the remainder were stragglers who had fallen out of the ranks from exhaustion on the roads followed by the enemy. The Army of the Potomac had received a good many conscripts a short time before the 10th of October, and many of them were probably unequal to the strain put upon them.

On the 21st of October Meade moved toward Warrenton, and finding that Lee had recrossed the Rappahannock, took up a position covering the Warrenton pike and the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, the cavalry watching the fords of the river. Lee had destroyed the railroad from Bristoe Station to the Rappahannock River, a distance of

more than twenty miles, during our enforced delay at Centreville, and this had now to be rebuilt. Colonel McCallum, Superintendent of Military Railroads, had completed it as far as Warrenton Junction, one-half the distance, by November 2d.

Respecting the operation that has just been described, beginning on the 9th of October, it may be remarked that, so long as the enemy's movement and its object were undeveloped, the Army of the Potomac should have remained quiet, or have been concentrated at or near its central point, Culpeper Court House, except such parts of it as were necessary to make the enemy show his hand.

Arresting the movement toward Warrenton on the morning of the 12th of October was also erroneous, for if General Lee had moved to Culpeper Court House, and had been waiting there on the 12th, seeking to bring on a general engagement, the loss of time on the part of the Army of the Potomac, in moving toward him from the vicinity of Warrenton, would have delayed it only a day. Whereas, if the supposition that Lee was moving on the 12th to cross the upper fords of the Rappahannock, on the roads leading to Warrenton, were correct, as it actually proved to be, the return to Culpeper Court House would place the Army of the Potomac in such a position that it would lose the opportunity which it had sought. In fact, that movement back to Culpeper Court House obliged the Army of the Potomac finally to go to Centreville.

When the railroad was completed as far as War-



renton Junction, General Meade proposed to General Halleck, General-in-Chief, to make a rapid movement to the heights of Fredericksburg, and transfer his base of operations to the Fredericksburg Railroad, believing that General Lee had counted upon a long delay in any further operations on our part, from the necessity we were under of rebuilding the Alexandria Railroad, which involved the construction of several bridges. Indeed, information reached General Meade that General Lee's troops were engaged in building huts, as though they expected to winter between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan—a rumor subsequently confirmed. But General Meade's project was disapproved; and he was informed that, while he had full authority to make any tactical movement he chose, no change of base or line of communication would be approved.

By the 6th of November the Army of the Potomac was fully supplied, and on the morning of the 7th moved to cross the Rappahannock.

General Lee states that after the return of his army to the Rappahannock, it was disposed on both sides of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, General Ewell's corps on the right, General Hill's corps on the left, with the cavalry on each flank. The troops were placed as near the river as suitable ground for encampment could be found, and most of the artillery was sent to the nearest point in the rear, where the animals could be readily foraged.

It was deemed advantageous, he says, to main-

tain communication with the north bank, in order to threaten any flank movement the enemy might make above or below, and thus compel him to divide his forces, when, it was hoped, an opportunity would be presented to concentrate on one or the other part. For this purpose, he continues, a point was selected a short distance above the site of the railroad bridge, where the hills on each side of the river afforded protection to his ponton bridge, and increased the means of defence. Small earthworks, constructed on these hills by the Army of the Potomac to repel an attack from the south, were remodelled; those on the north bank being converted into a *tête de pont*, and a line of trenches extended from it along the crest, on the right and left, to the river-bank above and below. The works on the south side were also remodelled, and sunken batteries for additional guns constructed; and east of the railroad sunken batteries for two guns and rifle pits were arranged to command the east side of the railroad embankment on the north bank, under cover of which an attacking force might advance upon the *tête de pont*. He adds that these works were slight, but were deemed adequate to accomplish the object for which they were intended, and the ponton bridge was considered a sufficient means of communication, as, in the event of the troops north of the river being compelled to withdraw, their crossing could be covered by the artillery and infantry in the works on the south side. Four pieces of artillery were placed in the *tête de pont*, and eight other in the works on the

south bank. A dam was built across the river below the works, making a deep pool along their length. The defence of this position was intrusted to Lieutenant-General Ewell's corps; and the troops of Johnson's and Early's divisions guarded the works alternately, Rodes's division being stationed near Kelly's Ford. General Early's division relieved General Johnson's on the morning of the 6th of November, Hays's brigade taking charge of the works. General Early criticises the works on the north side of the river, which were, indeed, defective in the particulars he mentions, though he says the position was susceptible of being made very strong.

General Wright, temporarily commanding the Sixth Corps, when the works were assaulted by that corps, says that it was a strong natural position, fortified with much labor and care.

Lieutenant-General Ewell says: "I had paid frequent visits to the works at the *tête de pont*, where much labor had been bestowed." He also differed from General Early as to the necessity for more artillery in the *tête de pont*.

The general character and extent of the defences prepared at Rappahannock Station had been ascertained by General Meade, as well as of those at Kelly's Ford and elsewhere at the river crossings.

On the evening of the 6th of November Major-General Sedgwick was placed in command of the right column, composed of the Fifth and Sixth Corps, then in the vicinity of Warrenton, and directed to move at daylight of the 7th to Rap-

pahannock Station, drive the enemy from his positions on both banks of the river at that place, cross, and advance toward Brandy Station. In addition to the corps artillery, ten siege guns were assigned to the column.

Major-General French was placed in command of the First, Second, and Third Corps, then on the Warrenton Railroad, and in the vicinity of Warrenton Junction, and directed to move at daylight to Kelly's Ford, which is four or five miles below Rappahannock Station, effect a crossing up the river there, make a lodgment on the heights overlooking the crossing, and then, moving toward the enemy's rear at Rappahannock Station, assist the operations of the right column, under General Sedgwick, in dislodging the enemy at that point. That accomplished, he was to advance with the right column toward Brandy Station.

General Buford was directed to cross the Rappahannock at the upper fords and Hazel River at Rixeyville: General Kilpatrick to cross at the fords below Kelly's: Gregg's division to guard the trains at Bealeton.

The head of the right column, Sedgwick's, arrived within a mile and a half of the river at midday and formed two lines of battle, the left of the Sixth and the right of the Fifth Corps resting on the railroad. Skirmishers were pushed forward and the enemy's position and defences carefully examined.

The head of the left column, French's, arrived near Kelly's Ford at midday, unexpectedly to the

enemy on the south side of the river, who at once reinforced their rifle trenches, and resisted the crossing with artillery and infantry in their intrenchments. General French's batteries opened at half-past twelve, and a brigade effected a lodgment on the south side at half-past one, capturing many prisoners in the rifle trench. At two o'clock the leading division had crossed, the water being waist-deep, and the laying of the ponton bridges was begun. The greater part of the command crossed that night.

As the ground on the north bank commands that on the south bank at Kelly's Ford, only such preparation for resistance had been made there by the enemy as would allow the division holding the crossing time to get into a position selected in rear of the ford, with a view to contest the advance of any large force after crossing. General Rodes placed his division in this position, its left resting in woods on the river. As soon as General Lee learned what was transpiring, General Johnson's division was ordered to reinforce General Rodes, which it did about dark, forming on his right and extending to Mountain Run; for General Lee believed that the force in front of Rappahannock Station could be kept in check, and that he would be able to concentrate upon the other at Kelly's Ford.

The casualties of French's column, as taken from the official reports, were: seventy killed and wounded; of Rodes's division, five killed, fifty-nine wounded, and 295 missing; but General French

states that over forty of the enemy's dead were buried by one of his divisions.

When General Sedgwick displayed his force in front of the position at Rappahannock Station, General Lee ordered Hill's corps to be in readiness. Anderson's division was advanced to the river on the left of the railroad, and the artillery was ordered to the front. General Early had at once moved his division close up to the ponton bridge, and sent Hoke's brigade, under Colonel Godwin, to reinforce General Hays on the north bank. No other troops were sent over, as the two brigades were sufficient to man the works completely, and the nature of the position was such that an attack upon them could not be made with a front more extended than their own. The remainder of Early's division was placed in support, one regiment being stationed in the rifle-trenches on the east side of the railroad to sweep the approach along the railroad embankment on the north side; the attempt to place a gun in the pits prepared for the same purpose was abandoned, as the skirmish line of the Fifth Corps was already in possession of the river-bank opposite this point.

As soon as the enemy's position in front of Sedgwick's column had been sufficiently examined, the plan of attack was formed. The Fifth Corps was to get possession of the river-bank on the left, the Sixth Corps on the right, in order to establish their artillery on a range of high ground in front of the enemy's position and endeavor to drive him from his works by that fire.

The skirmishers of the Fifth Corps, under General Garrard, advanced about three o'clock, followed by the first division, under General Bartlett, and held the river bank from Norman's Ford close up to the redoubt, and kept up a fire upon its artillery. Two rifle batteries were established on the left by the Fifth Corps at effective range on the high ground from which the enemy's skirmishers had been driven, and opened upon the enemy. General Howe, commanding the Second Division of the Sixth Corps, drove the enemy's skirmishers from the high ground on the right, established batteries there, and opened upon the works. General Tyler, commanding artillery reserve, added six of the 20-pounders to them. But all this artillery fire, though kept up until dusk, did not silence the enemy's nor compel the force in the works to withdraw from them. During this time the lines of battle advanced nearer.

An assault just after dusk was now determined upon. The redoubts and rifle trench would cover the assaulting troops from the artillery fire on the south bank. Our artillery on the right and left were to keep up a hot fire until the assaulting troops, advancing in the sector between the two lines of artillery fire, reached the works. General David A. Russell, temporarily commanding the First Division, General Wright being in command of the Sixth Corps, led the assault in person, with parts of the Third and Second brigades of his division, commanded respectively by Colonel Ellmaker and Colonel Upton.

The assault was gallantly made, and its success was complete. The redoubts, with connecting rifle-pits, four pieces of artillery with their caissons and ammunition, 103 commissioned officers, 1,200 enlisted men, 1,225 stands of small arms, and seven battle-flags were captured. The 5th Wisconsin and the 6th Maine of the Third Brigade formed the storming party, and carried the works. The 49th and the 119th Pennsylvania of the Third Brigade supported them, and aided in holding the works after they were carried. The 5th Maine and the 121st New York, of Upton's brigade, the Second, carried the rifle-pits on our right most gallantly, and took a large number of prisoners. The 95th and the 96th Pennsylvania, of Upton's brigade, held the ponton bridge and guarded the prisoners. The 121st New York and the 20th Maine, of the Fifth Corps, on picket duty, joined in the assault, led by Captains Fish and Merrill, and captured one flag, eight officers and seventy-eight enlisted men.

General Sedgwick commended particularly the conduct of General Russell, Colonels Upton and Ellmaker, and the 5th Wisconsin and the 6th Maine, and called attention to the fact that the enemy's intrenchments were defended by a force numerically equal to the attacking force.

General Wright, temporarily commanding the Sixth Corps, in his report, says that this was the first case during the war of an intrenched position of importance being carried on the first assault.

General Russell in his report gives great credit to the officers and men of the Third and Second



brigades. He states that the number of the Third Brigade engaged was 1,549, and of the Second Brigade, 568. The casualties in his command were: In the Third Brigade, six officers and fifty-two enlisted men killed, twenty-three officers and 182 enlisted men wounded, and two enlisted men missing—total, Third Brigade, 263 officers and enlisted men killed and wounded. In the Second Brigade, two officers and nine enlisted men killed, three officers and forty-nine enlisted men wounded—total Second Brigade sixty-three officers and enlisted men killed and wounded; total for the division, 336 killed and wounded and two missing. The loss of the picket men of the Fifth Corps that joined in the assault was twenty-nine killed and wounded and four missing. General Early reported his casualties, including the artillery in the *tête de pont*, at six enlisted men killed, three officers and thirty-two enlisted men wounded, 119 officers and 1,512 enlisted men missing. Those reported killed, he states, were known to be killed, and the wounded were those who were brought off, some wounded while escaping. Among the missing were, doubtless, he adds, a number of killed and wounded. His total loss of killed, wounded and missing was, therefore, 1,672 officers and enlisted men. He says that nearly 300 of Hays's men present at the action made their escape, and between 100 and 150 of Hoke's. Some of these managed to escape in the darkness of the night after they were captured. These, added to the number of enlisted men killed, wounded, and missing, make the number present in the works 1,950.

General Russell states that the number of his troops engaged—that is, the number that captured the works and held them—was 2,117. His report is a brief, clear statement. He was a man of high character, an educated soldier, careful and exact in his statements.

The assault was a complete surprise, and its success perfect, the whole affair being the work of only a few minutes.

General Early was on one of the hills on the south side of the river watching, with General Lee, until dark, what was going on. When the artillery fire ceased they had noted musketry fire from and in front of the rifle-trenches, but could not hear it because of a strong southerly wind blowing; and General Lee left the hill with the remark that Sedgwick's movement was, in his opinion, a feint, and that it was too late for anything serious that night. General Early confesses that he felt considerable anxiety for the result of a night attack, if his opponent should have the enterprise to make it, yet the confident opinion of his Commanding General relieved his fears. Presently, however, one of his staff officers, who had been sent across the river to General Hays and Colonel Godwin with messages, returned after seeing those officers, and informed General Early that when he left General Hays the enemy were advancing against him; that he had then gone to Colonel Godwin, holding the rifle-trenches on their left, and that in returning across the bridge he had met some of Hays's men, who told him that Hays had been driven from the

trenches. This General Early did not credit, but at once ordered Pegram's brigade to the bridge, and the artillery to be ready; and then, going to the bridge, he found that the greater part of Hays's brigade had been captured, General Hays escaping by his horse taking fright after he had been made a prisoner. He also learned that Hoke's brigade, under Colonel Godwin, had been cut off, and that two regiments of Upton's brigade were in possession of the north end of the bridge. Pegram's brigade was so disposed as to resist a crossing of the bridge; Gordon's brigade was ordered up, and a message sent to General Lee. General Early found, however, that he could do nothing to retrieve the disaster, and the ponton bridge was set on fire, and so far burned before his troops were drawn off as to prevent all crossing.\*

Upon losing this position, General Lee abandoned the design of attacking the force that had crossed at Kelly's Ford, and fell back during the night to Mountain Run. That position, however, was not regarded by him as favorable, and he withdrew during the night of the 8th to his former position south of the Rapidan.

A heavy fog on the morning of the 8th prevented General Sedgwick from ascertaining whether the enemy had evacuated the south bank, and the column at Kelly's Ford was moved up to the railroad to secure the crossing at Rappahannock Station; the Fifth Corps moved at 4 A. M. to Kelly's Ford, and crossed there. By the time the fog cleared

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\* See General Early's Report.

Sedgwick had established a ponton bridge, and the army moved in pursuit to Brandy Station, the cavalry on the right proceeding to Culpeper Court House and that on the left through Paoli Mills, on Mountain Run, toward Stevensburg; Lee having recrossed the Rapidan.

A position was taken up by Meade from Kelly's Ford through Brandy Station to Wellford's Ford on Hazel River, and the rebuilding of the Orange Railroad to the Rappahannock River was resumed.\*

\* On the 9th of November General Meade issued the following general order to his army:

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
*November 9, 1863.*

GENERAL ORDERS }  
No. 101. }

The Commanding General congratulates the army on the recent successful passage of the Rappahannock in the face of the enemy, compelling him to withdraw to his intrenchments behind the Rapidan.

To Major-General Sedgwick, and the officers and men of the Fifth and Sixth Corps participating in the attack, particularly to the storming party under Brigadier-General Russell, his thanks are due for the gallantry displayed in the assault on the enemy's intrenched position at Rappahannock Station, resulting in the capture of four guns, two thousand small arms, eight battle flags, one bridge train, and sixteen hundred prisoners.

To Major-General French, and the officers and men of the Third Corps engaged, particularly to the leading column commanded by Colonel De Trobriand, his thanks are due for the gallantry displayed in the crossing at Kelly's Ford, and seizure of the enemy's intrenchments, and the capture of over four hundred prisoners.

The Commanding General takes great pleasure in announcing to the army that the President has expressed his satisfaction with its recent operations.

By command of

MAJOR-GENERAL MEADE.

S. WILLIAMS,

*Asst. Adjt.-Gen.*

### CHAPTER III.

General Meade Crosses the Rapidan, expecting to surprise General Lee, and encounter his Forces in detail—The plan is frustrated by the failure of the Third Corps to unite with the Second and Sixth Corps on the morning of the second day at Robertson's Tavern—Meade Advances to Mine Run, makes dispositions to attack Lee ; but finding him too strongly posted and intrenched, withdraws to his former position on the Rapidan.

AS soon as the railroad was completed to the Rappahannock River, and the army supplied, arrangements were made for an advance. The enemy occupied his intrenchments along the Rapidan from Barnett's Ford, about five miles above the railroad crossing of the Rapidan, down to Morton's Ford, a total distance of eighteen or twenty miles. The fords below his intrenchments as far as Ely's Ford (ten miles below Morton's), and above them as far as Liberty Mills (five miles above Barnett's) were watched by his cavalry, the latter fords having been intrenched after Buford's reconnoissance in September. To protect his right flank, General Lee had constructed an intrenched line from a point on the river between Raccoon Ford and Morton's Ford to the vicinity of Bartlett's Mill on Mine Run. Bartlett's Mill is on the road from Raccoon Ford to Robertson's Tavern, and between four and five miles distant from each. Robertson's Tavern, sometimes called Locust Grove, is on the

turnpike from Fredericksburg to Orange Court House, and about sixteen miles from the latter place.

Ewell's corps of three divisions, 15,650 enlisted men of infantry present for duty, held the intrenchments from near Bartlett's Mill to Robertson's Ford; and Hill's corps of three divisions, 17,500 enlisted men of infantry present for duty, held from Robertson's Ford up to Barnett's Ford, each corps holding about nine miles of the river. An attack of these intrenchments in front, when well manned, had long been deemed impracticable. Lee's left flank was at least twice as far from the Army of the Potomac as his right flank. After examination of the subject, General Meade decided by a prompt movement to cross the lower fords nearest to General Lee's right in three columns, and, concentrating two of the columns at Robertson's Tavern, advance rapidly with the whole army by the turnpike and the plank-road toward Orange Court House; expecting to fall upon Ewell's corps before Hill's could unite with it, and before Lee could take position upon ground which he might have already selected and prepared. The plan promised brilliant success; to insure it required prompt, vigorous action, and intelligent compliance with the programme on the part of corps and other subordinate commanders. In accordance with this plan, orders were issued on the 23d of November for the movement on the 24th; but a heavy rain-storm set in that day, and the movement was postponed to the morning of the 26th.

When the plan and orders were prepared, the corps commanders were invited to headquarters, where full explanations of the project were given, and copies of maps or sketches, with the routes of the different corps marked on them, were distributed with verbal descriptions and explanations. The Third and Sixth Corps, the Third Corps leading, were to cross at Jacob's Ford, about four miles below the right of Lee's intrenchments, and move to Robertson's Tavern, seven or eight miles distant, by wood-roads, the existence and character of which had been ascertained, by careful inquiry, with sufficient accuracy to be used in such an operation, though not with the detail of an actual reconnoissance. The names of the occupants of the few houses to be met on the road and its branches were given, and General French was cautioned to take the left hand road at a certain Morris's, half-way to the tavern, where the road forks, as the left hand road led to Robertson's Tavern, entering the Raccoon Ford road, half a mile from the tavern. It was expected that a part of the enemy would move from the river by the Raccoon Ford road, and if encountered there, might delay the concentration at Robertson's Tavern. The right-hand fork at Morris's led direct to the Raccoon Ford road, entering it about two miles from Bartlett's Mill, and about three from Robertson's Tavern. The country between Jacob's Ford and the turnpike was difficult to move and manœuvre in, being covered with a dense growth of timber and tangled undergrowth, with only a small clearing here and there.

The Second Corps was to cross at Germanna Ford, and move to Robertson's Tavern.

By the plan as originally prepared, the Sixth Corps was to follow the Second Corps, the route of that corps being on good wide roads, whereas that from Jacob's Ford was a narrow wood-road, through dense forest. But General Meade, anticipating an attempt on the part of the enemy to check the heads of columns until he (the enemy) could get into position, and looking for this attack first on his right flank, which was nearest the enemy, finally directed the Sixth Corps to follow the Third Corps.

The Fifth and First Corps, the latter leaving one of its divisions to guard the railroad as far as Manassas, were to cross at Culpeper Mine Ford, move to the Orange and Alexandria plank-road at Parker's store, and, if practicable, to advance on that road as far as New Hope Church, where a road comes in from Robertson's Tavern, about four miles off to the right.

Gregg's cavalry division was to cross at Ely's Ford and cover the left flank. Kilpatrick's division, Custer commanding, was to guard Morton's, Raccoon, and other fords; and Buford's division, General Merritt commanding, guarded the trains of the army assembled at Richardsville, excepting certain ammunition and ambulance trains, and medicine and headquarters spring wagons, which always accompanied the troops.

The movement began on the morning of the 26th of November, but the passage of the river was delay-



ed two hours by the non-arrival of the Third Corps, for it was necessary that the crossing of the several columns should be simultaneous; further loss of time at the river occurred, owing to the bridge equipage provided for Jacob's Ford and Germanna Ford being each deficient one ponton. The banks of the river on the enemy's side were over 100 feet high and very steep, requiring much labor to make them practicable for artillery and wagons. The artillery of the Third and Sixth Corps were obliged on that account to cross at Germanna Ford and join their corps by an almost impassable road along the river bank.

As a consequence of these delays, the heads of columns, instead of reaching the vicinity of Robertson's Tavern by the night of the 26th, had only advanced from two to four miles from the river.

Orders were issued for the columns to continue the movement the next day, as previously directed: the Second Corps to advance on the pike as far as Old Verdiersville, about six miles beyond Robertson's Tavern; the Third and Sixth Corps to close up on the Second; the Fifth Corps to move to New Verdiersville on the plank-road, about six miles beyond New Hope Church; and the First Corps to close up on the Fifth; Gregg's cavalry division to move on the plank-road in advance of the infantry.

Culpeper Mine Ford and Ely's Ford were watched on the 26th by General Rosser's brigade, of Hampton's cavalry division, and the passage of the Rapidan by the several columns of the Army

of the Potomac was duly reported to General Lee, whose headquarters were at Orange Court House.

But this was not the earliest intelligence he received of our movements; for in the morning, as soon as the fog cleared, large bodies of troops, with trains, were seen by the enemy from their signal stations and intrenchments, moving toward the lower fords of the Rapidan; and at a later hour intelligence was received by General Lee that our army had crossed in force at Ely's, Culpeper Mine, Germanna, and Jacob's fords. The country in that direction, General Lee says, was an unbroken forest, and it could not be discovered whether it was the design of General Meade to advance toward Richmond by Spottsylvania Court House, etc., or move up the Rapidan on his (Lee's) right flank. His army was therefore withdrawn from its lines during the night of the 26th, and put in motion, with the intention of falling upon our flank and rear if the first movement was attempted, and of giving battle if the second movement was essayed.

General Early, commanding the Second Corps (General Ewell being absent, sick), was directed to move by the old turnpike and Raccoon Ford roads to Locust Grove (Robertson's Tavern), General Hill to move down the plank-road, General Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry division was directed to take charge of the intrenchments on the Rapidan, and General Hampton's division to precede the advance of Hill, General Stuart accompanying it.

Ewell's corps had been posted in the intrenchments as follows: Johnson's division on the right, from the vicinity of Bartlett's Mill to Mountain Run; Rodes's division from Mountain Run to Raccoon Ford, and Early's division (General Hays commanding) from Raccoon Ford to Robertson's Ford. These divisions were ordered to move at daylight of the 27th to Locust Grove (Robertson's Tavern), Johnson by way of Bartlett's Mill, Rodes by a road west of Mine Run to Zoar Church, and then by one parallel to the pike, a mile from it; and Hays across to the pike at Old Verdierville, and then forward along the pike. Johnson was ordered to look out for his left, though it subsequently appeared that General Early was not aware that any part of the Army of the Potomac was advancing on the road from Jacob's Ford to Robertson's Tavern until Johnson's troops were fired into.

General Warren arrived at Robertson's Tavern about ten o'clock in the morning, where his leading division, General Hays commanding, encountered the leading division of General Early's corps, General Hays commanding, and forced back his skirmish line along the turnpike, while General Webb deployed to the right, and encountering Rodes's division, drove his skirmishers back along the Raccoon Ford road. In these encounters Lieutenant-Colonel Hesser, 72d Pennsylvania, was killed, and Lieutenant-Colonel Joslin, 15th Massachusetts, was wounded. This was about 11:30 A. M. From the prisoners taken it was ascertained that Early's and

Rodes's divisions were in front of the Second Corps.

General Early says that upon coming up with his command on the pike he learned that General Hays had met our infantry at Locust Grove, and that he found his division in position three-fourths of a mile from the Grove; that Rodes had come up at the same time as Hays, and had formed on his left across the road from Zoar Church and Bartlett's Mill to Locust Grove. The troops of the Army of the Potomac, he says, were in possession of the Grove in a fine position, in strong force, though they were much concealed in thick woods, so that he could not ascertain how they were posted. Then he ordered a heavy skirmish line from Rodes's division, but could effect nothing, our troops having greatly the advantage in position, and he concluded that he could not attack except under great disadvantages. General Rodes and General Hays had come to the same conclusion soon after reaching the vicinity of Locust Grove, and determined to wait for General Johnson's division to come up before feeling to ascertain where to attack with advantage. But between 11 and 12 o'clock the rear of Johnson's division, when two miles out from Bartlett's Mills, had been fired into by the Third Corps pickets, and General Johnson halted his division to meet the attack which this, very unexpectedly, threatened.\*

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\* The numerical strength of the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac was, according to the return of that army on the 30th

At 11 o'clock the Third Corps had not arrived at Robertson's Tavern, though it had to march only six or eight miles at most, nor had any communication been received from General French or from General Sedgwick.\* A brief dispatch was now, at 11 A.M., sent to General French as follows: "General Warren is at Robertson's Tavern. Considerable force of the enemy in his front. Move forward as promptly as possible, and send word to General Sedgwick;" and again at 11:15 this: "General Warren has met the enemy in strong force (two divisions) at Robertson's Tavern. Communicate this to General Sedgwick, who is to keep closed on you. If you cannot unite with General Warren by the route you are on, you must move through to him by the left. It is highly important you should unite with Warren at once."

Let us see what had become of the Third Corps. On the night of the 26th its leading division, Gen-

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November, 1863, 685 officers and 9,850 enlisted men of infantry present for duty equipped. The numerical strength of the three divisions of infantry of Ewell's corps present for duty equipped, according to the return of the Army of Northern Virginia of the 20th November, 1863, was : Early's, 404 officers and 4,297 enlisted men ; Rodes's, 527 officers and 6,562 enlisted men ; Johnson's, 505 officers and 4,790 enlisted men.

\* It was difficult to communicate with them at first when General Meade arrived near Robertson's Tavern, as the road through the forest leading to them could not be found, the only guide we had having been sent to General French. The first despatches from and to them were sent by way of the river bank and the Germanna road, a distance of twelve miles or more. Somewhat later a direct road was found by which the despatches were sent.

eral Prince commanding, halted at Roche's farm, about two miles from the river, where a road comes in from Morton's Ford. On the morning of the 27th, the division, after moving a mile, was halted at the forks of the road at Morris's, and the two branches were examined. General Prince concluded the left-hand fork was the one to follow, as it really was. General French was of the contrary opinion, and the corps remained halted. Had the column moved promptly by either road, the Third Corps, followed closely by the Sixth, would have arrived at Robertson's Tavern at the same hour as the Second Corps, and these three corps, consisting of 2,344 officers and 37,819 enlisted men of infantry, with an ample supply of artillery, would have encountered Ewell's corps, consisting of 1,321 officers and 15,650 enlisted men, and at a time when Hill was too far off to be available, and when the Fifth and First Corps were advancing on the plank road to meet him.

At half-past eleven a despatch was at last received from General French, by way of the Germanna road, dated 9:20 A.M., and saying: "The head of my column is near the plank road and waiting for General Warren." From the bearer of this despatch it was ascertained that when he left General French the head of his column was only three miles from Jacob's Ford, and that the Sixth Corps had not been able to move at all. The reply to General French was: "Your despatch of 9h. 20m. is received. What are you waiting for? No orders have been sent you to wait for General War-

ren anywhere, upon your route. Robertson's Tavern is the point where he takes precedence, and he is there now engaged with the enemy, who are in strong force. He is waiting for you. The Commanding General directs that you move forward as rapidly as possible to Robertson's Tavern, where your corps is wanted."

At a quarter to two P.M., the following dispatch, dated a quarter to twelve A.M., was received from General French, who was still at Morris's: "General Prince reports from Captain Ford, commanding cavalry (100 men), that the enemy are throwing out a large force of infantry upon my right flank upon the Raccoon Ford road. I am making dispositions accordingly." The reply to him was: "Your dispatch of a quarter to twelve A.M. is received. The Major-General Commanding directs that you attack the enemy in your front immediately, throwing your left forward so as to connect with General Warren at Robertson's Tavern. The object of the attack is to form a junction with General Warren, which must be effected immediately." This order was delivered to General French at half-past two o'clock. General French says, in his report of this affair, 'that up to the time of receiving this order his efforts had been directed to ascertain the practicability of forcing the head of his column through the opposition in its front, but that he now, at half-past two, directed his order of battle, causing General Carr's division to extend to the left of General Prince's, which was already halted and deployed; and General Birney's

division to support the two; that while Carr's division was taking position, the enemy were found forming line of battle to the left, and that Prince and Carr were soon closely engaged; that before sundown General Birney's division relieved General Carr's, as it was out of ammunition.

The force encountered was Johnson's division of Ewell's corps.

The contest of Prince's and Carr's divisions with Johnson's was sharp, the brunt of it at first falling upon Carr's, which at one time, finding the right of the enemy extending around its left flank, fell back, Prince's division falling back with it into an open field, until a battery of artillery posted on the right was uncovered and its fire opened; then the whole line advanced again and forced the enemy back. Again the enemy attacked, and again was repulsed. Toward evening, at the request of General Johnson, General Rodes sent Doles's brigade to his support.

When the fire became hot, General Sedgwick sent forward two divisions of his corps to French's support, but they took no part in the action.

With three times the force of Johnson, and having besides the whole of the Sixth Corps, equal in number to his own, near at hand, General French remained on the defensive.

The casualties of the Third Corps, according to the report of General French, were thirty-six officers and 845 enlisted men killed and wounded—making a total of 881 killed and wounded, with seventy-one officers and enlisted men missing, being a total loss of 952.



Johnson's division lost sixty-nine officers and enlisted men killed, and 429 men wounded, making a total loss of 498. Among them were Colonel Walton, killed, and Colonel Colston, mortally wounded, while leading their commands, General Lee says, with conspicuous gallantry.

To return to General Warren. General Meade did not deem it prudent for him to attack Early's two divisions, as the two wings of his army were several miles distant, and the probability of the arrival of the Third and Sixth Corps at all during the day became less and less at each communication from General French. The Fifth and First Corps were, however, in the required positions on the left, and Generals Sykes and Newton were advised of the failure of the right column to arrive, and of the probability of its not arriving during the day. General Sykes was directed not to advance beyond New Hope Church, and General Newton, who was at Parker's Store, was directed to hold himself ready to move to Robertson's Tavern at any moment. Later, General Newton was ordered to Robertson's Tavern, where he arrived at dusk.

The enemy in front of Warren at length became so active and enterprising that General Warren made a feint of a general attack, Carroll's brigade driving the enemy down the turnpike and capturing a number of prisoners from Gordon's brigade of Early's division.

During the afternoon General Sedgwick was ordered to move to Robertson's Tavern, leaving

the Third Corps, and during the night the Third Corps was ordered to follow the Sixth.

Let us now turn to General Hill, who, on the morning of the 27th, moved toward Fredericksburg by the plank-road, reaching Mine Run between two and three o'clock, when he was informed that our troops were advancing upon the plank-road, driving back the cavalry. His leading division, Heth's, was hurried up, and about a mile from New Hope Church came up with the cavalry at four o'clock, when sharp skirmishing took place. At this time General Hill received an order to send a division to support General Early, and Anderson's division moved to him. Communication between the two parts of their army was established, but on consultation with General Lee it was found advisable for Hill not to advance.

Gregg crossed at Ely's Ford on the 26th, and halted for the night near the head-waters of the Po. On the 27th he moved past Parker's Store and along the plank-road to New Hope Church, where he encountered the enemy's cavalry, which were forced back a mile, and some prisoners captured from them. General Sykes reached Parker's Store on the 27th at 9 A.M., and with Gregg in his front, driving back the enemy's cavalry, had come up to New Hope Church, where the road comes in from Robertson's Tavern, at three o'clock. Here the enemy's infantry were supporting their cavalry, but upon General Sykes's arrival they became quiet. Sykes was now directed by General Meade not to advance until further orders, and during the

night he was ordered to be at Robertson's Tavern by daylight, as there were indications that Lee would concentrate by morning in front of that place.

It is to be remarked on the occurrences of this day that the Third Corps remained substantially in the vicinity of Morris's all day, and on the defensive, and not only prevented offensive operations by the Second Corps, but completely neutralized the Sixth Corps also; in fact paralyzed the whole army, so far as concerned its carrying out the plan of operations successfully.

At daylight of the 28th the First, Second, and Sixth Corps moved forward along the pike, in line of battle, supported by the Third and Fifth Corps, but found only the pickets of the enemy, General Lee having fallen back during the night. Meade, advancing, found that Lee had taken up a strong position on the west side of Mine Run, which he had intrenched.

A heavy rain set in early in the day, making it difficult to examine the enemy's lines, and it was night by the time our troops were in position on the east bank of Mine Run. The examination made showed the enemy's position to be too strong to attack in front. The ravine of the run was difficult of passage, and the ground west of it was cleared for more than a thousand yards, rising very gradually over a hundred feet, with a space well up the ascent flanked by heavy belts of timber on both sides. The summit was crowned with intrenchments for infantry and artillery, strengthened by abatis.

It was therefore determined, on the evening of the 28th, that General Warren should withdraw from the front before morning, and, having Terry's division of the Sixth Corps and 300 cavalry added to his force, move on the enemy's right flank on the 29th, so as to threaten it, and endeavor to discover a vulnerable point of attack, and if necessary to continue the movement, threatening to turn his right. The night of the 28th was dark and stormy.

The others corps commanders were directed to examine critically the position of the enemy in their front during the 29th, and ascertain the practicability of an assault. Toward evening General Wright, commanding the First Division, Sixth Corps, reported to General Meade that he had discovered a point on the enemy's extreme left where an assault was practicable with inconsiderable loss. At the same time Captain Michler, of the Engineers, reported that an assault in front of the Third Corps, though hazardous, was not impracticable; and Major Ludlow, A. D. C. to General Meade, who had just returned from General Warren, stated that he (General Warren) had passed the head of Mine Run on the plank and Catharpin roads, and that the conditions there were favorable to an attack.

Generals Newton and Sykes, commanders of the First and Fifth Corps, reported an attack from their front impracticable.

Upon this information General Meade decided to attack at three points: one on the enemy's extreme left, with the Fifth and Sixth Corps; one on his centre, with the First and Third corps, and one on the

enemy's right, with the force under General Warren. General Warren, reporting at headquarters in person in the evening, was informed of these dispositions; and as General French, who also reported at headquarters in person, deemed his attack impracticable, two divisions of the Third Corps were ordered over to General Warren, and the intended attack in the centre was dispensed with, the First Corps and the remaining division of the Third Corps being directed to make demonstrations in their front and unite in the attack if it proved successful on either flank. In the meantime the enemy had been constantly employed in strengthening their intrenchments, so that by the night of the 29th their position was, in their own judgment, strongly fortified. The presence of General Warren near their right caused them, during the night of the 29th, to extend and further intrench it, and place their reserve troops in that quarter in line. Their right was on the Catharpin road at Antioch Church, their left thrown back near Zoar Church—Hill's corps on their right, Ewell's on their left.

During the night the Fifth and Sixth Corps moved silently to their point of attack, unobserved by the enemy, and massed so as to be concealed from their view in the day; the two divisions of the Third Corps joined General Warren, and the night was spent in preparations for the attack on the morning of the 30th. General Warren was to assault at eight o'clock, and, at the special request of General Sedgwick, the artillery of the centre and right were to open at that hour, and continue their fire until nine

o'clock, when General Sedgwick was to assault with the Fifth and Sixth Corps. Punctually at eight o'clock the artillery opened, replied to at once with several batteries by the enemy; but at ten minutes before nine o'clock Captain Roebling, of General Warren's staff, arrived, bringing a despatch from him informing General Meade that he had suspended his attack until further orders, as he had found the enemy's works so formidable that he could not succeed: during the night their line had been reinforced with all the infantry and artillery it could hold, and their intrenchments completed with abatis. It would take Warren's troops eight minutes to move in double-quick up to the enemy's works, exposed to musketry and artillery fire. The attack of General Sedgwick was at once suspended, as there were no means of supporting him if repulsed, or of reinforcing him if successful. The plan of the attack was the only one that could be used; but it was necessarily vicious, the two wings, containing more than three-fourths of the infantry, being five miles apart, with less than a fourth of the infantry in the intermediate space, though the artillery of the Third, First, and Fifth Corps was left in position there.

General Meade immediately proceeded to General Warren's column, hoping to arrange some plan by which the attack might take place later in the day, but found it impracticable. The troops of the Third and Sixth Corps, with General Warren, were at once ordered back to their corps, and as soon as night set in the Fifth and Sixth Corps were returned to their former positions on and to the right

of the turnpike, they having been motionless in their concealed positions of attack from the time of reaching it the night before.

General Sedgwick had prepared his command for prompt attack at 9 A. M., but received the order suspending it a few minutes before the hour fixed upon.

The enemy, perceiving the intention to attack his left, proceeded to make the alterations in his line and the character of his defences necessary to insure his safety there.

When the artillery fire opened in the morning, the skirmishers of the First and Third Corps advanced across Mine Run, the enemy's skirmishers falling back before them. At nightfall they were withdrawn.

As the enemy's intrenchments had been extended to Bartlett's Mill, and now connected with those of the Rapidan, the only further operation that could be undertaken by the Army of the Potomac was a movement on the right flank of the enemy, abandoning the turnpike and plank roads. But this required the trains of the army, which had been left at Richardsville, on the north bank of the Rapidan, to be brought across the river and moved to our protected flank; but winter, apparently, had already set in, such severe cold following the rain-storm of the 28th that some of the pickets were frozen to death; and at any moment a similar rain-storm might render the country roads, which we should be obliged to use in such an operation, impracticable for our trains and artillery; the whole

country at such times becoming impassable except on turnpikes and plank roads.

Acknowledging the movement to have been a failure, General Meade determined to withdraw to his former position north of the Rapidan; which was accomplished on the night of the 1st of December, without the knowledge of the enemy.

On the night of the 1st of December, General Lee directed General Hill to concentrate Anderson's and Wilcox's divisions on his right, with a view to moving them on our left on the morning of the 2d. But at daylight it was discovered that we had withdrawn; Hill followed us from Parker's store, picking up some 200 stragglers, when he learnt that we had recrossed the Rapidan. Early followed with two divisions—Johnson's being sent to Morton's Ford—one as far as the Wilderness Tavern, the other as far as Spottswood on the Germana plank road, when he learnt we had recrossed the Rapidan. He picked up some 300 stragglers.

But for the restrictions imposed on General Meade from Washington, he would have fallen back toward Fredericksburg, taking up a position in front of that town. Had he done so, the first battle with Lee, in May, 1864, would not have been fought in the Wilderness, but in a more open country.

During the operation which has just been recounted, Gregg's cavalry division encountered the enemy's cavalry successfully on the plank-road, near New Hope Church, on the 27th of November, and Stuart, with Hampton's division, at Parker's



Store on the 29th; Stuart having been directed to gain our rear and ascertain what we were doing. Learning toward evening that Hill's right was threatened and a battle imminent, Stuart fell back to Antioch Church, and on the 30th posted his artillery so as to enfilade our line if it advanced. On the 30th Gregg covered our rear on the left, and with his division, with one brigade of the First Cavalry Division and two brigades of the Third Corps, covered the rear of the army in recrossing at Germanna, Culpeper Mine, and Ely's fords.

On the 26th of November, Custer, commanding Kilpatrick's Third Cavalry division, made demonstrations at Morton's Ford and at three other points above. On the morning of the 27th, the enemy having withdrawn his infantry from the Rapidan, General Custer crossed at Morton's Ford and pursued some of the enemy's cavalry, capturing a few prisoners. He continued to watch the fords of the Rapidan until the 3d of December, when he returned to Stevensburg.

General Rosser, of Hampton's cavalry division, picketing Ely's and Culpeper Mine fords on the 26th of November, moved back to Todd's Tavern, as our troops advanced. There he learnt the next morning that there was a train of ordnance stores belonging to the Fifth and First Corps at Ely's Ford. Waiting until Gregg's division had passed, he moved by the Brock road to the Germanna plank-road, attacked the train, destroyed, according to his report, thirty-five or forty wagons, carried off eight of them with seven ambulances and 280 mules,

and ninety-five prisoners (wagoners), but was driven off by the infantry.

The casualties on both sides during these operations, excepting those already mentioned, were small.

According to the best information that General Meade was able to obtain at the time concerning the numerical strength of the Army of Northern Virginia during the operations of October and November, it was but little less than that of the Army of the Potomac; but according to the official returns of the Confederate Armies, now in the War Department, it is found to have been much less.

It will be observed that, although General Lee's movement in October was made to bring on an engagement with the Army of the Potomac, yet when that army advanced toward him, as at the crossing of the Rappahannock, and at the crossing of the Rapidan, he selected a position, intrenched it, and awaited attack. It will be found, that in general he pursued a similar course in the operations of the following year, and in view of his inferior numbers, it must be admitted to have been judicious.

## CHAPTER IV.

The Army of the Potomac makes a Démonstration against Lee on the Rapidan to aid General Butler's proposed Attack on Richmond, but only spoils its own chance for surprising Lee in his Winter Quarters--Kilpatrick's attempt to capture Richmond, and release the prisoners of Libby and other Military Prisons.

GENERAL MEADE was now directed from Washington to establish the Army of the Potomac for the winter between the Rapidan and the Rappahannock, or north of the Rappahannock, as he might prefer, though it was intimated to him that it was thought the latter position was preferable to the former from its being nearer to the Washington depots of supply. General Meade, however, concluded to remain between the two rivers, as an opportunity might occur during the winter for some enterprise against the enemy that would serve to retrieve the failure of the recent operation. The manner in which the Army of Northern Virginia was disposed for the winter gave promise of this. A small part of its force held the intrenchments along the Rapidan, the bulk of the army being encamped or hutted several miles from the river on ground better adapted to the comfort and health of the troops. The Army of the Potomac, too, had apparently counted on a quiet winter, and large numbers of the families and friends of the officers

were allowed to visit them—a fact that was pretty certain to be made known to the enemy. All the conditions for a successful enterprise against the enemy, so far as they related to the position and sense of security of Lee's army, now existed. There was one other condition that might at any time be looked for, which was essential to success—the state of the weather and of the roads. There sometimes occurred in the winter several successive days of weather in which the army might be moved secretly and rapidly to the Rapidan, and that condition was waited for, when on the 3d of February, General Sedgwick, commanding the army in the absence of General Meade, received a telegram from General B. F. Butler, at Old Point Comfort, asking him to make a movement against Lee on Saturday the 6th instant, to aid an operation he (General Butler) would begin that day. General Halleck requested General Sedgwick to give such co-operation as he could, and General Sedgwick consented to making a vigorous demonstration in his front, a flank movement being impracticable in the condition of the roads and the state of the weather then existing, though, as he informed General Halleck, the demonstration might spoil the chances for the future.

Accordingly, on the evening of the 5th General Kilpatrick was ordered to make a demonstration on the morning of the 6th, at the Culpeper Mine Ford; General Merritt at Barnett's Ford; General Warren, with the Second Corps, with three batteries and three days' rations, at Morton's Ford; and General Newton, with the First Corps, taking three

batteries, at Raccoon Ford. The weather was threatening, and a rain-storm set in at night, continuing next day and night. An attempt to get the pontoons to Morton's Ford proved abortive, as did the attempt to get forward some of the artillery.

The enemy at Morton's Ford was surprised. Through some misapprehension of the instructions, General Caldwell, in the absence of General Warren, who was too unwell to be on the ground until late in the day, sent a small part of his force across the river, which captured the enemy's outposts and advanced toward the works, the number of the enemy in which was evidently small. Later in the day the whole of Hays's division of the Second Corps crossed the river, and a sharp contest took place toward sunset, the enemy having been by that time largely reinforced by the troops in the rear. General Webb's division now crossed to the support of Hays, who was brought back at dark, and Webb's division later in the night. The casualties in Hays's division were over 200 officers and enlisted men killed and wounded. The demonstrations at the other points were made, and all were continued during the 7th, Merritt having some fighting at Barnett's Ford.

Under the orders of General Butler, General Wistar, with 4,000 infantry and 2,200 cavalry, left Williamsburg on Saturday morning, the 6th of February, to make a dash on Richmond and release the military prisoners there. He arrived at Bottom Bridge on the Chickahominy, about thirteen miles from Richmond, in the morning of the 7th, and

found the enemy there in force, and constantly receiving reinforcements by railroad. The bridge had been taken up and the ford obstructed. As it was evident that the enemy had been made aware of the designs against Richmond—for there had been no Confederate troops at Bottom Bridge for two months previous—and had made dispositions to frustrate them, General Wistar withdrew.

It appeared that one of General Butler's enlisted men in confinement had escaped by the negligence of a sentinel, deserted to the enemy, and informed them of the intended movement.

The demonstration at Morton's Ford proved that, had the roads and weather been suitable for moving the army, a well-arranged plan for surprising them at that ford and throwing a large force quickly over the river would have been successful, their intrenchments taken at this point and at Raccoon Ford, would have been turned, and their army encountered in detail.

When General Meade was in Washington about the middle of February, the Secretary of War informed him that the President wished his amnesty proclamation distributed within the enemy's lines, and had sent for General Kilpatrick to confer with him as to the practicability of accomplishing the object in connection with a cavalry expedition. Upon the return of General Meade to the army he called on General Kilpatrick for such a project, and received in reply a report from him, stating the force he would require, the routes his command should take, the time it would occupy, what he

proposed to effect on the way to Richmond, and the points at which he, with the main force, and Colonel Dahlgren, with a detachment of 500 men, would enter the city. General Pleasonton, commanding the cavalry, considered the scheme impracticable under the circumstances then existing. General Meade learnt, however, that Richmond had for its land defence only some local troops, with field artillery, and a small cavalry force, Pickett's division and other of Lee's troops being in North Carolina and south of James River; that Hampton's Cavalry Division, 1,500 strong, was in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, and on the railroad from that town to Richmond; and under these circumstances thought it possible by a secret, rapid, and bold movement, conducted with judgment, to take Richmond and release our prisoners before reinforcements from Lee's troops or from any quarter could reach there.

The release of the prisoners was the chief object of the expedition, which was sanctioned by the Secretary of War and the President, and every effort was made by General Meade to insure its success.

Accordingly, General Kilpatrick, with a force of 4,000 officers and enlisted men of cavalry and a battery of horse-artillery, was ordered by General Meade to cross the Rapidan at the lower fords early in the night of the 28th of February, and move with the utmost expedition by the shortest route past the enemy's right flank to Richmond; endeavor to enter that city, liberate our prisoners, and, if suc-

cessful, conduct them within our lines at Williamsburg. General Kilpatrick was informed that, in order to create a diversion in his favor, a powerful expedition had been organized and would be in full movement on the 28th instant, to operate toward the left flank of the enemy in the direction of Charlottesville as far as the railroad bridge across the Rivanna River near that town; that this operation would be followed up by other movements of troops, and that it was expected in this way so to distract the attention of the enemy that every chance for the success of the expedition would be secured that it was practicable for him to provide for. Arrangements were also made by Colonel Sharpe, of the Secret Service Department, for cutting all the telegraph lines leading from General Lee's forces to Richmond as soon as the expedition set out.

General Sedgwick, with the Sixth Corps, was directed to move on the 27th so as to reach Madison Court House on the evening of the 28th; General Custer with his cavalry division to pass the Sixth Corps at that point, and proceed as far as the railroad bridge over the Rivanna, near Charlottesville, destroy the bridge if practicable, and cut the telegraph from Richmond to Lynchburg. General Birney, with his division of the Third Corps, was to follow General Sedgwick on the 28th as far as James City; and the whole army was held in readiness to move at short notice. These movements on Lee's left were continued until Wednesday, the 2d of March, when the troops began to return, as



it was expected that General Kilpatrick would reach Richmond Tuesday morning, March 1st.

This demonstration on Lee's left was begun with all the secrecy of a genuine operation, its objects not having been communicated even to General Sedgwick, who commanded the troops engaged in it. Its chief object was accomplished.

General Kilpatrick crossed the Rapidan at Ely's Ford early Sunday night, the 28th of February, captured the enemy's picket there without firing a shot, and moved rapidly by way of Spottsylvania Court House, Ground Squirrel bridge over the South Anna, and the Brook pike which enters Richmond on the north side, doing such injury as he could, without any material delay, to the Central and Fredericksburg railroads where he crossed them. At 10 o'clock in the morning of Tuesday, March 1st, after a march of seventy or eighty miles, he was on the Brook pike five miles from Richmond, where he learned that his approach to the city was entirely unknown there, and that only a small force of infantry occupied the intrenchments on that road. Moving forward to the interior line of defensive works, encountering on his way only pickets and their supports, he found infantry and artillery in them. Some skirmishing ensued with trifling loss on both sides. General Kilpatrick says it was now about 1 o'clock, and he was about to attack, when he saw the enemy receive reinforcements of infantry and artillery; and feeling confident that Dahlgren had failed to cross the river, and that his own attempt would be a "bloody failure," he with-

drew his command. That night he encamped near Atlee Station, on the Central Railroad, north of the Chickahominy. But General Kilpatrick was mistaken; the only force opposed to him was 500 men with six field-guns, and had he made a determined charge, he would have taken Richmond and accomplished the objects of the expedition.

Considering the circumstances under which he was before Richmond, it was incumbent upon him to have dismounted his command, and to have led it in person in an assault upon the intrenchments.

It appears that Colonel Bradley Johnson, who was at or near Guinea Station on the Fredericksburg Railroad, succeeded in telegraphing to Richmond on the 29th of February, before our troops cut the wires, that a strong force of our cavalry was on a raid, and, although no apprehension for the safety of Richmond was felt in that city, yet, as a matter of precaution, Colonel Stevens, of the Engineers, moved such force as he had of infantry and field artillery to the line of fortifications on the Brook road, and on the road to Meadow Bridge (over the Chickahominy) early Tuesday morning, the 1st of March. Colonel Stevens states that he had 500 men and six field-guns on the Brook road, but says nothing of receiving or expecting any addition to his force on either road; his loss was trifling. There was no encounter on the Meadow Bridge road.

Colonel Bradley Johnson followed Kilpatrick from Beaver Dam Station to the vicinity of Richmond, where he joined General Hampton, who had

hastily got his cavalry together, and, moving toward Richmond, attacked General Kilpatrick Tuesday night, near Atlee's Station, and captured the camp of one of his brigades; then followed him down the peninsula, General Kilpatrick arriving at Williamsburg on Wednesday night.

Captain Mitchell, with 300 of Colonel Dahlgren's party, joined Kilpatrick near Tunstall's Station, on the York River Railroad; Colonel Dahlgren, with the remainder of his force, having become separated from him during Tuesday night.

Colonel Dahlgren, with his command, left General Kilpatrick's route Sunday night, the 28th of February, at or near Spottsylvania Court House, sent a detachment to cut the telegraph and destroy the railroad at Guinea Station, moved across the Virginia Central Railroad near Frederickshall, and thence to James River, near Goochland Court House, where, in the vicinity of the plantation of Mr. Seddon, the Confederate Secretary of War, or at some lower ford, he expected to cross James River and enter Richmond from the south side, after releasing the prisoners at Belle Isle; and then, uniting with General Kilpatrick at 10 o'clock Tuesday morning, aid in the release of our prisoners confined in the city prisons.

Colonel Dahlgren, finding no practicable fords, was unable to cross James River, and moved down its north bank to Richmond, doing such damage to the James River and Kanawha Canal as the brief time at his disposal admitted, and destroying such military supplies as he found. Approaching the

city late in the afternoon, he encountered some force of infantry, with which his command had sharp skirmishing; when, night coming on, and no word having been received from Kilpatrick, whose guns had been heard early in the afternoon, he withdrew, believing that Kilpatrick had failed to enter the city. Taking the lead, he became separated in the night from the larger part of his command under Captain Mitchell, crossed the Pamunkey at Hanover town and the Mattapony at Eylett's, apparently on his way to Gloucester, opposite Yorktown; but on Wednesday night fell into an ambush about three miles from King and Queen Court House, where he was killed. The ambush was formed chiefly through the efforts of Captain Fox and Lieutenant Pollard, who collected a number of men on furlough from Lee's army, the Home Guard of King and Queen County, and a squadron commanded by Captain Magruder. Many of the men with Dahlgren were killed and wounded, and the greater part of the remainder captured.\*

Not long after his return to the Army of the Potomac from this expedition, General Kilpatrick was relieved from duty with that army.

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\* For the correspondence that took place respecting certain papers said to have been found on the person of Colonel Dahlgren (which correspondence was duly transmitted to the Secretary of War), see Appendix.

Among the instructions contained in the second paper are the following :

“The bridges once secured and the prisoners loose and over the river, the bridges will be secured and the city destroyed. The men must keep together and well in hand, and once in the city it must be destroyed and Jeff Davis and Cabinet killed. Pioneers will go along with combustible material.”

In obedience to my instructions, I beg leave respectfully to inquire whether the designs and instructions of Colonel Dahlgren, as set forth in these papers, particularly those contained in the above extracts, were authorized by the United States Government, or by his superior officer, and also whether they have the sanction and approval of those authorities.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

R. E. LEE,

*General.*

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

*April 17, 1864.*

GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE,

*Commanding Army Northern Virginia.*

GENERAL: I received on the 15th inst., per flag of truce, your communication of the 1st instant, transmitting photographic copies of two documents, alleged to have been found on the body of Colonel U. Dahlgren, and inquiring “whether the designs and instructions of Colonel Dahlgren, as set forth in these papers, particularly those contained in the above extracts, were authorized by the United States Government or by his superior officers; and also whether they have the sanction and approval of these authorities.”

In reply, I have to state that neither the United States Government, myself, nor General Kilpatrick authorized, sanctioned,

or approved the burning of the City of Richmond and the killing of Mr. Davis and his Cabinet, nor any other act not required by military necessity and in accordance with the usages of war.

In confirmation of this statement, I inclose a letter from General Kilpatrick, and have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE G. MEADE,

*Major-General.*

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HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

*April 16, 1864.*

BRIG.-GENL. J. KILPATRICK.

I am directed by the Major-General Commanding to advise you that he desires you to send him a copy of your letter of March 15th, in reference to the instructions given the late Colonel Dahlgren, at the very earliest moment practicable, and that he desires to see you personally upon the subject at these Headquarters as soon as the copy of the letter is forwarded.

Very respectfully, &c.,

CHARLES E. PEASE,

*Captain and A. A. G.*

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HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION CAVALRY CORPS,

*April 16, 1864.*

BRIG.-GENERAL S. WILLIAMS,

*A. A. G. Army of the Potomac.*

GENERAL : In accordance with instructions from Headquarters Army of the Potomac, I have carefully examined officers and men who accompanied Colonel Dahlgren on his late expedition.

All testify that he published no address whatever to his com-

mand, nor did he give *any* instructions, much less of the character as set forth in the photographic copies of two papers alleged to have been found upon the person of Colonel Dahlgren, and forwarded by Genl. Robt. E. Lee, Commanding the Army of Northern Virginia.

Colonel Dahlgren, one hour before we separated at my Headquarters, handed to me an address that he intended to read to his command; that paper was indorsed in red ink "Approved," over my official signature. The photographic papers referred to are true copies of the paper approved by me, save so far as they speak of "exhorting the prisoners to destroy and burn the hateful city and kill the traitor Davis and his Cabinet," and in this, that they do not contain the indorsement referred to as having been placed by me on Colonel Dahlgren's papers.

Colonel Dahlgren received no orders from me to pillage, burn or kill, nor were any such instructions given me by my superiors.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. KILPATRICK,

*Brig.-Gen. Vols.*

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Respecting this matter, General Fitzhugh Lee has written a letter, to be found on pages 256, 257 and 258 of Dawson's Historical Magazine, April, 1870, New Series, Vol. VII., No. IV. In it he says that he was in Richmond (unofficially), "when, on the second morning after Colonel Dahlgren's death, Lieutenant James Pollard, of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, brought me some papers and an artificial leg, which, he said, had been taken from the body of one of the officers of the enemy named Dahlgren, and who had been killed in King and Queen County. Pollard was one of my officers, accidentally in that vicinity at the time, and hence brought the papers *first* to me. Upon ascertaining their contents, I immediately took them to Mr. Davis."

He goes on to state that he found Mr. Benjamin with Mr. Davis, and that the papers were read, and that he then carried them to General Cooper, Adjutant-General, to be filed in his office. After some discussion of the matter and of Kilpatrick's movements, he says :

"I have only to add, in conclusion, that what appeared in the Richmond papers of that period as the 'Dahlgren papers,' was correctly taken from the papers I carried in person to Mr. Davis, and that these papers were not added to or changed in the minutest particular before they came into my possession, as far as I know and believe, and that from all the facts in my possession I have every reason to believe they were taken from the body of Colonel Ulric Dahlgren, and came to me without any alteration of any kind."

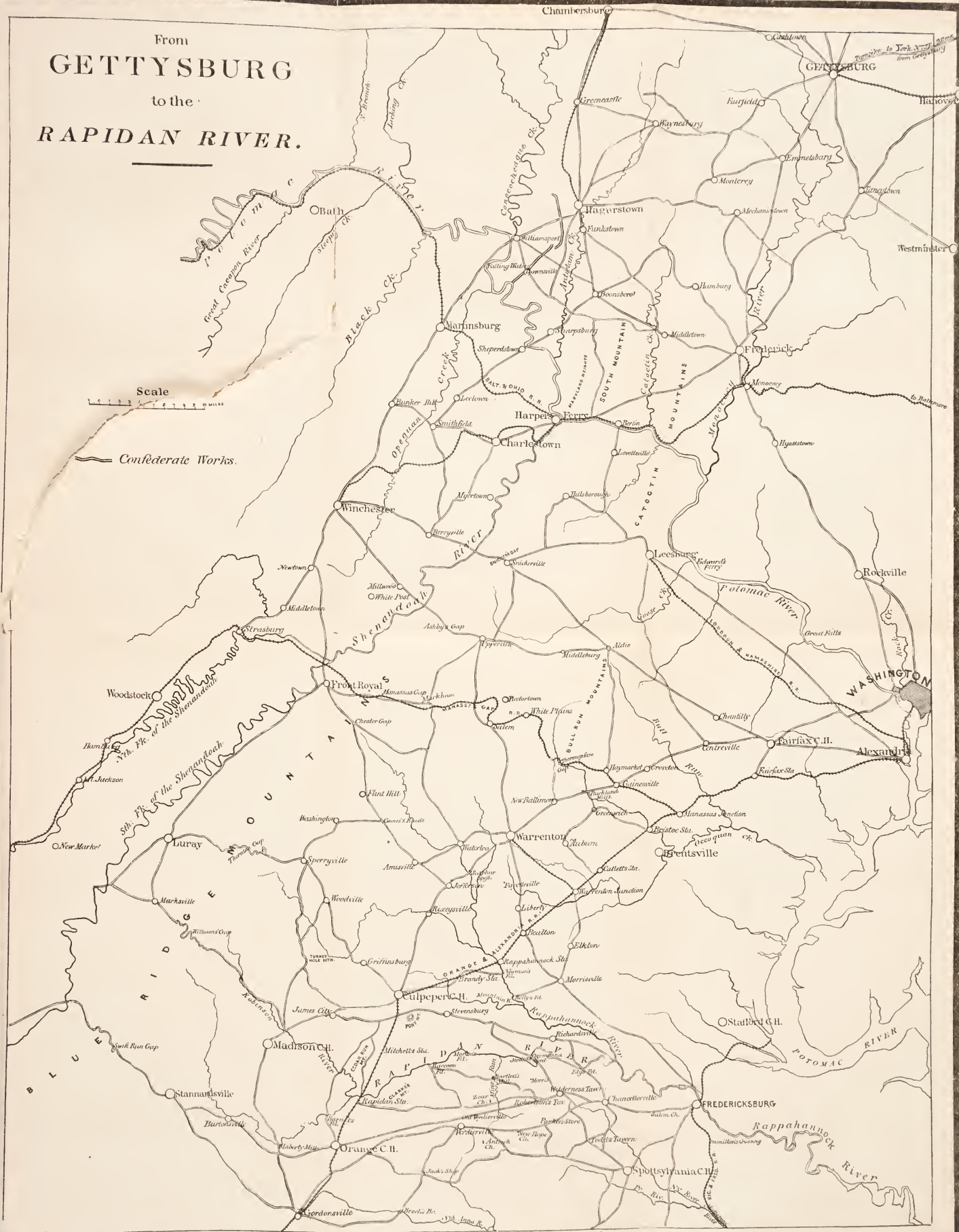
Then follows a copy of the "Dahlgren papers" as published in the *Richmond Examiner*, April 1, 1864, referred to by General Lee; and, in conclusion, there is a copy of General Fitzhugh Lee's letter to General Cooper of March 31, 1864, transmitting Colonel Dahlgren's note-book, which had just been sent him by Colonel Beale, commanding Ninth Virginia Cavalry, the existence of which note-book General Lee had not before been aware of. He says that on the first page Colonel Dahlgren's name and rank were written, and that among other memoranda it contained a rough pencil sketch of his address to his troops, differing somewhat from his pen-and-ink copy. General Lee adds that "the original papers bore no marks of alteration, nor could they possibly have been changed except by the courier who brought them to me, which is in the highest degree improbable; and the publication of them in the daily Richmond papers were exact copies, in every respect, of the original."



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## APPENDIX.

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HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

March 14, 1864.

COMMANDING OFFICER,

*Cavalry Corps.*

The Major-General Commanding directs that careful inquiry be made to ascertain whether Colonel Dahlgren made, or issued, such an address to his command as that which has been published in the journals of to-day, and also whether any orders or directions of the character of those contained in the memorandum following the address were given to his command, or to any part of it.

Very respectfully, &c.,

A. A. HUMPHREYS,

*Maj.-Genl. and Chief of Staff.*

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HEADQUARTERS THIRD DIVISION CAVALRY CORPS,

March 16, 1864.

CAPT. F. C. NEWHALL,

*A. A. A. G. Cavalry Corps.*

CAPTAIN: In accordance with instructions from Headquarters Cavalry Corps, I have carefully examined officers and men who accompanied Colonel Dahlgren on his late expedition.

All testify that he published no address whatever to his command, nor did he give *any* instructions—much less of the character alleged in the Rebel journals, in the memorandum following his address. Colonel Dahlgren, one hour before we separated at my headquarters, handed me an address that

he intended to read to his command ; that paper was indorsed in red ink, "approved," over my official signature.

The alleged address of Colonel Dahlgren, published in the papers, is the same as the one approved by me, save so far as it speaks of "exhorting the prisoners to destroy and burn the hateful city and kill the traitor Davis and his Cabinet." All this is false, and published only as an excuse for the barbarous treatment of the remains of a brave soldier.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J. KILPATRICK,

*Brig.-Gen. Vols.*

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,

*1st April, 1864.*

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE G. MEADE,

*Comdg. Army of the Potomac.*

GENERAL : I am instructed to bring to your notice two papers found upon the body of Colonel U. Dahlgren, who was killed while commanding a part of the Federal Cavalry during the late expedition of General Kilpatrick. To enable you to understand the subject fully, I have the honor to inclose photographic copies of the papers referred to, one of which is an address to his officers and men bearing the official signature of Colonel Dahlgren ; and the other, not signed, contains more detailed explanations of the purpose of the expedition, and more specific instructions as to its execution.

In the former this passage occurs :

"We hope to release the prisoners from Belle Island first, and having seen them fairly started, we will cross the James River into Richmond, destroying the bridges after us, and exhorting the released prisoners to destroy and burn the hateful city ; and do not allow the Rebel leader, Davis, and his traitorous crew to escape. The prisoners must render great assistance, as you cannot leave your ranks too far, or become too much scattered, or you will be lost."

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