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OVER

“LEAVE POPE TO GET OUT OF HIS SCRAPE.”

McCLELLAN'S DISPATCHES.

On the 20th day of August, 1862, Gen. McClellan, having terminated his unfortunate campaign, left the Virginia Peninsula and embarked his army at Fortress Monroe, Yorktown, and Newport News.

The entire rebel army was thus free to precipitate itself upon Pope's small command of 35,000 men, and the bulk of its forces had in fact, moved upon Pope several days before.

Fully aware of this and naturally anxious as to the result, Gen. Halleck telegraphed Gen. Pope on 21st August:

Dispute every inch of ground, and fight like the devil till we can reinforce you. Forty-eight hours more and we can make you strong enough! Don't yield an inch if you can help it.

Pope obeyed his instructions, falling back and fighting every inch of ground until he confronted the entire rebel army at Manassas. With what result, the country knows.

But what the country does not know is how it happened that the small army at Manassas should be allowed to be outnumbered, while the large and well appointed force of McClellan lay, during the three days' struggle, within marching distance, almost motionless.

Gen. McClellan prefaced his report of the Antietam campaign by stating that—

The troops composing the Army of the Potomac were meanwhile ordered forward to reinforce the army under Gen. Pope. So completely was this order carried out, that on the 30th of August I had remaining under my command only a camp guard of about one hundred men. Everything else had been sent to reinforce Gen. Pope. In addition, I exhausted all the means at my disposal to forward supplies to that officer, my own headquarter teams even being used for that purpose.

Is this or not one of those specious statements that keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the sense? Is it true, or is it a delusion and a snare?

Did Gen. McClellan really send troops and rations to Gen. Pope in his sore distress?

Did he send them expecting them to reach him?

Did he desire that they should reach him?

Did he or not purposely prevent their reaching him?

Now, we shall not answer these vital questions with the testimony of Gen. Pope, or of any his army; nor yet with the inexorable array of facts and crushing logic of the Committee on the Conduct of the War. We propose simply that Gen. McClellan himself, speaking in his official dispatches, shall reply to them.

On the 27th of August, 1862, Gen. Pope, in compliance with his instructions, after fighting the enemy five days on the upper Rappahannock, fell back towards Washington. Halleck, who knew the entire rebel army was upon him, had promised heavy reinforcements from the Army of the Potomac. Upon their reaching Pope depended the safety of his army, and perhaps that of the Capital. No one was more keenly alive than Gen. Halleck to the importance of strengthening Pope, and, accordingly, on the morning of August 27th, 1862, he telegraphed to Gen. McClellan, through whom alone all reinforcements for Pope must pass, to have Franklin's corps march in the direction of Manassas as soon as possible.

The order is clear and definite. If it had been obeyed, Jackson's forces, defeated and driven by Pope on the 27th, would have been met near Centreville the next afternoon by Franklin, and crushed! Now follow the developments of the next three days, and see with what fertility of device, prodigality of invention, and coolness of assumption—with what unyielding tenacity, shameless prevarication, and rank insubordination—Gen. McClellan carried out his steadfast purpose, that Pope should not have a man of these reinforcements—not an ounce of powder, not a loaf of bread, and that with his 40,000, struggling in a death-grapple with that same rebel army that had discomfited McClellan's 150,000, he might be left to get out of his scrape. This choice phraseology, we hasten to remark, is not ours, but that of Gen. McClellan, who proposed to the President "*to leave Pope to get out of his scrape.*"

Plain enough was Halleck's order, yet it never was executed! Thus it fell out. At 10.40 McClellan replied that he had sent orders to Franklin (*not to march*, but) to prepare to march, and to repair to Alexandria in person, to inform him as to his means of transportation. Singular, that in order that Franklin should march *with* his corps, he should begin by leaving it! Was there no Quartermaster to attend to transportation? At 12 m., Halleck telegraphed to McClellan, "Franklin's corps should move out by forced marches, carrying three or four days' provisions," to which McClellan replies that Franklin had gone to Washington, and that his

aid gave the order to the next in rank; and later that "Franklin's artillery had no horses."

Will it not be well to push Sumner's corps here by water as rapidly as possible, to make immediate arrangements for placing the works in front of Washington in an efficient condition of defence. I have no means of knowing the enemy's force between Pope and ourselves. Can Franklin, without his artillery or cavalry, effect any useful purpose in front? Should not Burnside at once take steps to evacuate Falmouth and Acquia, and at the same time cover the retreat of any of Pope's troops who may fall back in that direction? I do not see that we have force enough on hand to form a connection with Pope, whose exact position we do not know. Are we safe in the direction of the valley?

True to himself and sensible to the last! Stay in the works—the front is a dangerous place! Sitting at the feet of such a Gamaliel, is it strange that Porter learned to say, as he told McDowell, pointing to the enemy, "We cannot go in there without getting into a fight." And so the 27th of August passed away, and brought Pope no reinforcements.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28th, 1862.—On the morning of the 28th Halleck telegraphed directly to Franklin:

On parting with Gen. McClellan, about two o'clock this morning, it was understood that you were to move with your corps to-day toward Manassas Junction, to drive the enemy from the railroad. I have just learned that the General has not returned to Alexandria. If you have not received his order, act on this.

At 1.05 McClellan, not Franklin, answered:

Your dispatch to Franklin received. I have been doing all possible to hurry artillery and cavalry. The moment Franklin can be started with a reasonable amount of artillery, he shall go. * * * * * Please see Barnard, and be sure the works toward Chain Bridge are perfectly secure. I look upon those works, especially Ethan Allen and Marcy, as of the first importance.

Still harping on my daughter. "Be sure the works are perfectly secure!" At 3.30 p. m., Halleck becomes impatient, and telegraphs McClellan:

Not a moment must be lost in pushing as large a force as possible toward Manassas, so as to communicate with Pope before the enemy is reinforced.

The day wears away, and still Franklin does not move; so at 8.40 p. m., Halleck, more impatient, decided, and imperative, tells McClellan:

There must be no further delay in moving Franklin's corps towards Manassas; *they must go to-morrow morning, ready or not ready.* If we delay too long to get ready, there will be no necessity to go at all, for Pope will either be defeated or victorious without our aid. If there is a want of wagons, the men must carry provisions with them till the wagons can come to their relief.

To which McClellan replies at 10 p. m.:

Your dispatch received. Franklin's corps has been ordered to march at 6 o'clock to-morrow morning. Sumner has about 14,000 infantry, without cavalry or artillery here.

And so Gen. Pope is left to get out of his scrape. Gens. McClellan and Franklin sleep comfortable within snug quarters, and the 28th of August, 1862, passes into history.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29th, 1862.—At 10.30 a. m., General

McClellan resumes the chant of his well-worn refrain, his campaign *Kyrie Eleison!*

Franklin's corps is in motion; started about six (6) a. m. If Sumner moves in support of Franklin, it leaves us without any reliable troops in and near Washington; yet Franklin is too much alone. *What shall be done?* I do not think Franklin is in a situation to accomplish much if he meets strong resistance. I should not have moved him but for your pressing orders of last night.

“What shall be done?”

Pope, at that moment was not asking such questions, he was up and doing.

“What shall be done?”

Only to think of these horrid rebels offering “strong resistance” to Franklin! Heavens! Gen. Halleck this is not what I intended my army for! Strong resistance!! Good God, sir, somebody will surely get killed, and you are not so unreasonable as to suppose that I am going to sacrifice my future voters to save John Pope and — my country, he would have added, “but amen stuck in his throat.” But with what matchless coolness he tells Halleck that all his promises throughout the two previous days to send Franklin forward, were unvarnished falsehoods! “*I should not have moved him but for your pressing orders last night!*”

Economize your patience, though, gentle reader, and restrain your profanity, if you have any weakness in that direction, for here is something that will sorely try both.

At 12 m., McClellan telegraphs Halleck:

“Do you wish the movement of Franklin's corps to continue? He is without reserve ammunition and without transportation.”

The man who makes himself hoarse vainly calling by the hour for some lazy shirk of a servant who, finally, comes asking with placid ease, “Did you call, sir,” may have some faint idea of General Halleck's feelings when he received that despatch.

Pray notice the statement, that Franklin is without transportation. It is a remarkable one in the light of facts well known at the time to McClellan, and which we shall presently develop.

At 12 m., McClellan telegraphs Halleck:

“Franklin has only between 10,000 and 11,000 ready for duty. How far do you wish this force to advance?”

And again at 1 o'clock.

“Shall I do as seems best to me with all the troops in this vicinity, including Franklin, who, I really think ought not, under the present circumstances to proceed beyond Anandale?”

The writer of that despatch has solemnly declared in an official report that he “completely carried out the order to reinforce General Pope; that he had sent everything; that

he only retained a camp guard of one hundred men!"
 I beg for yourself, reader.

At 3 p. m., Gen. Halleck, who must certainly possess an angelic disposition, musters nerve to tell the Young Napoleon:

I want Franklin's corps to go far enough to find out something about the enemy. Perhaps he may get such information at Anandale as to prevent his going further; otherwise, he will push on toward Fairfax. Try to get something from direction of Manassas, either by telegrams or through Franklin's scouts. Our people must move more actively, and find out where the enemy is. I am tired of guesses.

"Our people must find out where the enemy is!" During the entire days of August 29th and 30th, the thunders of nearly three hundred pieces of artillery shook the ground under McClellan's feet. All Alexandria knew precisely where the enemy was and where the fighting was. But General McClellan could not make the discovery.

There is one grand, overruling and guiding military principle that overrides conflicting orders or supplies their total absence. It is the Napoleonic maxim—"March to the sound of the cannon." The neglect of it by Grouchy, cost the Emperor Waterloo. Has it never been heard of by General McClellan?

Every drummer boy in Franklin's, Sumner's, and Cox's corps knew the situation, knew that the enemy had concentrated, knew that Pope had been fighting them for two days. General McClellan alone, of all his army, did not know it, could not see it; so Halleck's last dispatch remains unanswered.

And now we are about to present the most remarkable—we weigh and emphasize the words—the most remarkable dispatch ever framed by man wearing a soldier's uniform! We pause a moment before doing it, that our readers may prepare for a sensation at once novel and painful—a pang of shame for our country and our humanity—a feeling of profound horror and contempt for the man who could perpetrate it. At 2.45 p. m., Gen. McClellan, in answer to a dispatch from the President asking, "What news from direction of Manassas Junction," telegraphed—

The last news I received from direction of Manassas was from stragglers, to the effect that the enemy were evacuating Centreville and retiring toward Thoroughfare Gap. This is, by no means, reliable. I am clear that one of two courses should be adopted: First—To concentrate all our available forces to open communication with Pope. Second—*To leave Pope to get out of his scrape*, and at once use all means to make the Capital perfectly safe. No middle course will now answer. Tell me what you wish me to do, and I will do all in my power to accomplish it. I wish to know what my orders and authority are. I ask for nothing, but will obey whatever orders you give. I only ask a prompt decision, that I may at once give the necessary orders. It will not do to delay longer.

Comment there can be none. Nothing short of the power of a Macauley would avail here, to do this infamy justice. And we can only feebly indicate—pointing to the “bad eminence” on which it stands—the more striking point of its weakness. The man is satisfied—for what he hopes, he would fain believe—that Pope is or will be defeated. He suggests two courses, which, after all, are substantially one and the same, for he well knows that Lee’s junction with Jackson is certain. He can trust Porter for that. In either case, he is sure “*to leave Pope to get out of his scrape.*”

Consider the latter part of the despatch in the light of the previous two days’ transactions.

“*Tell me what you wish me to do.*” Why, for two days and a half the wires have not ceased their monotonous throbbings under the reiterated order to send Franklin forward.

“*I ask for nothing, but will obey whatever orders you give.*”

He asks for nothing! Oh, certainly not; when just one hour and a half ago he insinuatingly despatches—“*shall I do as seems best to me with all the troops in this vicinity?*”

He appears to have been left entirely without orders too! “*I wish to know what my orders and authority are? No middle course will now answer. It will not do to delay longer.*”

This is the sublime of impudence, and ghastly work as it is, we cannot help smiling at its coolness.

But what “*scrape*” of his own was Pope to get out of? Let us see. Is he a deserter, a straggler, or some incompetent soldier who has rushed into difficulty without or against orders? How came he where he is? Thus: With a small army of 35,000, he threw himself down on the Rapidan—into the heart of the enemy, tearing of his very vitals—to compel him to loose his hold on the once noble and dispirited Army of the Potomac. He did it. McClellan’s army of 91,000 effective troops was freed. The entire rebel force was precipitated on the devoted Pope. He fought them for seventeen days in seven large battles, and skirmishes innumerable, and with but small aid of troops and food for his starving men and horses, would have strangled the rebellion at Manassas. He was denied men, rations, and forage. Now we see. That was the “*scrape*” Pope was left to get out of!

At 7.50 p. m., Halleck discovering that Franklin still loiters, tells McClellan—

You will immediately send construction train and guards to repair railroad to Manassas. Let there be no delay in this. I have just been told that Franklin’s corps stopped at Anandale, and that he was this evening in Alexandria. This is all contrary to my orders. Investigate and report the facts of this disobedience. That corps *must* push forward, as I directed, to protect the railroad and open our communication with Manassas.

And one hour afterward is answered by him :

It was not safe for Franklin to move beyond Anandale, under the circumstances until we knew what was at Vienna. Gen. Franklin remained here until about 1 p. m., endeavoring to arrange for supplies for his command. I am responsible for both these circumstances, and do not see that either was in disobedience to your orders. Please give distinct orders in reference to Franklin's movements of to-morrow.

And then, placidly, with an air of injured innocence—

In regard to to-morrow's movements I desire definite instructions, as it is not agreeable to me to be accused of disobeying orders, when I have simply exercised the discretion you committed to me.

At ten that night, he advises Halleck that he has a despatch from Franklin, stating that *Pope is very short of provisions, and the country will not support him.*

And so closed Friday, August 29th. Pope had fought the rebel army all that day, had driven them in defeat, and, with any one of the corps of Franklin, Sumner, Cox, or Couch, would have crushed it the next morning. But Franklin, ordered to move on the 27th, with but twenty-four miles between him and the battle-field, had, at the end of three days, advanced six miles! We know of Western regiments, who hearing, thirty miles off, the thunders of Shiloh, stopped not to ask about transportation, but rushed forward, and were grappling with the foe in twenty hours!

Saturday, August 30, 1862, at 5, A. M., Gen. Pope telegraphs Gen. Halleck :

I think you had better send Franklin's, Cox's, and Sturgis' regiments to Centreville, as also forage and subsistence. I received a note this morning from Gen. Franklin, written by order of Gen. McClellan, saying that *wagons and cars would be loaded and sent to Fairfax Station as soon as I would send a cavalry escort to Alexandria to bring them out. Such a request, when Alexandria is full of troops and we fighting the enemy, needs no comment. Will you have these supplies sent, without the least delay, to Centreville?*

Note that he now had a certainty Porter would fail him. Neither Sumner, Franklin, Cox, Sturgis, nor Couch were up. His men and horses were starving, and he had McClellan's assurance that he would send him no relief. Lee had joined Jackson. The bloody struggle of the previous day was to be renewed with thinned ranks against superior forces. Self-reliant and possessed, calm and measured, he means to fight, and, in advance, is confident of his position after the battle. He knew it would be at Centreville. He would hold his ground, but could not pursue the enemy if victorious. "*Have these supplies sent to Centreville.*" And yet there was time, when, at 9.40, Halleck telegraphed McClellan :

I am by no means satisfied with Gen. Franklin's march of yesterday, considering the circumstances of the case. He was very wrong in stopping at Anandale. Moreover, I learned last night that the Quartermaster's Department could have given him plenty of transportation if he had applied for it any time since his arrival at Alexandria. He knew the importance of opening communication with Gen. Pope's army, and should have acted more promptly.

On the 27th, McClellan makes Franklin leave his corps to come to Alexandria, in order that he (McClellan) may inform him as to his means of transportation.

On the 28th, he says Franklin is without transportation; but on the 29th instant, it appears from statement of the Quartermaster's Department, high and indisputable authority, that *neither McClellan nor Franklin ever applied for transportation.*

At 11, A. M., McClellan telegraphs:

Have ordered Sumner to leave one brigade in the vicinity of Chain Bridge, and to move the rest, *via* Columbia Pike, on Anandale and Fairfax Court House, if this is the route you wish them to take. He and Franklin are both instructed to join Pope as promptly as possible. Shall Couch move also when he arrives:

With the thunder of battle in his ears, he wishes to know which way they shall move. Halleck's answer is crushing in its retort:

Send them, where the fighting is.

And again, at 2.15, P. M., Gen. Halleck telegraphs:

Franklin's and Sumner's corps should be pushed forward with all possible dispatch. They must use their legs and make forced marches. *Time now is everything.*

But why go on? Given the programme, we know the play. "*Leave Pope to get out of his scrape,*" sufficiently announces that General's struggle with enemies in front, around, and in rear, a struggle disgraceful to others, but glorious to him and his noble army! Here is his dispatch to Gen. Halleck on the morning after the three days' fighting at Manasses:

Our troops are all here and in position, though much used up and worn out. I think it would, perhaps, have been greatly better if Sumner and Franklin had been here three or four days ago. But you may rely upon our giving them (the enemy) as desperate a fight as I can force our men to stand up to. I should like to know whether you feel secure about Washington, should this army be destroyed. I shall fight it as long as a man will stand up to the work. You must judge what is to be done, having in view the safety of the Capital. The enemy is already pushing a cavalry reconnoissance in our front at Cub Run, whether in advance of an attack to-day, I don't yet know. I send you this that you may know our position and my purpose.

Is there any whining here about reinforcements? Any anxiety as to getting behind the fortifications? Are not these the words of a soldier and a patriot?

During the examination of Gen. Hallack before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, he is asked this question:

Had the Army of the Peninsula been brought to co-operate with the Army of Virginia with the utmost energy that circumstances would have permitted, in your judgment, as a military man, would it not have resulted in our victory instead of our defeat?

His reply was:

I thought so at the time, and still think so.

And so thinks every man who dispassionately reads this statement. Judge ye!