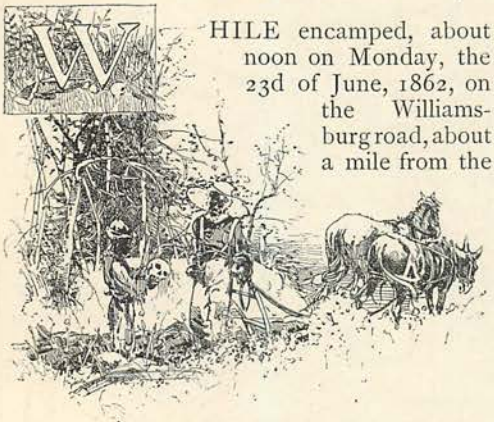
THE BATTLE OF GAINES'S MILL.

INCLUDING A SKETCH OF JACKSON'S MARCH TO THE FIELD, BY MAJOR R. L. DABNEY; THE BATTLE OF MECHANICSVILLE (OR BEAVER DAM CREEK, OR ELLERSON'S MILL*), JUNE 26; THE BATTLE OF GAINES'S MILL (OR THE CHICKAHOMINY), JUNE 27, 1862.



"W'AT WAR DEY FIGHTIN' 'BOUT?"

WHILE encamped, about noon on Monday, the 23d of June, 1862, on the Williamsburg road, about a mile from the battle-field of Seven Pines, in command of a division of the Confederate army, I received an order from General Lee to report immediately at his quarters on the Mechanicsville road. On approaching the house which the general occupied, I saw an officer leaning over the yard-paling, dusty, travel-worn, and apparently very tired. He raised himself up as I dismounted, and I recognized General Jackson, who, I had till that moment supposed, was confronting Banks and Frémont far down the Valley of Virginia. He said that he had ridden fifty-two miles since one o'clock that morning, having taken relays of horses on the road. We went together into General Lee's office. General Jackson declined refreshments, courteously tendered by General Lee, but drank a glass of milk. Soon after, Generals Longstreet and A. P. Hill came in, and General Lee, closing the door, told us that he had determined to attack the Federal right wing, and had selected our four commands to execute the movement. He told us that he had sent Whiting's division to reënforce Jackson, and that at his instance the Richmond papers had reported "that large reënforcements had been sent to Jackson with a view to clearing out the Valley of Virginia and exposing Washington." He believed that General McClellan received the Richmond papers regularly, and he (Lee) knew of the nervous apprehension concerning Washington.† He then said that he would retire to another room to attend to some office work, and would leave us to arrange the details among ourselves. The main point in his mind seemed to be that the crossings of the Chickahominy should be uncovered by Jackson's advance down the left bank, so that the other three divisions might not suffer in making a forced passage.

During the absence of General Lee, Longstreet said to Jackson: "As you have the longest march to make, and are likely to meet opposition, you had better fix the time for the attack to begin." Jackson replied: "Daylight of the 26th." Longstreet then said: "You will encounter Federal cavalry, and roads blocked by felled timber, if nothing more formidable: ought you not to give yourself more time?"‡ When General Lee returned, he ordered A. P. Hill to cross at Meadow Bridge, Longstreet at the Mechanicsville Bridge, and me to follow Longstreet. The conference broke up about nightfall.

It may be of interest to the student of history to know how Jackson managed to slip off so often and so easily. His plan was to press his infantry as near as possible to the enemy, without bringing on a general engagement; then to occupy these advanced points with dismounted cavalry pickets, and to start his "foot cavalry" in the other direction with all possible speed. His stealthy marches to the rear were made without consulting his highest officers, and even without their knowing his destination.§

* The usual spelling, Ellison's Mill, is incorrect. Mr. J. H. Ellerson, whose father owned the mill, is living in Richmond.— EDITOR.

† I do not know how far the Federals were deceived by the announcement of reënforcements sent to Jackson, but during the seven days' battles I read in a Northern paper a letter from Strasburg, Va., of the 25th of June, stating that they were expecting Stonewall Jackson there, and were so well fortified that they would give him a warm reception. General Jackson's corps was then at Ashland, within twelve miles of Richmond. He certainly had slipped off without observation.— D. H. H.

‡ Longstreet's caution was justified by the event. Jackson's flank movement was delayed a day by cavalry and felled timber, and the delay seemed to Lee to make it necessary to fight the disastrous battle at Beaver Dam Creek.— EDITOR.

§ This was a source of annoyance to Loring in '61, and later on to Ewell. When Jackson's corps was so strangely left at Winchester after the battle of Sharpsburg, or Antietam, and General Lee had gone to the Rappahannock (we were making a feint every day of holding the gaps in the Blue Ridge, with strict orders not to bring on an engagement), I said to Jackson one day: "I am the next in rank, and should you be killed or captured in your many scouts around, I would not know what the corps was left for, or what it was expected

Another peculiarity of Jackson's was to select for his chief-of-staff, not a military man, but a Presbyterian clergyman, a professor in a theological seminary, and to clothe him with the power of carrying out his mysterious orders when he was temporarily absent. In this Jackson acted as did the greatest of all English commanders, Oliver Cromwell, who always surrounded himself with men of prayer. Jackson's confidence was well bestowed, and he found in the Rev. R. L. Dabney, D. D., a faithful, zealous, and efficient staff-officer. To him, now a professor in the State University of Texas, I am indebted for the following account of the unexpected appearance of Jackson on the Federal right wing before Richmond:

"General Jackson's forced march from Mount Meridian, in the neighborhood of Port Republic battle-field, began in earnest on Wednesday, June 18th, the general and a few of the troops having left the evening before. About midday on Thursday, the 19th, we were at Mechum's River Station, about ten miles west of Charlottesville, with the head of the column. The general called me into a room in the hotel, locked the door, and told me that he was about to go in advance of his corps by rail to Richmond to see the commander-in-chief; that the corps was going to Richmond to join in a general attack upon McClellan, but that he would return to his command before we got there; that I was to march the corps towards Richmond, following the line of railroad, as near as the country roads would permit, by Charlottesville and Gordonsville, General Ewell's division to form the head of the column with which I was personally to proceed; that strict precautions of secrecy were to be observed — which he then dictated to me. He then got on an express train and left us. I dined that day with General Ewell, and I remember that he complained to me with some bitterness of General Jackson's reserve.

"'Here, now, the general has gone off on the railroad without intrusting to me, his senior major-general, any order, or any hint whither we are going; but Harman, his quartermaster, enjoys his full confidence, I suppose, for I hear that he is telling the troops that we are going to Richmond to fight McClellan.'

"'You may be certain, General Ewell,' I replied, 'that you stand higher in General Jackson's confidence than any one else, as your rank and services entitle you. As for

SKETCH OF STONEWALL JACKSON. (DRAWN FROM LIFE NEAR BALL'S BLUFF BY A. J. VOLCK, PROBABLY IN 1861.)

Major Harman, he has not heard a word more than others. If he thinks that we are going to Richmond, it is only his surmise, which I suppose every intelligent private is now making.'

"The column reached Gordonsville, Saturday, June 21, about noon. To my surprise, on riding into town, I got an order to go to the general — at a private house, where he was lodging. On reaching Gordonsville, Thursday afternoon, he had been met by news which alarmed the outpost there: that a heavy Federal force was on the Rapidan, about sixteen miles away. He therefore had postponed going to Richmond until he could effectually clear up this rumor. The chief mode adopted was characteristic: it was to send out by night an intelligent private citizen, thoroughly acquainted with the Rapidan people and country, as his scout. This gentleman came back after thorough inquiry, with the news that the rumor was unfounded. About half an hour before sunset on Saturday, the general got into an express car with no one but me and the conductor, and came to Frederick's Hall Station in the county of Louisa, arriving about dawn on Sunday, the 22d. We spent the Sabbath there at the house of Mr. N. Harris, attending

to do." He then told me that he had suggested to General Lee, who had to move back to protect Richmond, that he could remain and remove our wounded and stores, and that his presence on McClellan's flank and rear would keep him from attacking Lee. In case of any casualty to himself, the removal was to go on till completed. — D. H. H.

camp-preaching in the afternoon. At this house were Major-General Whiting and General Hood, then commanding a Texas brigade. At one o'clock that night General Jackson arose, took an orderly whom I had selected for him as trustworthy and well acquainted with the road, and started for Richmond with impressed horses. He had me wake up General Whiting and make *him* sign a pass and an impressment order (which no one under

we came into collision with McClellan's outposts. We were much mystified at first to know why the general should put a battery in position, and cannonade the bushes furiously for ten minutes only to drive away a picket. We found out afterwards this was his signal to you,* and in a little while the distant sound of your guns at Ellerson's mill told us that the ball had opened."

It will be seen from the narrative of Major

CONFEDERATE SKIRMISH-LINE DRIVEN IN BY UNION LINE OF BATTLE.
(DRAWN BY W. L. SHEPPARD AFTER THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF, OWNED BY R. A. WOOLDRIDGE, ESQ., BALTIMORE.)

[The original sketch for this picture was made from personal observation. It describes an incident of the "Peninsular Campaign"—*i. e.* of the retreat before McClellan's advance up the Peninsula, to which operations that name is confined at the South; at the North it is used to include also the subsequent movements down to McClellan's arrival on the James River.—EDITOR.]

the rank of major-general had a right to do). He had about fifty-two miles to ride to Richmond; to the Nine-mile bridge, near which General Lee was in person, I suppose the distance was as great, so that the ride occupied him, with the time lost in impressing relays of horses, about ten hours. He must have reached his rendezvous with General Lee and his three major-generals about noon on the 23d. If he rode into the city first, the meeting would have been a few hours later. He rejoined his corps at Beaver Dam Station on Tuesday (24th), and assembled the whole of it around Ashland Wednesday night, the 25th. About two hours by sun on the 26th

Dabney that General Jackson, who fought some of his most desperate battles on Sunday, would not start to Richmond till Sunday had passed. He had the pass and impressment order from General Whiting that he might not be known on the road; he wore no insignia of rank, and as he would have been known in Richmond, he did not go to that city. It was three P. M. on the 23d when I saw him at General Lee's headquarters. Major Dabney is mistaken in saying that the signal-guns were intended for me. A. P. Hill was farther up the Chickahominy, and he was to cross first, and being nearer to Jackson, could hear his guns better than those

* This account is written to General Hill.—EDITOR.

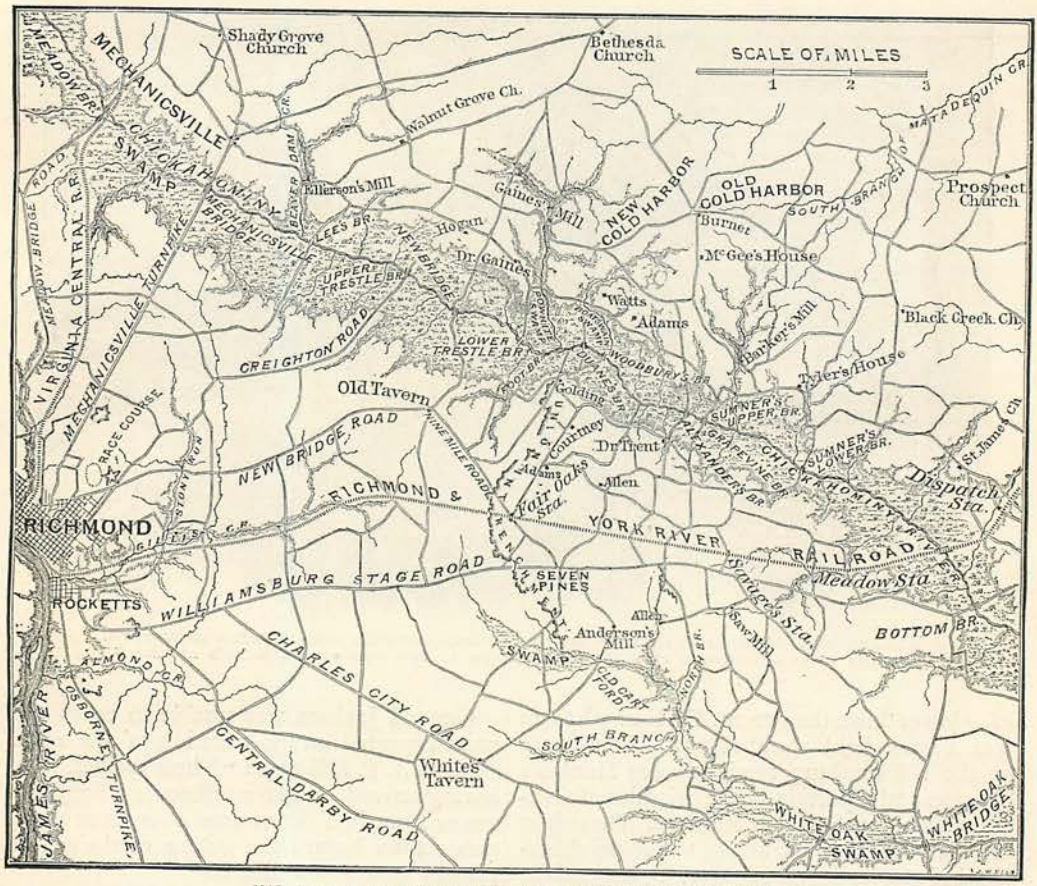
EXTERIOR LINE OF DEFENSES OF RICHMOND ON THE MECHANICSVILLE ROAD (LOOKING SOUTH-EAST). (DRAWN BY W. L. SHEPPARD FROM HIS SKETCH MADE AT THE TIME OF McCLELLAN'S ADVANCE.)

of us lower down the stream. On the 25th there was a brisk fight about King's school-house on the Williamsburg road, between Hooker's division and a portion of the brigades of Generals Wright and Robert Ransom. That night my division marched across to the neighborhood of Mechanicsville Bridge. To conceal the movement, our camp-fires were freshly lighted up by a detachment after the troops had left, and a company was sent some miles down the Charles City road to send up rockets, as though signaling an advance in that direction. General Lee's order issued on the 24th June says:

"At three o'clock Thursday morning, 26th instant, General Jackson will advance on the road leading to Pole Green Church, communicating his march to General Branch [seven miles above Meadow Bridge], who will immediately cross the Chickahominy, and take the road leading to Mechanicsville. As soon as the movements of these columns are discovered, General A. P. Hill with the rest of his division will cross the Chickahominy near Meadow Bridge. . . . The enemy being driven from Mechanicsville, and the passage across the bridge opened, General Longstreet with his division and that of General D. H. Hill will cross the Chickahominy at or near that point — General D. H. Hill moving to the support of General Jackson, and General Longstreet supporting General A. P. Hill — the four divisions keeping in communication with each other, and moving *en échelon* on separate roads, if practicable; the left division in advance, with skirmishers and sharp-shooters extending their front, will sweep down the Chickahominy, and endeavor to drive the enemy from his position above New Bridge, General Jackson bearing well to his left, turning Beaver Dam Creek, and taking the direction towards Cold Harbor, etc."

General Jackson was unable to reach the point expected on the morning of the 26th. General A. P. Hill says: "Three o'clock P. M. having arrived, and no intelligence from Jackson or Branch, I determined to cross at once, rather than hazard the failure of the whole plan by longer deferring it."

Heavy firing was heard at three P. M. at Meadow Bridge, and the Federal outposts were seen fleeing towards Mechanicsville, pursued by A. P. Hill. We could see a line of battle drawn up at that village ready to receive Hill. My division being nearest the bridge, Longstreet ordered me to cross first. Some delay was made in repairing the bridge, and A. P. Hill became hotly engaged before we could get to his relief. At this time President Davis and staff hurried past us, going "to the sound of the firing." Ripley's brigade was pushed forward to the support of three batteries of artillery of Jones's battalion, and the two under Hardaway and Bondurant. The five batteries soon silenced the Federal artillery, and the whole plateau about Mechanicsville was abandoned to the Confederates, the Federals retiring across Beaver Dam Creek, which was strongly fortified. Our engineers seem to have had little knowledge of the country, and none of the fortifications on the creek. The maps furnished the division commanders were worthless. At a request from General Pender, who had been roughly handled in attacking works on the creek, Brigadier-General Ripley, of my divis-



MAP OF THE UPPER CHICKAHOMINY AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRY.

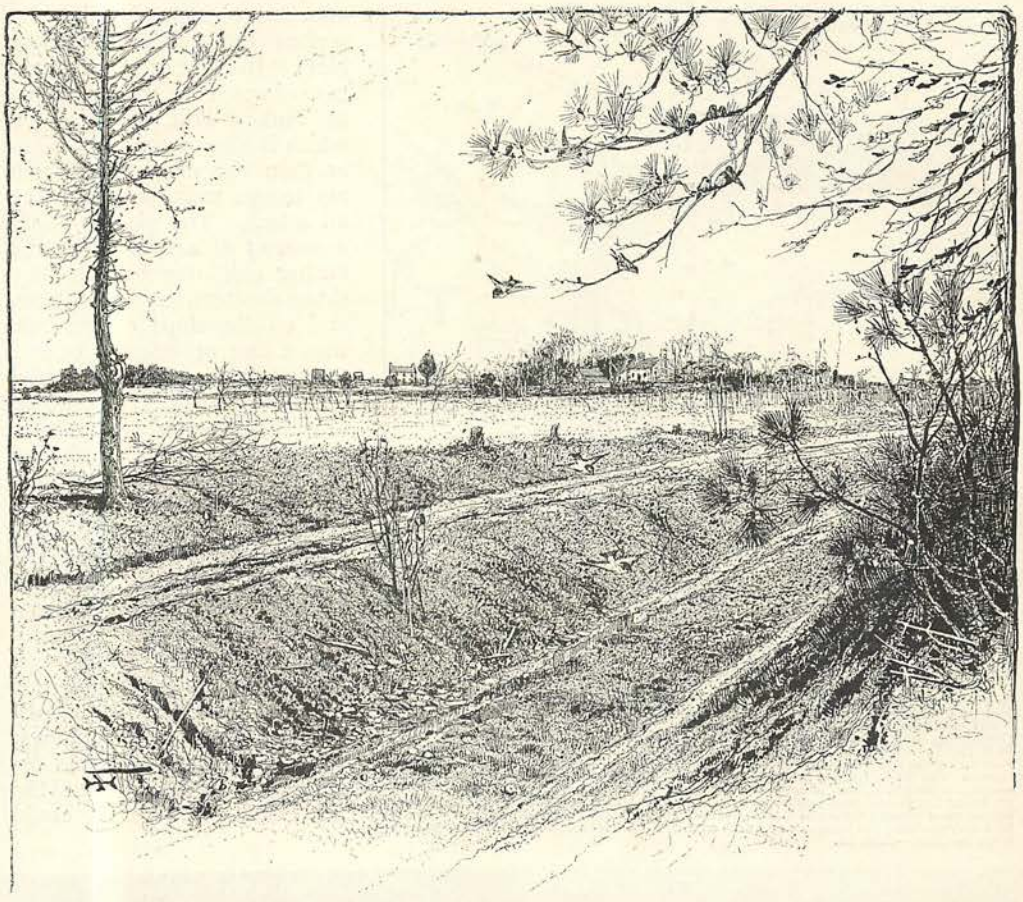
[During the battles of Mechanicsville and Gaines's Mill the Union army, except Porter's corps and the cavalry engaged in protecting McClellan's right flank and communications, was posted on the south side of the Chickahominy behind the line of intrenchments here shown. The divisions of Longstreet and the two Hills who had confronted McClellan on the different roads were withdrawn, in order to unite with Jackson's three divisions (coming from the Shenandoah) in the attack in force upon Porter's corps. Magruder's and Huger's divisions were left to engage the attention of the corps of Sumner, Keyes, Heintzelman, and Franklin. As will be seen, the attack of Lee's six divisions fell upon Porter's corps, which was reënforced during the battle by Slocum's three brigades of Franklin's corps.—EDITOR.]

ion, was directed to coöperate with him, and the attack was made about dark. The enemy had intrenchments of great strength and development on the other side of the creek, and had lined the banks with his magnificent artillery. The approach was over an open plain exposed to a murderous fire of all arms, and across an almost impassable stream. The result was, as might have been foreseen, a bloody and disastrous repulse. Nearly every field-officer in the brigade was killed or wounded. It was unfortunate for the Confederates that the crossing was begun before Jackson got in rear of Mechanicsville. The loss of that position would have necessitated the abandonment of the line of Beaver Dam Creek; as in fact it did, the next day. We were lavish of blood in those days, and it was thought to be a great thing to charge a battery of artillery or an earthwork lined with infantry. "It is magnificent, but it is not war," was the sarcastic remark of the French general as he looked on at the British cavalry charge at Balaklava. The attacks on the Beaver Dam intrenchments, on the heights of Malvern Hill, at Gettysburg, etc., were all grand, but of exactly the kind of grandeur which the South could not afford.

A brisk cannonade was kept up on the morning of the 27th for an hour or more from the Federal artillery along the line of Beaver Dam, which was held by a thin line of skirmishers, the main force having retreated to Gaines's Mill and New Cold Harbor. A. P. Hill's division was ordered to pursue on to the mill, and my division to take the Bethesda Church road to join Jackson. The works on that road were turned by my division, and some sixty or seventy prisoners holding them were captured.

Major Dabney says:

"General Jackson continued his march on the morning of the 27th. When I overtook him he was dismounted in the turnpike road



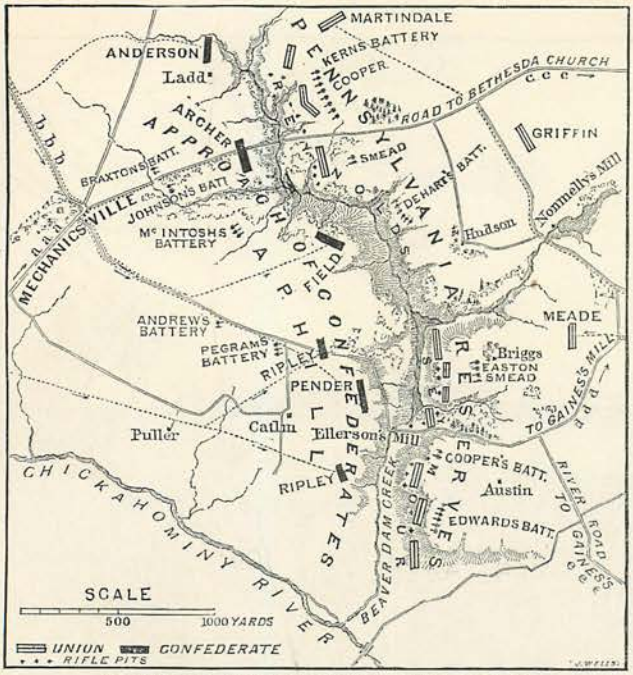
MECHANICSVILLE FROM THE NORTH-WEST — SCENE OF THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN DAYS' BATTLES.
(DRAWN BY HARRY FENN AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. S. ANDERSON, RICHMOND, VA.)

[The cross-roads (Mechanicsville proper) are indicated by the two houses at the extreme right. The woods in the left distance show the line of Beaver Dam Creek at the crossing of the upper road from the town. A. P. Hill advanced from Meadow Bridge and along the road in the foreground, his troops deploying at this point on both sides of the road about 4 P. M. The house at the left center (Horn's) marks the location of the Union battery which opened upon Hill's troops as they came along this road, from which the Confederate artillery (McIntosh's and Pegram's) replied as they advanced. Anderson's brigade was sent to the left to flank the Union guns, which, together with the single regiment left in the town by General Porter, withdrew before the enemy to the strong position beyond the creek.—EDITOR.]

with his cap off before a gentleman sitting on a cedar-stump, who was speaking to him in a suppressed voice. An old acquaintance whom I met told me that this gentleman was General Lee. The conference soon ended, and the march was resumed — deflecting strongly to the east."

General Lee's object in pressing down the Chickahominy was to unmask New Bridge, and thus to establish close communication between the forces defending Richmond and the six divisions attacking the Federal right. A. P. Hill, who marched close to the Chickahominy, succeeded in driving off the Federal troops defending the creek at Gaines's Mill, and advanced until he developed their full line of battle at New Cold Harbor, half a mile beyond. After waiting till 2:30 P. M. to hear from Longstreet,* he advanced his division without support to the attack of the intrenched position of the Federals. He kept up a struggle for two hours, was repulsed and driven back, and in turn repulsed his pursuers. His report says: "From having been the attacking I now became the attacked; but stubbornly and gallantly was the ground held. My division was thus engaged full two hours before assistance was received. We failed to carry the enemy's lines, but we paved the way for the successful attacks afterwards, in which attacks it was necessary to employ the whole of our army on that side of the Chickahominy."

* General Lee in his official report says: "The arrival of Jackson on our left was momentarily expected, and it was supposed that his approach would cause the extension of the enemy's line in that direction. Under this impression, Longstreet was held back until this movement should commence."—EDITOR.



PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF MECHANICSVILLE, JUNE 26.

a. a. a., Approach of D. H. Hill and Longstreet from Richmond; *b. b. b.*, Same, A. P. Hill; *c. c. c.*, Route of D. H. Hill to Old Cold Harbor the day after the battle to join Jackson's attack on Union left; *d. d. d.*, Route of A. P. Hill to New Cold Harbor, to attack Union center; *e. e. e.*, Route of Longstreet to Dr. Gaines's, to attack Union left. Of the five Confederate brigades engaged in this battle, one (Ripley's) was attached to the division of D. H. Hill and came up as a reënforcement to Pender, who, with Field, Archer, and Anderson, were part of the division of A. P. Hill, his other two divisions, Gregg and Branch, being held in reserve. The losses in their hopeless attack fell chiefly upon Archer, who made the first advance about 5 P. M., and later upon Pender and Ripley. Pegram's battery was badly cut up, losing forty-seven men and many horses. On the Union side, Martindale, Griffin, and Meade came up after the battle had begun. When firing ceased, about 9 P. M., Porter's troops held their position; but Jackson's approach on their right flank compelled its evacuation early in the morning.—EDITOR.

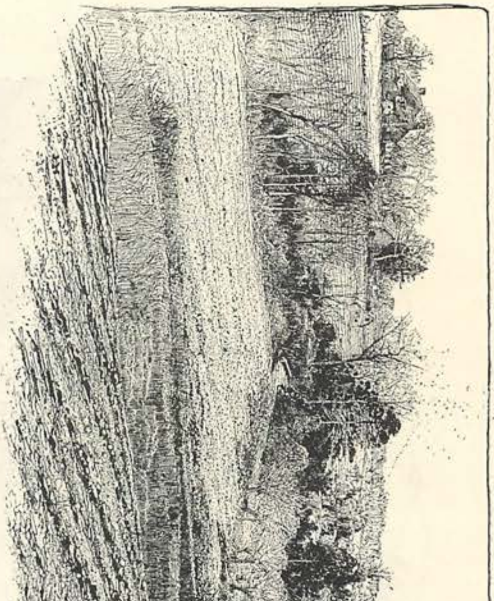
Longstreet came into action after four o'clock. He thus describes the difficulties before him: "In front of me the enemy occupied the wooded slope of Turkey Hill, the crest of which is fifty or sixty feet higher than the plain over which my troops must pass to make an attack. The plain is about a quarter of a mile wide; the farther side was occupied by sharp-shooters. Above these, and on the slope of the hill, was a line of infantry behind trees, felled so as to form a good breastwork. The crest of the hill, some forty feet above the last line, was strengthened by rifle-trenches and occupied by infantry and artillery. In addition to this the plain was enfiladed by batteries on the other side of the Chickahominy. I was, in fact, in the very position from which the enemy wished us to attack him."

All was done that mortals could do by the two gallant divisions struggling against such disadvantages, but nothing decisive could be effected until the full Confederate forces could

CHARGE OF CONFEDERATES UNDER RIPLEY AND PENDER AT BEAVER DAM CREEK, JUST ABOVE ELLERSON'S MILL.

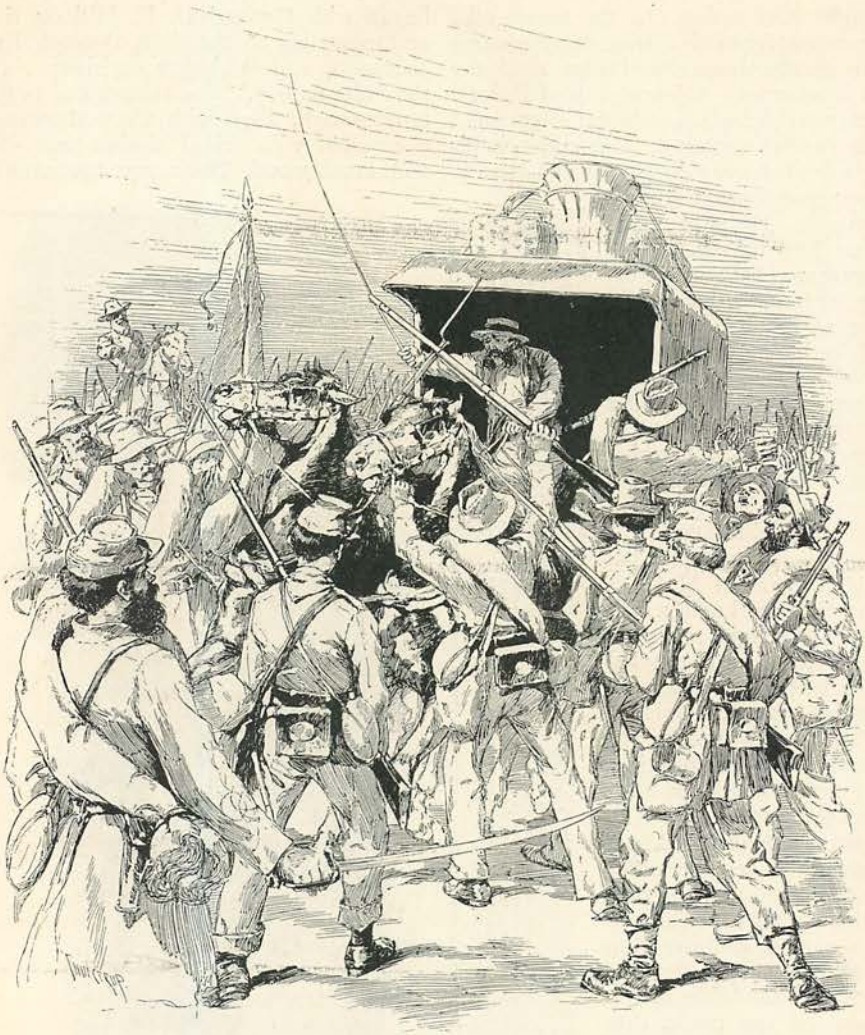
be brought into action. In the meanwhile, Jackson moved forward on what we afterwards found to be the Grapevine Bridge road, my division in advance. A few squads of Federal stragglers were picked up, and some wagons and ambulances were captured. One sutler, in his desperate desire to save his fancy stock, tried to dash his wagon through Anderson's brigade. He paid no attention to the orders to halt, or to the presented bayonets. Fortunately for him, his horses did not have so much at stake as he had in canned fruits and vegetables, and were quite willing to surrender. Some poor ragged graybacks got toothsome delicacies then, from which they had been long debarred, and of which before nightfall they had no need forever.

About 2 P. M. we reached the neighborhood of McGee's house, an elevated knoll, which was the Federal right, and from which a dense and tangled swamp extended westward in an irregular curve to Gaines's Mill. Bondurant's battery was brought up to feel the position. Jackson remained with it for a time after the firing began. The battery was badly crippled, and was withdrawn by my order when I perceived the superiority of the enemy's artillery — always the most effective arm of his service. So little was known of the condition of the battle and of the roads, that Jackson posted my division in the woods to the left of the road, and facing towards the firing at Gaines's Mill, in order to intercept the forces that Longstreet and A. P. Hill might drive in that direction! His report says: "Hoping that Generals A. P. Hill and Longstreet would soon drive the Federals towards me, I directed General D. H. Hill to move his division to the left of the road, so as to leave between him and the wood on the right of the road an open space, across which I hoped that the enemy would be driven. . . . But it soon becoming apparent from the direction and sound of the firing that General A. P. Hill was hard pressed, I ordered a general advance of my entire corps, which began with General D. H. Hill on the left and extending to the right, through Ewell's, Jackson's, and Whiting's divisions . . . in the order named." The swamp was to be gotten through, filled with sharp-shooters, and obstructed with felled timber and choked with brush-wood. The report continues: "In advancing to the attack, General D. H. Hill had to cross this swamp densely covered with tangled undergrowth and young timber. This caused some confusion, and a separation of regiments. On the farther edge of the swamp he encountered the enemy. The conflict was



THE BATTLE-FIELD OF BEAVER DAM CREEK AT ELLERSON'S MILL — PRESENT ASPECT. (DRAWN BY HARRY FENN AFTER PHOTOGRAPH BY E. S. ANDERSON.)

[This view is taken from the left of the Union position on the east slope, looking up-stream, the ruins of Ellerson's Mill being shown in the middle ground. The house at the left is Dr. Catlin's. The road past the mill, bending at the bridge over the creek, follows the bed of an old mill-dam (not in use at the time of the fight) for a quarter of a mile, and turns again to the left to Mechanicsville, which is three-quarters of a mile farther, and, from the observer's point of view, directly beyond the Catlin house. The Confederate advance from Mechanicsville was by this road, and by another which strikes the creek nearly a mile farther up. The Union position at this point was held by General Seymour, of McCall's division, with artillery intrenchments, rifle-pits, and abattis. The Confederates came across the open hills and down the slope and along the road (offering their flank to the Union artillery) to the line of the creek (shown by the trees below the bridge), but did not cross it. Their loss in this engagement was frightful. Dr. Catlin's son says that the slope of the hill was fairly covered with dead and wounded. The Catlin farm was occupied chiefly by Ripley's brigade of D. H. Hill's division, and by Pender's brigade of A. P. Hill's. The 44th Georgia alone lost 335 killed and wounded, and its efforts to re-form in the rear without officers are described as pathetic. "Good heavens!" said spectators, "is this all of the 44th Georgia?" — EDITOR.]



CHARGE OF A SUTLER UPON ANDERSON'S BRIGADE AT GAINES'S MILL.

[At this time there were four brigade commanders of this name in the Confederate army: G. B. Anderson, in D. H. Hill's division, R. H. Anderson, in Longstreet's, Joseph R. Anderson, in A. P. Hill's, and G. T. Anderson, in Magruder's corps. The reference here is to the first.—EDITOR.]

fierce and bloody. The Federals fell back from the wood under the protection of a fence, ditch, and hill. Separated now from them by an open field, some four hundred yards wide, he promptly determined to press forward. Before doing so, however, it was necessary to capture a battery on his left which could enfilade his line upon its advance. . . . Again pressing forward, the Federals again fell back, but only to select a position for a more obstinate defense, when, at dark, under the pressure of our batteries,— which had then begun to play with marked effect upon the left, of the other concurring events of the field, and of the bold and dashing charge of General Hill's infantry, in which the troops of Brigadier-General C. S. Winder joined,— the enemy yielded the field and fled in disorder." I have always believed that this was the first break in the Federal line; it disposed of Sykes's division of regulars, who had been so stubborn and so troublesome all day. The Comte de Paris says of their retreat: "Fearfully reduced as they are, they care less for the losses they have sustained than for the mortification of yielding to volunteers." The general advance of our whole line and their intrepid onset everywhere made the defeat of the regulars possible, but credit should be given to the troops that did it. We discovered that our line overlapped that of the Federal forces, and saw two brigades (afterwards ascertained to be under Lawton and Winder) advancing to make a front attack upon the regulars. Brigadier-Generals Samuel Garland and G. B. Anderson, commanding North Carolina bri-

GENERAL A. P. HILL. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY COOK.)

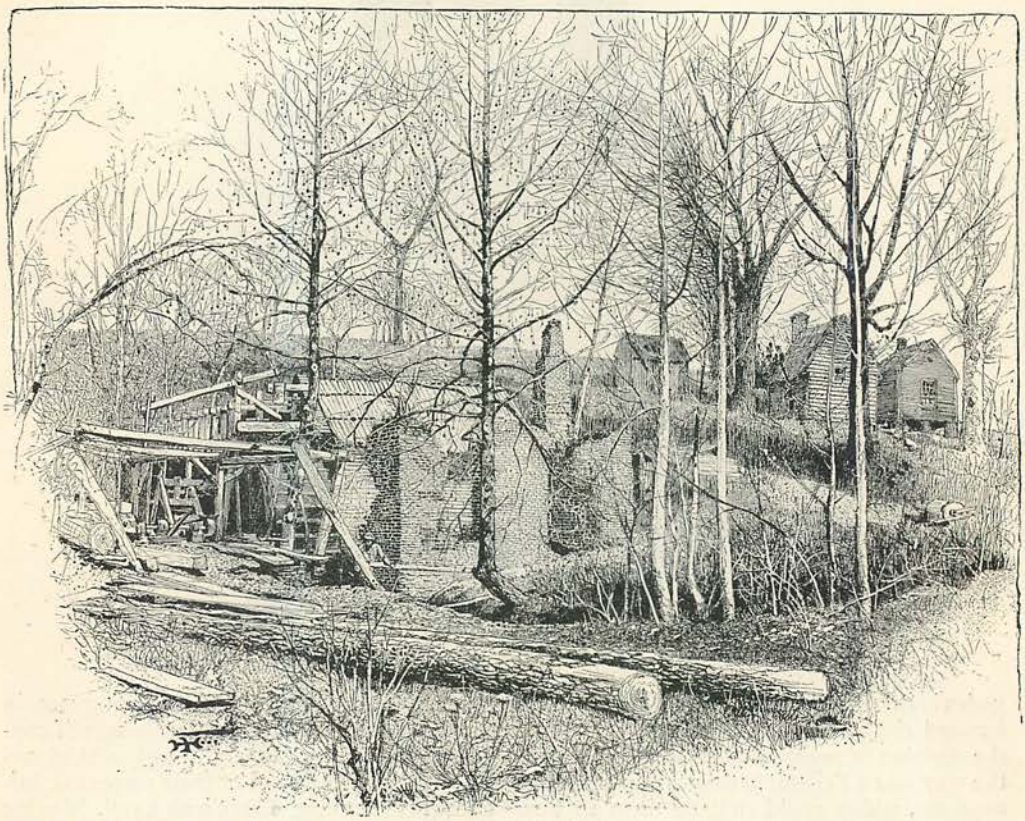
gades in my division, asked permission to move forward and attack the right flank and rear of the division of regulars. The only difficulty in the way was a Federal battery with its infantry supports, which could enfilade them in their advance. Two regiments of Elzey's brigade, which had got separated in crossing the swamp, were sent by me, by way of my left flank, to the rear of the battery to attack the infantry supports, while Colonel Iverson, of the Twentieth North Carolina, charged it in front. The battery was captured and held long enough for the two brigades to advance across the open plain. "The effect of our appearance," says Garland's official report, "at this opportune juncture [upon the enemy's flank], cheering and charging, decided the fate of the day. The enemy broke and retreated, made a second brief stand, which induced my immediate command to halt under good cover of the bank on the roadside and return their fire, when, charging forward again, they broke and scattered in every direction." Their retreat was to the woods between the field and the river. Swinton * gives credit to Hood and Law for making the first break in the Federal line, and quotes from Jackson's report: "Dashing on with unfaltering step in the face of those murderous discharges of canister and musketry, General Hood and Colonel E. M. Law at the head of their respective brigades rushed to the charge with a yell. Moving down a precipitous ravine, leaping ditch and stream, clambering up a difficult ascent, and exposed to an incessant and deadly fire from the intrenchments, these brave and determined men pressed forward, driving the enemy from his well selected and fortified position. In this charge, in which upward of a thousand men fell killed and wounded before the fire of the enemy, and in which fourteen pieces of artillery and nearly a regiment were captured, the Fourth Texas, under the lead of General Hood, was the first to pierce these strongholds and seize the guns." It is evident that Jackson means to compliment Hood for being the first to pierce the intrenchments on the Federal left. But the word "first" has been misleading as to the point where the break was first made in the Federal line.

General Lawton in his official report stated that after the forces were broken in front of him on our left, a staff-officer rode up and called for assistance to charge a battery on

* "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac." By William Swinton. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

the left, and that after marching two or three hundred yards by the *right* flank, "the shouts of victory from our friends announced that the last battery had been taken and the rout complete." In a letter to me just received, General Lawton says: "I do believe that the first break was on the right of the Federal line, and I moved against that line in front. My knowledge of the position of the battery to be charged was derived solely from the lips of a staff-officer, who rode up to me at full speed on the field, and returned immediately to his chief. My recollection is, that very promptly after I heard the shouts of victory from our friends, the same messenger came again to request me to halt. . . . I cannot feel that my memory fails me when I say that you struck the enemy in flank, while Winder's command and mine moved directly on his front. The effect of these several attacks was promptly felt, and soon became conspicuous."

It was now quite dark, and I took the responsibility of halting all the troops on our left. General Winder thought that we ought to pursue into the woods, on the right of the Grapevine Bridge road; but not knowing the position of our friends, nor what Federal reserves might be awaiting us in the woods, I thought it advisable not to move on. General Lawton concurred with me. I had no artillery to shell the woods in advance, as mine had not got through the swamp. No Confederate officer on the field knew that the Federals had but one bridge over which to retreat, else all the artillery that could have been collected would have opened fire upon the Federal masses crowded into a narrow space in the woods, and there would have been a general advance of our line under cover of this fire. Winder was right; even a show of pressure must have been attended with great results. I made my headquarters at McGee's house, and ordered my artillery and infantry to occupy the hill around it. The artillery, however, did not get into position until sunrise next morning. Before the infantry was in place, we



PRESENT ASPECT OF GAINES'S MILL, LOOKING EAST. (DRAWN BY HARRY FENN FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. S. ANDERSON.)

[At the time of the battle, this building was of five stories, and was, it is said, one of the finest grist-mills in Virginia. The wooden structure, dovetailed into the ruins, now covers but one pair of burrs. The mill was not injured in the fight, but was burned by Sheridan's cavalry in May, 1864, the fire extending to a dwelling-house which stood just beyond the mill. The main conflict was a mile farther to the south-east, but the ridge shown in the picture was the scene of a most gallant resistance to the Confederate advance by the Ninth Massachusetts regiment, acting as a rear-guard to Porter's corps. The road to New Cold Harbor and the battle-ground runs to the right of the picture. The mill-stream runs into Powhite Swamp, and thence into the Chickahominy.— EDITOR.]

(FROM PHOTOGRAPH BY BRADY.)

heard huzzaing on the bridge road, and understood by that that reënforcements had come up to cover the Federal retreat. They took up their position across the road and showed a determined front, but might have been broken by an artillery fire from our elevated plateau; unfortunately for us, there was no artillery to do this work.

Between nine and ten o'clock General Lawton and myself walked out alone to examine the line of battle across the road, afterwards discovered to be Meagher's Irish brigade. We got within thirty yards of the Federals, and must have been seen, but we were not fired upon, probably because we were mistaken for a party of their own men sent up to get water at McGee's well. We met the party going back, and saw them go into their own lines. Not a word was spoken by them or by us. At such times, "Silence is golden."

In his attack upon General McClellan's right wing General Lee had 50,000 men.* General Fitz John Porter, who commanded the Federals at Cold Harbor, handled his 40,000 men with an ability unsurpassed on any field during the war. He had greatly the advantage

* Dabney, in his "Life of Jackson," puts the Confederate force at 40,000. Swinton estimates General Porter's forces at 30,000 and Lee's at 70,000 — an under- and an over-estimate respectively, I think.—D. H. H. But see page 319.—EDITOR.

in position, and he had improved this superiority with intrenchments, log breastworks, rifle-pits, and abattis. He had an immense preponderance in artillery, and that of the most superb character. Many of our field-batteries did not get across the swamp at all, and those which did get over were inferior in range and power to General Porter's. Artillery seems to have been a favorite arm with General McClellan, and he had brought it to the highest point of efficiency.

I do not know how much of our infantry straggled in the swamp. Ripley got lost, and his fine brigade was not in action at all. Of Colquitt's brigade, the Sixth and Twenty-seventh Georgia regiments were engaged; the other three regiments were not. Rodes, Garland, and Anderson kept their brigades well in hand and did brilliant service. (These three splendid officers were all killed, subsequently, in battle.) I do not know how many men the other five divisions lost by the difficulties of the swamp; but if their loss was proportional to mine, the Confederates outnumbered the Federals by only a few hundreds. However, it is hardly probable that their loss was so great, as my division had to go through the densest part of the swamp.

Riding in advance of his skirmish-line through the swamp attended by a few staff-officers, General Jackson found himself in the presence of fifteen or twenty Federal soldiers on outpost duty. He judged it the part of prudence to assume the offensive and charge upon them before they fired upon him. I am indebted to Major T. O. Chestney, then assistant adjutant-general of Elzey's brigade, for the following account:

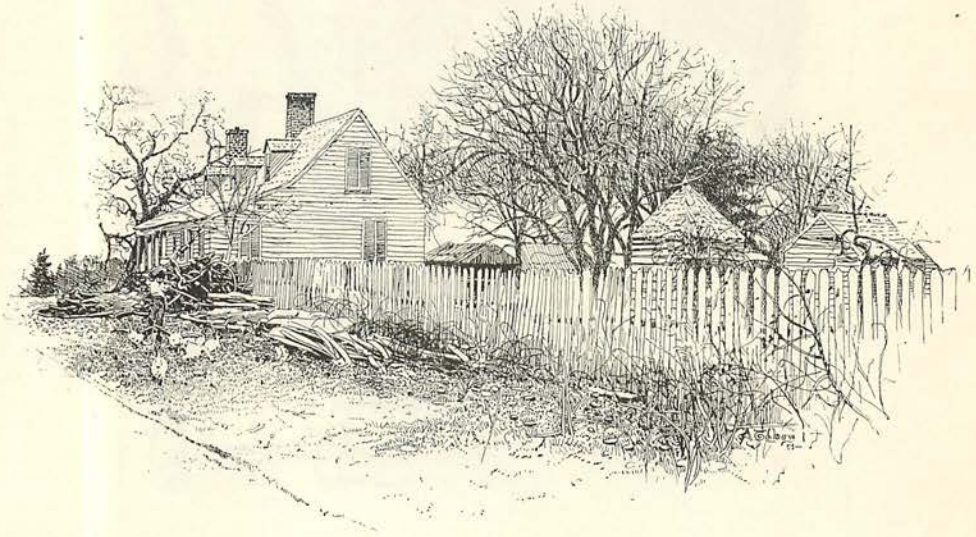
"As Elzey's brigade was pressing forward to the line held by the Confederates at the bloody battle of Gaines's Mill, a squad of fifteen or twenty soldiers were encountered on their way to the rear. A tall fellow at the head of the little party drew special attention to himself by singing out to us at the top of his voice with an oath, 'Gentlemen, we had the honor of being captured by Stonewall Jackson himself' — a statement which he repeated with evident pride all along the line, as our men tramped past. We subsequently learned that his story was true. General Jackson, having ridden some distance in advance, had come suddenly upon the blue-coats, and with his characteristic impetuosity had charged among them and ordered them to surrender, which they made haste to do."

One of the saddest things connected with the miserable fratricidal war was the breaking up of ties of friendship and of blood. The troops opposing mine on that murderous field that day were the regulars of General George Sykes, a Southerner by birth, and my room-mate at West Point,—a man admired by all for his honor, courage, and frankness, and peculiarly endeared to me by his social qualities. During the negotiations of the cartel for the exchange of prisoners, intrusted to General Dix and myself, I sent word to General Sykes, through Colonel Sweitzer, of General McClellan's staff, that "had I known that he was in front of me at Cold Harbor, I would have sent some of my North Carolina boys up to take him out of the *cold*." He replied through the same source: "I appreciate the sarcasm, but our time will be next and the tables will be turned." Alas! it was a true prophecy. About nine P. M. on the 27th, Major H. B. Clitz was brought into my room at the McGee house, headquarters for the night, wounded in the leg, and a prisoner. He was very young and boyish-looking when he entered West Point, and was a very great favorite with us of maturer years. It flashed upon my mind how, in the Mexican war, as his regiment filed past, I had almost a fatherly fear lest he should be struck; and now he was here, wounded by one of my own men! He was tenderly cared for by my medical director, Doctor Mott, and I was delighted to learn that he would not lose his leg. With a sort of shamefacedness, my staff gave him some of our coarse supper. Longstreet's inspector-general, much under the influence of liquor, got into quite a heated discussion with Major Clitz, in which the latter said, "You have outnumbered us to-day, but if McClellan is the man I take him to be, he'll pay you well for it before all is over." Malvern Hill impressed this remark upon my memory! I said to the Confederate, "You must not be rude to a wounded prisoner," and he apologized frankly for his abrupt language. The next morning General J. F. Reynolds was brought in as a prisoner. He had been my mess-mate in the old army for more than a year, and for half that time my tent-mate. Not an unkind word had ever passed between us. General Reynolds seemed confused and mortified at his position. He sat down and covered his face with his hands, and at length said: "Hill, we ought not to be enemies." I told him that there was no bad feeling on my part, and that he ought not to fret at the fortunes of war, which were notoriously fickle. He was placed in my ambulance and sent over to Richmond, declining a loan of Confederate money. General Reynolds had gone to sleep in the woods between the battle-ground and the Chickahominy, and when he awoke, his troops were gone and the bridge broken down.

Winder, Anderson, and Garland, probably the most promising of all our young brigadiers,

fell fighting for the cause they loved so well. Reynolds, one of the noblest of mankind, fell doing his duty on his side at Gettysburg. Sykes, as the friend of McClellan, never received the recognition which his knightly qualities demanded. Worst of all, Porter, who commanded on the field the most creditable to the Federal arms, received that condemnation so much worse than death to the proud soldier from the country he had served so ably and so loyally.

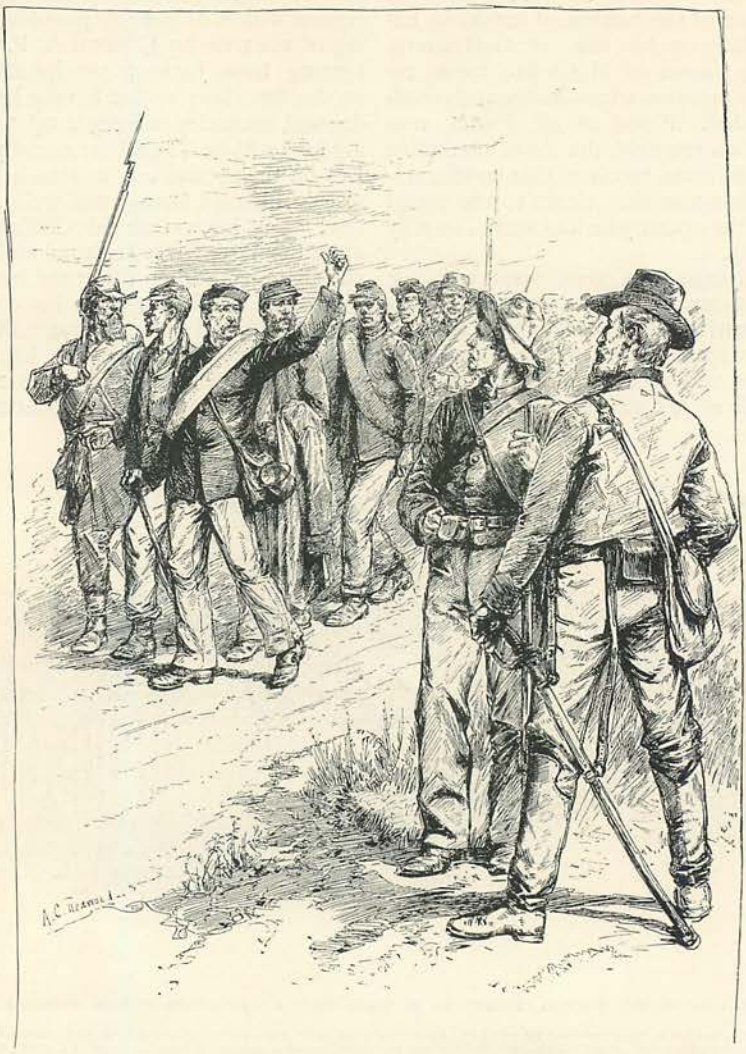
In these battles, the great want with the Confederates, strange as it may seem, was accurate knowledge of the country in their front. The map furnished me (and I suppose the six other major-generals had no better) was very full in regard to everything within our own lines; but a red line on the east side of the Chickahominy and nearly parallel to it, without any points marked on it, was our only guide to the route on which our march was to be made. None of us knew of the formidable character of the works on Beaver Dam. The blood shed by the Southern troops there was wasted in vain, and worse than in vain; for the fight had a most dispiriting effect on our troops. They might have been halted at Mechanicsville until Jackson had turned the works on the creek, and all that waste of blood could have been avoided. Ripley's brigade was sent to the assistance of Pender, by the direct order, through me, of both Mr. Davis and General Lee. They both felt pressing upon them the vast importance of keeping near Richmond, and of opening up communications with it as soon as possible. The crossing of the river by General A. P. Hill before hearing from Jackson precipitated the fight on the first day; and it having begun, it was deemed necessary to keep it up, without waiting for Jackson. The same necessity compelled Lee on the second day to attack his antagonist on his own strong and well-chosen position. Lee knew that McClellan depended upon the York River Railroad for his supplies, and by moving upon that road he could have compelled the battle upon his own selected ground, with all the advantages thereof. The lack of transportation, and the fear of the capture of Richmond while he was making this detour to the Federal rear, constrained him to surrender the advantage of position to McClellan and his able lieutenant, General Porter, commanding in the field. Never was ground more wisely chosen or more skillfully arranged for defense.



OLD COLD HARBOR TAVERN. (DRAWN BY W. TABER FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY E. S. ANDERSON.)

[This view is from the south, from the road by which the Confederate left under Stonewall Jackson and D. H. Hill advanced to attack Porter's right. Five roads meet at this point. Old Cold Harbor consists of one or two houses and a smithy. During the battle of Gaines's Mill the tavern was within the Confederate lines. Two years later, during the bloody engagement of General Grant's campaign, it was within the Union lines. The name is sometimes written Cool Harbor, Coal Harbor, or Cool Arbor; but Mr. Burnet, the present owner of the tavern, says that family tradition admits only Cold Harbor.— EDITOR.]

During Lee's absence Richmond was at the mercy of McClellan; but Magruder was there to keep up a "clatter," as Swinton expresses it. No one was better fitted for such a work. When McClellan landed on the Peninsula, he had 118,000 men, and Magruder had 11,500 to cover a defensive line of fourteen miles (see "Official Records, War of the Rebellion," Vol. XI., Part III., pages 77 and 436). But "Prince John" (as Magruder was called) amused his enemy by keeping up a "clatter," and, it may be, amused himself as well. No one



"CAPTURED BY STONEWALL JACKSON HIMSELF." (SEE PAGE 306.)

ever lived who could play off the Grand Seignior with a more lordly air than could the Prince.* During the absence of Lee, he kept up such a clatter that each of McClellan's corps commanders was expecting a special visit from the much-plumed cap and the once-gaudy attire of the master of ruses and strategy. He put on naturally all those grand and imposing devices which so successfully deceive the military opponent.

Just before we crossed the Chickahominy, I asked General Garland if he remembered what Napoleon said at Austerlitz when one of his marshals had begged permission to at-

* In ante-bellum days (so the old army story used to run) Magruder was a lieutenant of artillery at Rouse's Point. There his mess entertained some British officers, two of whom were scions of nobility. The visit having been expected, the mess had borrowed or rented gold plate and silver plate, cut-glass ware, rich furniture, and stylish equipages for driving the noble guests around. Prince John assured them that these were but the débris of the former splendor of the regimental mess. "Only the débris, my lord; the schooner bringing most of the mess plate from Florida was unfortunately wrecked." One of the dazzled and bewildered noblemen said to Prince John, on the second day of the gorgeous festival: "We do not wish to be impolitely inquisitive, but we have been so much impressed with this magnificence that we are constrained to believe that American officers must be paid enormously. What is your monthly pay?" Assuming an indifferent air, Prince John said: "Damned if I know," then, turning to his servant, he asked, "Jim, what is my monthly pay?" The servant was discreetly silent, it may be from a wink, or it may be that to remember sixty-five dollars was too heavy a tax upon his memory also.—D. H. H.

tack a column of the Austro-Russian army which was making a flank movement. Garland replied: "I, too, was just thinking that McClellan was saying to his officers, as Napoleon did, 'When your enemy is making a false movement, do not strike him till he has completed it'; and it may be that he will gobble up Richmond while we are away.".

The fortifications around Richmond at that time were very slight. He could have captured the city with but little loss of life. The want of supplies would have forced Lee to attack him as soon as possible, with all the disadvantages of a precipitated movement. But the Federal commander seems to have contemplated nothing of the kind; and as he placed the continuance of the siege upon the hazard of Cold Harbor, he was bound to put every available man into that fight.

While we were lying all day idle on the 28th, unable to cross the Chickahominy, the clouds of smoke from the burning plunder in the Federal camps and the frequent explosions of magazines indicated a retreat; but General Whiting kept insisting upon it that all this was but a *ruse de guerre* of McClellan preparatory to a march upon Richmond. I made to him some such reply as that once made to General Longstreet, when a cadet at West Point, by Professor Kendrick.

The professor asked Longstreet, who never looked at his chemistry, how the carbonic acid of commerce was made. Longstreet replied:

"By burning diamonds in oxygen gas."

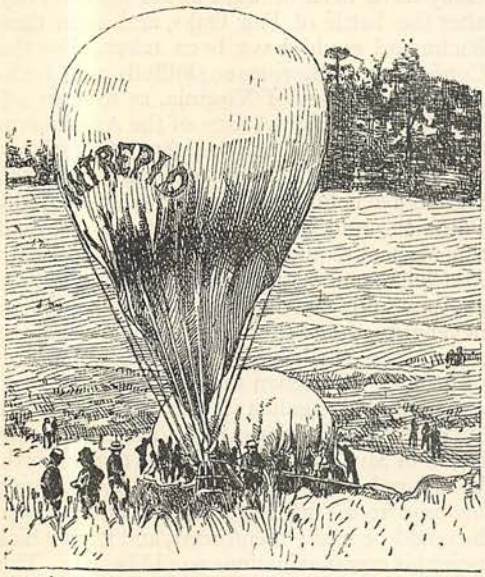
"Yes," said Professor Kendrick, "that will do it; but don't you think it would be a *leetle* expensive?" *

"Don't you think," I said to Whiting, "that this *ruse* of McClellan is a leetle expensive?"

The old West Point yarn had a very quieting effect upon his apprehensions.

D. H. Hill.

THE BATTLE OF GAINES'S MILL AND ITS PRELIMINARIES.



LOWE'S MILITARY BALLOON, IN THE SERVICE OF GENERAL McCLELLAN IN THE RICHMOND CAMPAIGN. ‡

THE events immediately preceding the "Seven Days' Battles on the Peninsula," in June, 1862, have been subjects of great historical interest, and the causes which prompted certain movements connected with that campaign have given rise to much dispute and controversy. It is with the hope that a history of the part taken by my command during those days may shed new light upon the story of that eventful period, that the following narrative has been prepared. I have been compelled, however, to confine myself to facts within my own personal knowledge and to statements of the matters that influenced my actions, whether premeditated and by order, or the result of movements necessary to be taken by the exigencies of existing circumstances.

After the battle of Fair Oaks, during the greater part of the month of June, 1862, the Army of the Potomac, under General McClellan, and the Army of Northern Virginia, under General Lee, confronted each other, east of Richmond. The two armies were of nearly equal strength.† McClellan's forces, divided by the Chickahominy, were extended south of that stream, from New Bridge to White Oak Swamp, leaving north of the river only the Fifth Army Corps. The Confederate troops faced the Federal army throughout its length,

* Professor Kendrick would never contradict any one, but always modify the answer when wrong. The following is a specimen of his style of questioning. X. Y. Z. (whose name is now a household word) was on examination: Professor K. "What is its color?" X. Y. Z. "White, sir." Professor K. "Yes, you mean a kind of grayish white. In fact, you might call it coal black, might you not?" X. Y. Z. "Yes, sir, that's it."—D. H. H.

† The records give: Union army, 144 regiments, 60 batteries; Confederate, 187 regiments, 89 batteries.—F. J. P.

‡ Colonel Auchmuty, of New York City, who made many ascensions by this balloon from the camp near Doctor Gaines's before the battle, says that the Confederates had a Whitworth gun at Mrs. Price's, on the south side of the Chickahominy, with which they would fire at the balloon as it rose and descended. The usual height for observation was 1000 feet; and when lower than 300 feet high the balloon was within range of this gun. General Porter made no fewer than a hundred such ascensions.—EDITOR.