

McCLELLAN'S CHANGE OF BASE.

THE CONFEDERATE PURSUIT.



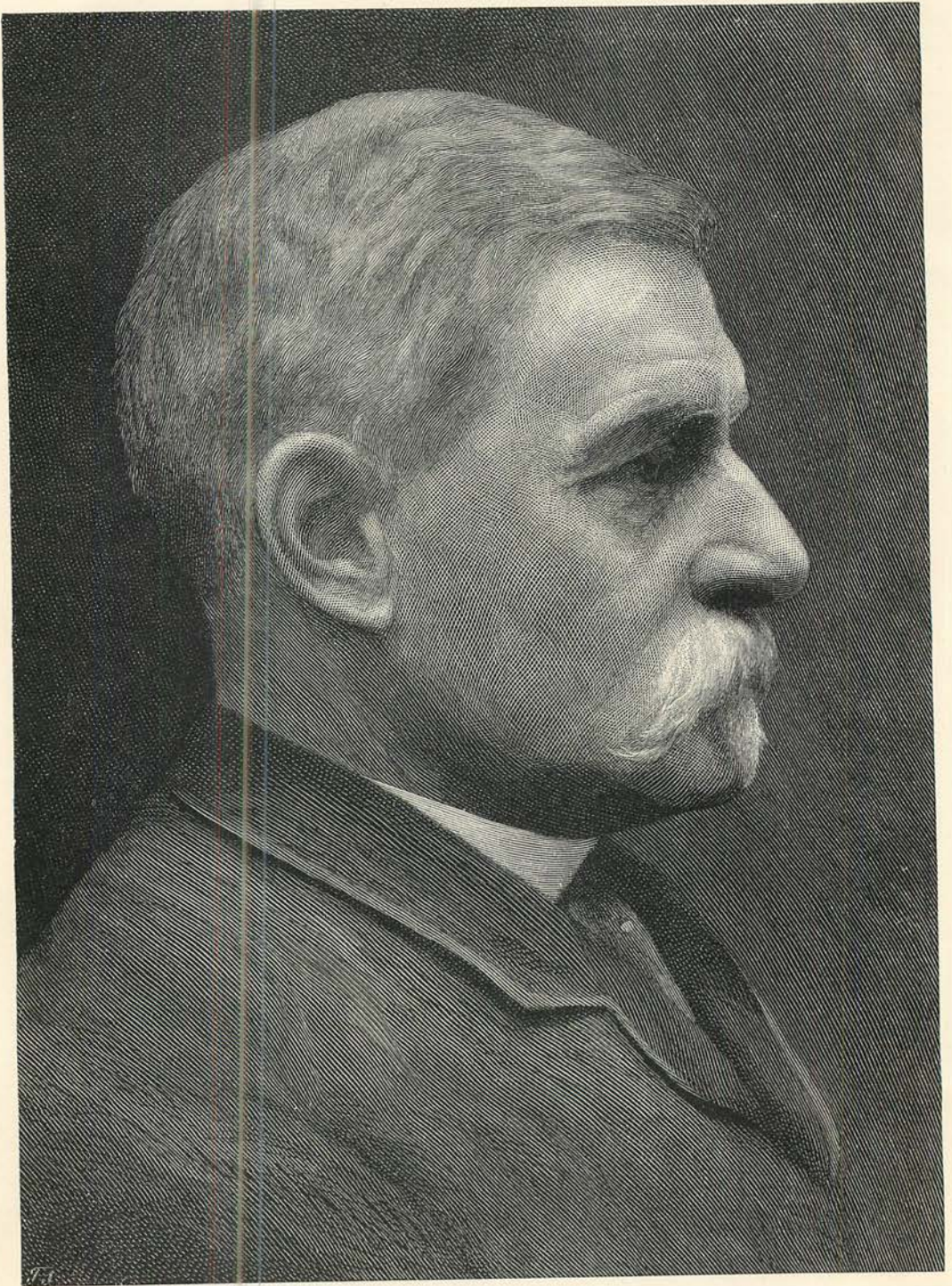
WILLIS'S CHURCH, ON THE QUAKER ROAD, NEAR GLENDALE.
USED AS A CONFEDERATE HOSPITAL AFTER THE
BATTLE OF MALVERN HILL.

FIVE of the six Confederate divisions north of the Chickahominy at the close of the battle of Gaines's Mill remained in bivouac all the next day (June 28th), it being deemed too hazardous to force the passage of the river in the presence of the enemy. General Ewell was sent with his division to Dispatch Station on the York River railroad. (See map on page 453.) He found the station and the railroad-bridge burnt. J. E. B. Stuart, who followed the retreating Federal cavalry to the White House on the Pamunkey River, found destruction of stations and stores all along the line. These things proved that General McClellan did not intend to retreat by the short line of the York River railroad; but it was possible he might take the Williamsburg road. General Lee, therefore, kept his troops on the north side of the river, that he might be ready to move on the Federal flank, should that route be attempted. New Bridge was repaired on Saturday (the 28th), and our troops were then ready to move in either direction. The burnings and explosions in the Federal camp Saturday afternoon and night showed that General McClel-

lan had determined to abandon his strong fortifications around Richmond. Ewell, who was watching him at Bottom's Bridge, and the cavalry, holding the crossings lower down, both reported that there was no attempt at the Williamsburg route. Longstreet and A. P. Hill were sent across the river at New Bridge early on Sunday morning to move down the Darbytown road to the Long Bridge road to intercept the retreat to the James River. This movement began before it was known that General McClellan had evacuated his stronghold. Lee gave here the first illustration of a quality for which he became noted—the remarkable discernment of his adversary's plans through the study of his character. McClellan could have retreated to Yorktown with as little loss as Johnston sustained on his retreat from it. The roads from Richmond to Yorktown lead through a wooded and swampy country, on which strong rear-guards could have afforded perfect protection to a retreating column without bringing on a general engagement. General Johnston, on his retreat from Yorktown, did fight at Williamsburg, but it was a battle of his own choosing, and not one forced upon him by the vigor of pursuit. Lee had but little idea that McClellan would return to Yorktown, judging rightly that the military pride of his distinguished opponent would not permit him to march back a defeated column to the point from which he had started, a few months before, for the capture of the Confederate capital, with his splendid army and magnificent outfit.* It is a proof of Lee's sagacity that he predicated his orders for an advance upon the belief that General McClellan was too proud a man to fall back by the same route by which the triumphal advance had been made. A great commander must study the mental and moral characteristics of the opposing leader, and Lee was specially endowed with an aptitude in that direction. At the battle of Salzbach, Montecucculi, the Austrian commander, noticed the French troops making a movement so different from the cautious style of his famous rival that he exclaimed, "Either Turenne is dead or mortally wounded." So it proved to be; the French marshal had been killed by a cannon-ball before the movement began.

In pursuance of General Lee's plan, Huger

* The capture of Petersburg would have been almost as disastrous to the South as the capture of Richmond, and for many days Petersburg was at the mercy of the Federal army. There were no troops and no fortifications there when General McClellan reached the James. Some two weeks after the battle of Malvern Hill the first earth-works were begun at Petersburg, by my order.—D. H. H.



Geo. S. M. Allen

was directed (on the 29th) to take the Charles City road to strike the retreating column below White Oak Swamp. Holmes was to take possession of Malvern Hill, and Magruder to follow the line of retreat, as soon as the works were abandoned. The abandonment became known about sunrise on Sunday morning, but Grapevine bridge was not completed till sunset. Jackson then crossed his corps at that point, my division leading. We bivouacked that night near Savage's Station, where McLaws's division had had a severe fight a few hours before. Just at dawn on Monday, the 30th, we were in motion, when I discovered what appeared to be a line of battle drawn up at the station, but which proved to be a line of sick and of hospital attendants, two thousand five hundred in number. About half a mile from the station we saw what seemed to be an entire regiment of Federals cold in death, and learned that a Vermont regiment had made a desperate charge upon the division of McLaws, and had been almost annihilated. From the time of crossing the river, we had evidence everywhere of the precipitate nature of the Federal retreat. Dabney, in his life of Jackson, says:

"The whole country was full of deserted plunder, army wagons, and pontoon trains partially burned or crippled; mounds of grain and rice and hillocks of mess beef smoldering; tens of thousands of axes, picks, and shovels; camp kettles gashed with hatchets; medicine chests with their drugs stirred into a foul medley; and all the apparatus of a vast and lavish host; while the mire under foot was mixed with blankets lately new, and with overcoats torn from the waist up. For weeks afterwards agents of our army were busy in gathering in the spoils. Great stores of fixed ammunition were saved, while more were destroyed."

In our march from Savage's Station my division picked up a thousand prisoners, stragglers from the retreating army, and gathered a large number of abandoned rifles. I detached two regiments (the Fourth and Fifth North Carolina) to take the prisoners and arms to Richmond. We reached White Oak Swamp about noon, and there found another hospital camp, with about five hundred sick in it. Truly, the Chickahominy swamps were fatal to the Federal forces. A high bluff was on our side of the little stream called White Oak, and a large uncultivated field on the other side. In this field could be seen a battery of artillery, supported by a brigade of infantry — artillerists and infantry lying down and apparently asleep. Under cover of Munford's regiment of cavalry, thirty-one field pieces were placed upon the bluff, and were ordered to open fire as soon as the cavalry mask was removed. The battery fired its loaded guns in reply, and then galloped off, followed by its infantry supports and the long

lines of infantry farther back in the field. Munford crossed his regiment over the ford, and Jackson and myself went with him to see what had become of the enemy. We soon found out. The battery had taken up a position behind a point of woods, where it was perfectly sheltered from our guns, but could play upon the broken bridge and ford, and upon every part of the uncultivated field. It opened with grape and canister upon us, and we retired rapidly. Fast riding in the wrong direction is not military, but it is sometimes healthy. We had taken one prisoner, a drunken Irishman, but he declined the honor of going back with us, and made fight with his naked fists. A soldier asked me naively whether he should shoot the Irishman or let him go. I am glad that I told him to let the man go, to be a comfort to his family. That Irishman must have had a charmed life. He was under the shelter of his gum-cloth coat hung on a stick, near the ford, when a citizen fired at him four times, from a distance of about fifty paces; and the only recognition that I could see the man make was to raise his hand as if to brush off a fly. One of the shells set the farm-house on fire. The owner came out and told us that General "Baldy" Smith was taking a bath in the house at the time. I do not know how refreshing the general found it, or whether the story was true. We learned, however, that Franklin's corps was in front of us, and that item of news was true.

Our cavalry returned by a lower ford, and pronounced it perfectly practicable for infantry. But Jackson did not advance. Why was this? It was the critical day for both commanders, but especially for McClellan. With consummate skill he had crossed his vast train of five thousand wagons and his immense parks of artillery safely over White Oak Swamp, but he was more exposed now than at any time in his flank march. Three columns of attack were converging upon him, and a strong corps was pressing upon his rear. Escape seemed impossible for him, but he *did* escape, at the same time inflicting heavy damage upon his pursuers. General Lee, through no fault in his plans, was to see his splendid prize slip through his hands. Longstreet and A. P. Hill struck the enemy at Frayser's Farm (or Glendale) at 3 P. M. on the 30th, and, both being always ready for a fight, immediately attacked. Magruder, who followed them down the Darbytown road, was ordered to the assistance of General Holmes on the New Market road, who was not then engaged, and their two divisions took no part in the action. Huger, on the Charles City road, came upon Franklin's left flank,*

* See map on page 470.

but made no attack. I sent my engineer officer, Captain W. F. Lee, to him through the swamp, to ask whether he could not engage Franklin. He replied that the road was obstructed by fallen timber. So there were five divisions within sound of the firing, and within supporting distance, but not one of them moved. Longstreet and A. P. Hill made a desperate fight, contending against Sumner's corps, and the divisions of McCall, Kearny, and Hooker; but they failed to gain possession of the Quaker road, upon which McClellan was retreating. That night Franklin glided silently by them. He had to pass within easy range of the artillery of Longstreet and Hill, but they did not know he was there. It had been a gallant fight on their part. General Lee reported: "Many prisoners, including a general of division, McCall, were captured, and several batteries, with some thousands of small arms, were taken." But as an obstruction to the Federal retreat, the fight amounted to nothing.

Major Dabney, in his life of Jackson, thus comments on the inaction of that officer: "On this occasion it would appear, if the vast interests dependent upon General Jackson's coöperation with the proposed attack upon the center were considered, that he came short of the efficiency in action for which he was everywhere else noted." After showing how the crossing of White Oak might have been effected, Dabney adds: "The list of casualties would have been larger than that presented on the 30th, of one cannoner wounded: but how much shorter would have been the bloody list filled up the next day at Malvern Hill? This temporary eclipse of Jackson's genius was probably to be explained by physical causes. The labor of the previous days, the sleeplessness, the wear of gigantic cares, with the drenching of the comfortless night, had sunk the elasticity of his will and the quickness of his invention for the nonce below their wonted tension. And which of the sons of man is so great as never to experience this?"

I think that an important factor in this inaction was Jackson's pity for his own corps, worn out by long and exhausting marches, and reduced in numbers by its score of sanguinary battles. He thought that the garrison of Richmond ought now to bear the brunt of the fighting. None of us knew that the veterans of Longstreet and A. P. Hill were unsupported; nor did we even know that the firing that we heard was theirs. Had all our troops been at Frayser's Farm, there would have been no Malvern Hill.

Jackson's genius never shone out when under the command of another. It seemed then to be shrouded or paralyzed. Compare his inertness on this occasion with the

wonderful vigor shown a few weeks later at Slaughter's Mountain, in the stealthy march to Pope's rear, and later still in the capture of Harper's Ferry. MacGregor on his native heath was not more different from MacGregor in prison, than was Jackson his own master from Jackson in a subordinate position. He wrote once to Richmond requesting that he "might have fewer orders and more men." That was the keynote to his whole character. The hooded falcon cannot strike the quarry.

The gentleman who tried his "splendid rifle" on the drunken Irishman was the Rev. L. W. Allen. Mr. Allen had been raised in that neighborhood, and knew Malvern Hill well. He spoke of its commanding height, the difficulties of approach to it, its amphitheatrical form and ample area, which would enable McClellan to arrange his three hundred and fifty field guns tier above tier and sweep the plain in every direction. I became satisfied that an attack upon the concentrated Federal army so splendidly posted, and with such vast superiority in artillery, could only be fatal to us. The anxious thought then was, Have Holmes and Magruder been able to keep McClellan from Malvern Hill? General Holmes arrived at Malvern at 10:40 A. M. on the 30th, with five thousand one hundred and seventy infantry, four batteries of artillery, and one hundred and thirty improvised or irregular cavalry. He did not attempt to occupy the hill, although only fifteen hundred Federals had yet reached it. Our cavalry had passed over it on the afternoon of the 29th and had had a sharp skirmish with the Federal cavalry on the Quaker road.

As General Holmes marched down the river, his troops became visible to the gun-boats, which opened fire upon them, throwing those awe-inspiring shells familiarly called by our men "lamp-posts," on account of their size and appearance. Their explosion was very much like that of a small volcano, and had a very demoralizing effect upon new troops, one of whom expressed the general sentiment by saying: "The Yankees threwed them lamp-posts about too careless like." The roaring, howling gun-boat shells were usually harmless to flesh, blood, and bones, but they had a wonderful effect upon the nervous system. General Junius Daniel, a most gallant and accomplished officer, who had a brigade under General Holmes, gave me an incident connected with the affair on the 30th, known as the "Battle of Malvern Cliff." General Holmes, who was very deaf, had gone into a little house concealed from the boats by some intervening woods, and was engaged in some business when the bellowing of the "lamp-posts" began. The irregular cavalry stam-

peded and made a brilliant charge to the rear. The artillerists of two guns of Graham's Petersburg battery were also panic-struck, and cutting their horses loose mounted them, and, with dangling traces, tried to catch up with the fleet-footed cavaliers. The infantry troops were inexperienced in the wicked ways of war, having never been under fire before. The fright of the fleeing chivalry would have pervaded their ranks also with the same mischievous result but for the strenuous efforts of their officers, part of whom were veterans. Some of the raw levies crouched behind little saplings to get protection from the shrieking, blustering shells. At this juncture General Holmes, who, from his deafness, was totally unaware of the rumpus, came out of the hut, put his hand behind his right ear, and said: "I thought I heard firing." Some of the pale-faced infantry thought that they also had heard firing.

Part of Wise's brigade joined Holmes on the 30th, with two batteries of artillery and two regiments of cavalry. His entire force then consisted of five thousand eight hundred and twenty infantry, six batteries of artillery, and two regiments of cavalry. He remained inactive until 4 P. M., when he was told that the Federal army was passing over Malvern Hill in a demoralized condition. He then opened upon the supposed fugitives with six rifled guns, and was speedily undeceived in regard to the disorganization in the Army of the Potomac by a reply from thirty guns, which in a brief time silenced his own. The audacity of the Federals and the large number of their guns (which had gone in advance of the main body of Porter's corps) made General Holmes believe that he was about to be attacked, and he called for assistance, and, by Longstreet's order, Magruder was sent to him. After a weary march, Magruder was recalled to aid Longstreet; but the day was spent in fruitless marching and countermarching, so that his fine body of troops took no part in what might have been a decisive battle at Frayser's Farm. General Holmes was a veteran soldier of well-known personal courage, but he was deceived as to the strength and intentions of the enemy. General Porter says that the force opposed to General Holmes consisted of Warren's brigade and the Eleventh U. S. Infantry; in all, fifteen hundred infantry and thirty pieces of artillery. Here was afforded an example of the proneness to overestimate the number of troops opposed to us. The Federals reported Holmes to have twenty-five thousand men, and he thought himself confronted by a large part of McClellan's army. That night he fell back to a stronger position,* thinking appar-

ently that there would be an "on to Richmond" movement by the River Road. He lost two killed, forty-nine wounded, two pieces of artillery, and six caissons. The guns and caissons, General Porter states, were afterwards abandoned by the Federals. General Holmes occupied the extreme Confederate right the next day, July 1st, but he took no part in the attack upon Malvern Hill, believing, as he says in his official report, "that it was out of the question to attack the strong position of Malvern Hill from that side with my inadequate force."

Mahone's brigade had some skirmishing with Slocum's Federal division on the 30th, but nothing else was done on that day by Huger's division. Thus it happened that Longstreet and A. P. Hill, with the fragments of their divisions shattered at Gaines's Mill, were struggling alone, while Jackson's whole corps and the divisions of Huger, Magruder, Holmes, McLaws, and my own were near by.

Jackson moved over the Swamp early on the first of July, Whiting's division leading. Our march was much delayed by the crossing of troops and trains. At Willis's Church I met General Lee. He bore grandly his terrible disappointment of the day before, and made no allusion to it. I gave him Mr. Allen's description of Malvern Hill, and presumed to say, "If General McClellan is there in force, we had better let him alone." Longstreet laughed and said, "Don't get scared, now that we have got him whipped." It was this belief in the demoralization of the Federal army that made our leader risk the attack. It was near noon when Jackson reached the immediate neighborhood of Malvern Hill. Some time was spent in reconnoitering, and in making tentative efforts with our few batteries to ascertain the strength and position of the enemy. I saw Jackson helping with his own hands to push Riley's North Carolina battery farther forward. It was soon disabled, the woods around us being filled with shrieking and exploding shells. I noticed an artilleryman seated comfortably behind a very large tree, and apparently feeling very secure. A moment later a shell passed through the huge tree and took off the man's head. This gives an idea of the great power of the Federal rifled artillery. Whiting's division was ordered to the left of the Quaker road, and mine to the right; Ewell's was in reserve. Jackson's own division had been halted at Willis's Church. The divisions of Magruder, Huger, and McLaws were still farther over to my right. Those of Longstreet and A. P. Hill were in reserve on the right and were not engaged.

At length we were ordered to advance.

* Half a mile below the upper gate at Curl's Neck. (See Holmes's Report, Vol. XI., Pt. 2, Rebellion Records.)—D. H. H.

The brigade of General Joseph R. Anderson first encountered the enemy, and its commander was wounded and borne from the field. His troops, however, crossed the creek and took position in the woods, commanded by Colonel C. C. Tew, a skillful and gallant man. Rodes being sick, his brigade was commanded by that peerless soldier, Colonel J. B. Gordon. Ripley, Garland, and Colquitt also got over without serious loss. My five brigade commanders and myself now made an examination of the enemy's position.* He was found to be strongly posted on a commanding hill, all the approaches to which could be swept by his artillery and were guarded by swarms of infantry, securely sheltered by fences, ditches, and ravines. We remained a long while awaiting orders, when I received the following :

July 1, 1862.

GENERAL D. H. HILL: Batteries have been established to act upon the enemy's line. If it is broken, as is probable, Armistead,† who can witness the effect of the fire, has been ordered to charge with a yell. Do the same.

R. H. CHILTON, A. A. G.

A similar order was sent to each division commander. However, only one battery of our artillery came up at a time, and each successive one, as it took position, had fifty pieces turned upon it, and was crushed in a minute. Not knowing what to do under the circumstances, I wrote to General Jackson that the condition upon which the order was predicated was not fulfilled, and that I wanted instructions. He replied to advance when I heard the shouting. We did advance at the signal, and after an unassisted struggle for an hour and a half, and after meeting with some success, we were compelled to fall back under cover of the woods. Magruder advanced at the same signal, having portions of the divisions of Huger and McLaws, comprising the brigades of Mahone, Wright, Barksdale, Ransom, Cobb, Semmes, Kershaw, Armistead, and G. T. Anderson. But he met with some delay, and did not get in motion till he received a second order from General Lee, and we were then beaten.

The Comte de Paris, who was on McClellan's staff, gives this account of the charge of my most gallant division :

"Hill advanced alone against the Federal positions. . . . He had therefore before him Morell's right, Couch's division, reinforced by Caldwell's brigade . . . and finally the left of Kearny.* The woods skirting the foot of Malvern Hill had hitherto protected the Confederates, but as soon as they passed beyond the edge of the forest, they were received by a fire

from all the batteries at once, some posted on the hill, others ranged midway, close to the Federal infantry. The latter joined its musketry fire to the cannonade when Hill's first line had come within range, and threw it back in disorder on the reserves. While it was re-forming, new (Federal) battalions marched up to the assault in their turn. The remembrance of Cold Harbor doubles the energy of Hill's soldiers. They try to pierce the line, sometimes at one point, sometimes at another, charging Kearny's left first, and Couch's right, . . . and afterwards throwing themselves upon the left of Couch's division. But here also, after nearly reaching the Federal positions, they are repulsed. The conflict is carried on with great fierceness on both sides, and, for a moment, it seems as if the Confederates are at last about to penetrate the very center of their adversaries and of the formidable artillery, which but now was dealing destruction in their ranks. But Sumner, who commands on the right, detaches Sickles's and Meagher's brigades successively to Couch's assistance. During this time, Whiting on the left, and Huger on the right, suffer Hill's soldiers to become exhausted without supporting them. Neither Lee nor Jackson has sent the slightest order, and the din of the battle which is going on in their immediate vicinity has not sufficed to make them march against the enemy. . . . At seven o'clock Hill reorganized the *débris* of his troops in the woods; . . . his tenacity and the courage of his soldiers have only had the effect of causing him to sustain heavy losses." (Pp. 141-142, Vol. II.)

Truly, the courage of the soldiers was sublime! Battery after battery was in their hands for a few moments, only to be wrested away by fresh troops of the enemy. If one division could effect this much, what might have been done had the other nine coöperated with it!

General Lee says :

"D. H. Hill pressed forward across the open field and engaged the enemy gallantly, breaking and driving back his first line; but a simultaneous advance of the other troops not taking place, he found himself unable to maintain the ground he had gained against the overwhelming numbers and the numerous batteries of the enemy. Jackson sent to his support his own division, and that part of Ewell's which was in reserve; but owing to the increasing darkness, and the intricacy of the forest and swamp, they did not arrive in time to render the desired assistance. Hill was therefore compelled to abandon part of the ground that he had gained, after suffering severe loss and inflicting heavy damage upon the enemy."

I never saw anything more grandly heroic than the advance after sunset of the nine brigades under Magruder's orders.‡ Unfortunately, they did not move together, and were beaten in detail. As each brigade emerged from the woods, from fifty to one hundred guns opened upon it, tearing great gaps in its ranks; but the heroes reeled on and were shot down by the reserves at the guns, which a few squads reached. Most of them had an open field half a mile wide to cross, and this under the terrible fire of field artillery in front, and the

* See map on page 477.

† Immediately on my right.—D. H. H.

‡ Toombs's brigade belonged to this command, but had been moved up to the assistance of my division by my order when we were hard pressed. It was not, therefore, in the final attack made by Magruder.—D. H. H.

fire of the heavy ordnance of the gun-boats in their rear. It was not war—it was murder.

Our loss was double that of the Federals at Malvern Hill. Not only did the fourteen brigades which were engaged suffer, but also the inactive troops and those brought up as reserves too late to be of any use met many casualties from the fearful artillery fire which reached all parts of the woods for miles around. Hence, more than half the casualties were from the Federal field-pieces—an unprecedented thing in warfare. The artillery practice was kept up till nine o'clock at night. The darkness of the night added to the glory of the pyrotechnics, and though we were on the wrong side of the belching flames, we could not help looking at the gorgeous display with admiration, and even with enthusiasm. It was quite late when I had posted for the night the last of the reënforcements that had come up when the battle was over. A half hour before the last disposition was made, an incident occurred which is thus related by General Trimble:

“I proposed to General D. H. Hill to ride forward and reconnoiter the enemy's position. We approached within one hundred steps of the enemy's batteries, and could hear plainly the ordinary tone of conversation. The guns were then firing on the woods to our left, where the last attack had been made, at right angles to that part of the field we were then in. I suggested to General Hill the advantage of making an attack on this battery, and that it must be successful, as the enemy would not expect one from our position, and under cover of the darkness we could approach them undiscovered. General Hill did not seem inclined to make the movement.”

The chivalrous Trimble proposed to make the attack with his own brigade, but there were many troops now in the woods, and I thought that the attack would but expose them to a more intense artillery fire. We saw men going about with lanterns, looking up and carrying off dead and wounded. There were no pickets out, and the rumbling of wheels in the distance seemed to indicate that the retreat had begun. The morning revealed the bare plateau stripped of its terrible batteries.

The battle of Malvern Hill was a disaster to the Confederates, and the fourteen brigades that had been so badly repulsed were much demoralized. But there were six divisions intact, and they could have made a formidable fight on the 2d.

Possibly owing to the belief that Longstreet and A. P. Hill were making a march between Malvern and Harrison's Landing, the retreat was the most disorderly that took place. Wagons and ambulances were abandoned,

knapsacks, cartridge-boxes, clothing, and rifles by the thousand were thrown away by the Federals. Colonel Nance, of the Third South Carolina regiment, gathered nine hundred and twenty-five rifles in fine condition that had been thrown away in the wheat-field at Shirley, a farm between Malvern and Haxall's.

The fruits of the Seven Days' Fighting were the relief of Richmond, the capture of ten thousand prisoners, fifty-two pieces of artillery, and thirty-five thousand stands of arms, and the destruction or capture of many military stores.

I have not the means of ascertaining the relative losses. I crossed the Chickahominy with 10,000 effective men. Of these, 3907 were killed or wounded, and forty-eight were reported missing, either captured or fugitives from the field. With the infantry and artillery detached, and the losses before Malvern Hill, I estimate that my division in that battle was 6500 strong, and that the loss was 2000. Magruder puts his force at between 26,000 and 28,000 (I think a very high estimate), and states his loss as 2900.

Throughout this campaign we attacked just when and where the enemy wished us to attack. This was owing to our ignorance of the country and lack of reconnaissance of the successive battle-fields. Porter's weak point at Gaines's Mill was his right flank. A thorough examination of the ground would have disclosed that; and had Jackson's command gone in on the left of the road running by the McGee house, Porter's whole position would have been turned, and the line of retreat cut off. An armed reconnaissance at Malvern would have shown the immense preponderance of the Federal artillery, and that a contest with it must be hopeless. The battle, with all its melancholy results, proved, however, that the Confederate infantry and Federal artillery, side by side on the same field, need fear no foe on earth.

Both commanders had shown great ability. McClellan, if not always great in the advance, was most masterly in retreat, and is unquestionably the greatest of Americans as an organizer of an army. Lee's plans were perfect; and had not his dispositions for a decisive battle at Frayser's Farm miscarried, through no fault of his own, he would have won a most complete victory. It was not the least part of his greatness that he did not complain of his disappointment, and that he at no time sought a scape-goat upon which to lay a failure. As reunited Americans, we have reason to be proud of both commanders.

D. H. Hill.