

the battle of Seven Pines, furnished by him to General Mindil, "in hopes of making the Confederate side a little clearer."

As to my being "taken quite sick," I was not seriously ill until the 2d of June. General Longstreet's statement that General Smith was slow in organizing for renewed attack because he was taken sick is, therefore, a mistake. In fact, at that time there was no organizing requisite, except, perhaps, in the right wing under Longstreet, and this was intrusted to him. I turned the command of the army over to General Lee about 2 P. M. He certainly gave no orders to General Longstreet, or to any part of the army, before 4 P. M. General Longstreet seems to have forgotten his notes of that morning, as well as that dated 1:30 P. M., ending with the exclamation, "Oh that I had 10,000 men more!"

When General Lee and General Smith joined General Longstreet on the Williamsburg road, Longstreet had lost on the 1st of June much of the ground he had gained on the 31st of May. I have no knowledge of any proposition having been made by General Longstreet to General Lee for renewing the attack. I

had never seen the works in General Longstreet's front, over which the troops of the latter had fought forward on the 31st of May and back during the morning of the 1st of June. General Longstreet is in error when he says that he was forced to yield his opinions because of my superior knowledge of the position in his front.

During the night of the 1st of June the troops under Longstreet quietly fell back to resume their former positions in front of Richmond. The division under Whiting, on the Nine-mile road, remained for several days confronting the Federal position it had attacked, north of Fair Oaks Station.

The limited space allotted to this article would prevent much further comment on my part in reference to the incidents and previously published accounts of this battle, even if I felt disposed at this time to say more. I will therefore only add that in my opinion, then and since, General Johnston's "original plan" was entirely correct in principle, and promised assured success if carried into effect as he, at sunrise on the morning of the 31st of May, intended and expected.

*Gustavus W. Smith.*

#### RECOLLECTIONS OF A PRIVATE.—IV.\*

##### TO THE CHICKAHOMINY.—THE BATTLE OF SEVEN PINES.



CONFEDERATE SHARP-SHOOTER.

our trains were moved over them. A few miles west of the Pamunkey we found the country beautiful and undulating, with graceful, round-topped hills, here and there crowned with trees and clothed in the varied tints of early summer.

On our entire march up the Peninsula, we did not see a dozen white men left upon the soil. At last, on the twenty-third of May, we arrived upon the banks of the sluggish Chickahominy,—a small mill-stream, forty or fifty feet wide, with swampy lowland bordering on either side; the tops of the trees growing in the swamp being about on a level with the crests of the bluffs just beyond, on the Richmond side. Our first camp was pitched on the hills in the vicinity of Gaines's Farm.

The engineers soon began the construction of bridges for the passage of the troops, as it was very important to gain a foothold on the west bank, preparatory to our advance. While Duane's bridge was being constructed, we were ordered on duty along the banks; and upon approaching the river we found, in the thickets near it, one of our dead cavalrymen lying in the water, evidently having been killed while watering his horse. The bridges were thrown out with marvelous quickness, and the corduroy approaches were soon constructed. A small force was ordered to cross, to reconnoiter and to observe the condition of

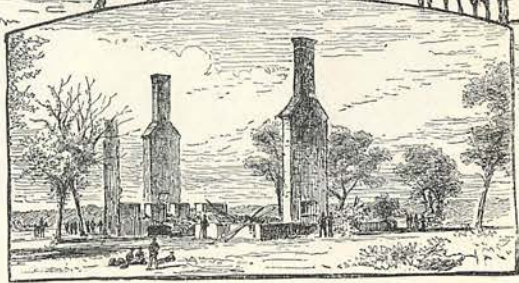
THE roads were narrow and very muddy between the White House and the Chickahominy, and it was with great trouble that

\* Copyright, 1884, by THE CENTURY CO. All rights reserved.





WHITE HOUSE, THE HOME OF GENERAL W. H. F. LEE, MCCLELLAN'S BASE OF SUPPLIES ON THE PAMUNKEY.—RUINS OF THE WHITE HOUSE. (FROM SKETCHES MADE AT THE TIME.)



the roads with respect to the passage of artillery. I happened to be one of that squad. With orders not to return the fire if assailed, we advanced across the bridge and through the woods, a quarter of a mile; and, seeing the sloughy condition of the roads, were returning, when the crack of a rifle told us the enemy were upon us. At the first fire one of our men fell. He entreated us to leave him and save ourselves; while we were carrying him, the enemy wounded two more of our men, but not seriously. On each side of the narrow defile were woods with but little screening underbrush, and it was through this we were advancing when attacked. We could not see the enemy, who were secreted in the tree-tops around us, but the *zip, zip* of their bullets pursued us as we retreated.

The comrade who had been shot, apparently through the lungs, was examined by our surgeon, who at first thought the case fatal, as the bullet came out of the chest on the side opposite to which it entered; but it was found that the bullet had been deflected by a rib, and glanced round, beneath the skin, only causing a painful flesh-wound. In three weeks our comrade was on light duty about camp. Before seeing very much service we discovered that a man may be hit with bullets in a great many places without killing him. Later I saw a man who had both his eyes destroyed by a bullet, without injuring the bridge of his nose, or otherwise marking his face.

In the barn at Gaines's Farm there were a number of Confederate sick and wounded,—men captured in some skirmish during our advance; and while taking a peep at them through a crack, I saw a North Carolina lieutenant whom I recognized as a former school-acquaintance. I obtained permission to speak to him, but they told me he was violent and bitter in his language. On approaching him, and inquiring if he knew me, something like a smile of recognition lighted up his face; hesitating a moment, he finally extended his hand. We talked for fifteen or twenty minutes about our school-fellows and early days, but not one word about the war. In two days I visited the barn again, and upon inquiring for him was told by one of the men in charge, "That cock is done crowing." I asked where he was buried. "He isn't buried; they have carried him out!" I stepped into the barnyard and found him thrown upon a heap of dirt. It was impossible to express all the indignation I felt; I emphatically said that none but cowards would have been guilty of such an act. I was ordered off for thus expressing my mind. Undoubtedly he had been very bitter, but that was no excuse. I mention this as the only instance I ever knew where a dead



enemy, or even a prisoner, was insulted by our soldiers. No *soldier* would have committed such a foul act. It was reserved for some miserable "skulker" who, to avoid the active duties of a soldier, had taken refuge in a hospital.

Considerable foraging was done, on the sly, about the neighboring plantations, but

water was waist-deep throughout the greater part of the swamp.

#### THE BATTLE OF SEVEN PINES (FAIR OAKS).

We were ordered on duty with Sumner's corps, which was stationed at Tyler's house,



SUMNER'S MARCH TO REËNFORCE COUCH AT FAIR OAKS STATION.

Lieutenant Edmund Kirby, Battery I, First U. S. Artillery, says in his official report: "The roads were almost impassable for artillery, and I experienced great difficulty in getting my guns along. I was obliged at times to unlimber and use the prolonge, the cannoners being up to their waists in water. About 4:30 P. M. I was within three-quarters of a mile of Fair Oaks Station, with three pieces [Napoleon twelve-pounders] and one caisson, the remainder of the battery being in the rear, and coming up as fast as circumstances would permit."

as a rule foraging was severely condemned by our commanders. There was much tobacco raised in this section of country, and we found the barns filled with the best quality of tobacco in leaf; this we appropriated without objection on the part of our officers. As all trades were represented in our ranks, that of cigar-maker was included, and the army rioted in cigars without enriching the sutlers.

By the lower bridges two of the army corps were sent across to take position near Seven Pines. Some of the bridges were of boats, with corduroy approaches. While they were in process of finishing, on the night of May 30, a terrible storm occurred; the rain-fall was immense, and the thunder the most terrific I ever heard, its sharp, crackling rattle at times sounding like the cannonading of an engagement. When morning dawned, our boat bridges were found dangling midway in a stream which covered the whole swampy and bottom land on both sides the original channel, and the

and held the center of the general line of the army. Not long after noon of the 31st we heard the dull reverberation of cannonading in the direction of Seven Pines, and the companies and regiments fell into line, ready to march at a moment's notice. About two in the afternoon the march was begun to the approaches of Sumner's upper bridge, also called the "Grapevine" bridge, which had been built of logs over the swampy bottom, and which was sustained in place by ropes tied to stumps on the up-stream side. At first it seemed impossible to cross, so swollen was the stream by the overflow; but when the troops were well on the bridge, it was held in place by the moving weight and rendered passable, although covered with water and swaying in the rushing torrent, which every moment threatened to float it away piecemeal. The men grumbled some, after the manner of soldiers. "If this bridge goes down I can't swim a stroke," said one. "Well," said



"Little" Day, always making the best of everything, "there will be, in that case, plenty of logs for you to float on." If we had gone down with all our marching-equipments, there would have been but little chance even for a good swimmer. Kirby's battery of Napoleon guns preceded us; we found them mired on the west shore. They were unlimbered, and the men of different regiments tugged and lifted at them, knee-deep in the mire, until they were extricated, and finally almost carried them to dry land, or rather firm land, as by no stretch of courtesy could anything in the vicinity be called dry.

Sedgwick's division, being nearer the Grapevine bridge, took the lead at that crossing, while Richardson's division moved toward Sumner's lower bridge. There French's brigade crossed by wading to the waist, the other brigades being ordered to turn back and follow Sedgwick. It was this delay which kept Richardson out of the first day's fight.

A private of the Fifteenth Massachusetts (Gorman's brigade) afterward gave me his recollections of that forced march through water and mud. "Most of our artillery," he said, "became so badly mired that we were obliged to proceed without it, but the little battery of twelve-pound Napoleon guns, commanded by an energetic regular officer (Lieutenant Kirby), notwithstanding it was continu-

ally mired to its axles, was pluckily dragged along by horses and men. Despite the mire, we cracked jokes at each other, shouted and sang in high spirits, and toiled through the morass in the direction of the heavy firing."

About 3:30 P. M. we began to meet stragglers from the front. They all told in substance the same story: "Our companies and regiments are all cut to pieces!" One straggler had a strapping Confederate prisoner in charge. He inquired for a Pennsylvania regiment, saying that during the fight in the woods he lost his company, and while trying to find his way out came across the "reb," and was trying to "take him in." "Stranger," said the prisoner, "yer wouldn't have taken me in if I'd known yer war lost."

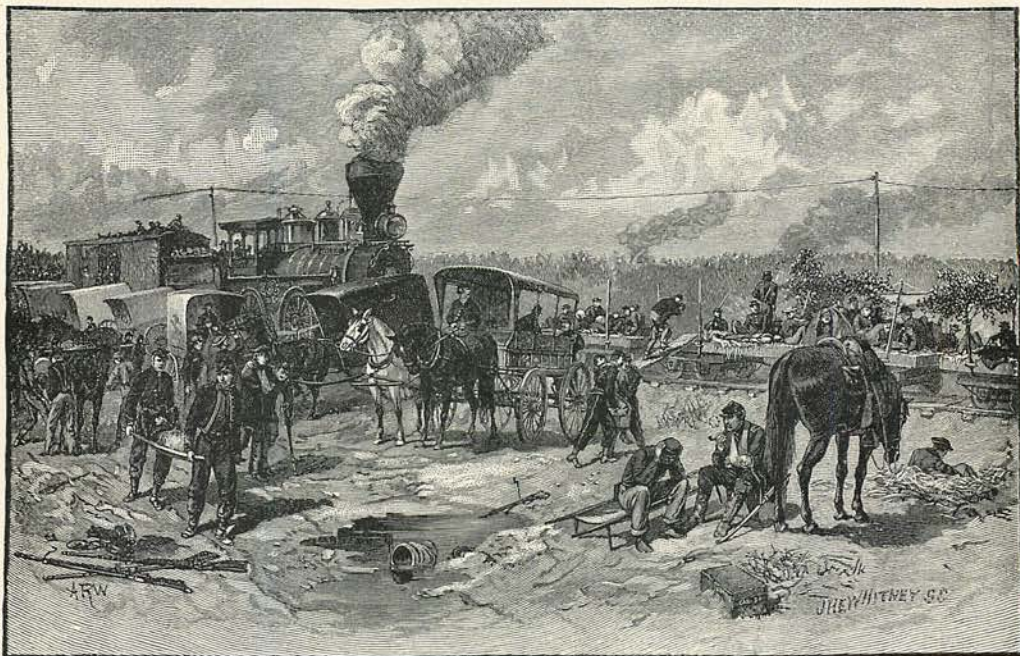
"Meanwhile the thunder of the conflict grew louder and louder, and about five o'clock we came upon fragments of regiments of that part of Couch's command which had become isolated at Fair Oaks Station; they had fallen back half a mile or so, and when we joined them beyond the Courtney house, they were hotly engaged with the enemy, who were in overwhelming numbers.

"As we came up through a stumpy field we were greeted with the quick *crack, crack* of the infantry in our front. The smoke of battle hung in clouds over the field, and through it could be seen the flashes of the



SUMNER'S CORPS CROSSING THE OVERFLOWED "GRAPEVINE" BRIDGE. (FROM A SKETCH MADE AT THE TIME.)





AFTER THE BATTLE OF FAIR OAKS—PUTTING THE WOUNDED ABOARD THE CARS. (FROM A SKETCH MADE AT THE TIME.)

artillery. The *ping, zip, zip* of bullets, and the wounded men limping from the front or carried by comrades, were a prelude to the storm to come. We formed on the left of Abercrombie's shattered brigade, near the Adams house, and were welcomed with hearty cheers. Presently there was a terrible explosion of musketry, and the bullets pattered around us, causing many to drop; a line of smoke ahead showed where this destructive fire came from. Kirby's five Napoleon guns came up, and in the angle of the woods opened with splendid precision upon the Confederate columns. The recoil of the pieces was often so great as to bury the wheels nearly to the hub in mud. Soon the "rebel yell" was heard as they charged on the right of Kirby's battery, which changed front to the right, and delivered a destructive fire of canister. This caused the enemy to break in confusion, and retreat to the cover of the woods. Shortly afterward the enemy developed in greater force in our front, and the hum of shot and shell was almost incessant; but in a few minutes the fire slackened, and the Confederate lines came dashing upon us with their shrill yells. We received them with a volley from our rifles, and the battery gave them its compliments. The gray masses of the enemy were seen dimly through the smoke, scattering to cover. Presently the order ran

down the line, "Fix bayonets!" While waiting the moment for the final order, John Milan said: "It's light infantry we are, boys, and they expect us to fly over them criss-cross fences." Then the final order came: "Guide right—Double quick—Charge!" Our whole line went off at double-quick, shouting as we ran. Some scattering shots were fired by the enemy as we struggled over the fences, and then their line broke and dissolved from view.

"That night we lay under the stars, thinking of the events of the day and the expected conflict of the morrow. Until dawn of Sunday (June 1) our officers were busy gathering together the scattered and separated forces. About five o'clock next morning we heard firing on our left flank, which was covered by Richardson's division of Sumner's corps. It was a line of Confederate pickets deploying in an open field on the south side of Fair Oaks Station. Shortly after six o'clock there was a furious fire of musketry on our left, which continued for an hour.

"During the day I went over a portion of the battle-field in the road through the woods, where the Confederates had made the unsuccessful charge upon Kirby's battery. Here the dead lay very thick, and a number of their wounded were hidden in the thickets. They had fallen in many instances on their faces in the headlong charge; some with their legs torn



off, some with shattered arms, and others with ghastly wounds in the head.

"On the 2d of June the whole line moved forward, and from Fair Oaks to the Williamsburg road occupied the positions which had been held previous to the battle. About that time I went over the battle-ground in front of Casey's position where the battle began. Many of the dead remained unburied. Some of the men who first took possession of the works informed me that they found large quantities of Confederate arms; also a number of the enemy who had become intoxicated on Yankee whisky. The camp had been well plundered, and the enemy had adopted a system of exchange in dress, throwing aside their ragged uniforms, and clothing themselves in the more comfortable and cleanly garments of the Federal soldiers. I saw a Sibley tent in which I counted over two hundred bullet-holes."

A comrade who visited the scene of the charge made by Sedgwick's men said that in the woods beyond, where the Confederate lines had been formed, a number had been killed while in the act of getting over the fence, and were suspended in the positions in which they had been shot. In the woods just beyond this fence were some swampy pools, to which a number of the enemy's wounded had crept for water and died during the night. There were two or three of these pools of stagnant water, around which were clusters of wounded and dead men.

When my company reached the vicinity of Fair Oaks, about a week after the battle, I was surprised to find how many limbs of

trees had been cut away by bullets and shot. At one place a cannon-ball had apparently passed entirely through the stem of a large tree, splitting it for some distance; but the springy wood had closed together again so closely that the point of a bayonet could not be inserted in its track. The forests in the rear were marked in such a manner by bullets as to indicate that the enemy must have shot at times a long way over their intended mark.

In the advance, where Naglee's brigade made its struggle until overwhelmed by the enemy, graves were plenty in every direction, and some of the enemy's dead were found standing, in the swamp near by, in the position in which they were shot. They had decomposed so rapidly that the flesh had partly dropped from the bones.

Many of Casey's men had lost their knapsacks, blankets, and clothing, as well as their tents, and were in a sad plight for soldiering.

Thereafter our lines were constantly engaged in skirmishing, and we were kept in position for battle day after day, expecting an attack. Often the bugler at brigade headquarters sounded the alarm to "fall in," on one day sounding it ten times. During one of the frequent thunder-storms the Confederates made reconnaissance, and fired volleys so timed that they might be mistaken for thunder; but our men were not deceived and stood to their arms, expecting an attack. At one time the men in our rear were practicing the drill with blank cartridges, and were mistaken for the enemy. Thus the alarms of war kept our attention occupied.

*Warren Lee Goss.*



LINE OF BATTLE OF GENERAL DEVENS'S BRIGADE, COUCH'S DIVISION, WHERE GENERAL DEVENS WAS WOUNDED.