

## THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG.



CONFEDERATE PICKET WITH BLANKET-CAPOTE AND RAW-HIDE MOCCASINS.

IN the early fall of 1862, a distance of not more than thirty miles lay between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia. A state of uncertainty had existed for several weeks succeeding the battle of Sharpsburg, but the movements which resulted in the battle of Fredericksburg began to take shape when on the 5th of November the order was issued that removed General McClellan from command of the Federal forces and installed General Burnside in that position.

The order assigning General Burnside to command was received at General Lee's headquarters, then at Culpeper Court House, about twenty-four hours after it reached Warrenton, though not through official courtesy. General Lee, on receiving the news, said he regretted to part with McClellan, "For," he added, "we always understood each other so well. I fear they may continue to make these changes till they find some one whom I don't understand."

The Federal army was encamped around Warrenton, Virginia, and was soon divided into three grand divisions whose commanders were Generals Sumner, Hooker, and Franklin.

Lee's army was on the opposite side of the Rappahannock River, divided into two corps, the First commanded by myself and the Second commanded by General Stonewall Jackson. At that time the Confederate Army extended from Culpeper Court House (where the First Corps was stationed) on its right across the Blue Ridge down the Valley of Virginia to Winchester. There Jackson was encamped with the Second Corps, except one division which was stationed at Chester Gap on the Blue Ridge Mountains.

About the 18th or 19th of November, we received information through our scouts that Sumner, with his grand division of more than thirty thousand men, was moving towards Fredericksburg. Evidently he intended to surprise us and cross the Rappahannock before we could offer resistance. On receipt of

the information, two of my divisions were ordered down to meet him. We made a forced march and arrived on the hills around Fredericksburg about three o'clock on the afternoon of the 21st. Sumner had already arrived and his army was encamped on Stafford Heights, overlooking the town from the Federal side. Before I reached Fredericksburg, General Patrick, provost-marshal general, crossed the river under a flag of truce and put the people in a state of great excitement by delivering the following letter:

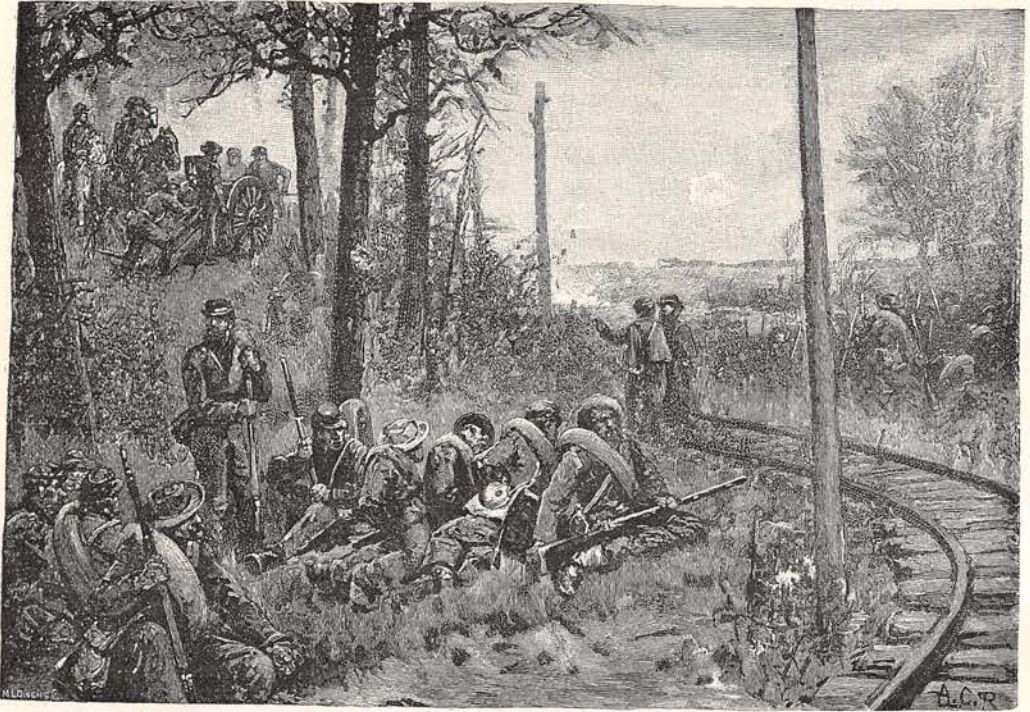
"HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, November 21st 1862.

"TO THE MAYOR AND COMMON COUNCIL OF FREDERICKSBURG. GENTLEMEN: Under cover of the houses of your city shots have been fired upon the troops of my command. Your mills and manufactories are furnishing provisions and the material for clothing for armed bodies in rebellion against the government of the United States. Your railroads and other means of transportation are removing supplies to the depots of such troops. This condition of things must terminate, and by direction of General Burnside I accordingly demand the surrender of your city into my hands, as the representative of the government of the United States, at or before five o'clock this afternoon. Failing in an affirmative reply to this demand by the hour indicated, sixteen hours will be permitted to elapse for the removal from the city of women and children, the sick and wounded and aged, etc., which



BRIGADIER-GENERAL MAXCY GREGG OF JACKSON'S CORPS. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE S. COOK.)

General Gregg, who was killed in repelling Meade's charge, was a South Carolinian, born about 1814, and by profession a lawyer.



HAYS'S BRIGADE OF STONEWALL JACKSON'S CORPS, AT HAMILTON'S CROSSING. (SEE MAP, PAGE 622.)

period having expired I shall proceed to shell the town. Upon obtaining possession of the city every necessary means will be taken to preserve order and secure the protective operation of the laws and policy of the United States government.

"I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
"E. V. SUMNER,

Brevet Major General U. S. Army, Commanding  
Right Grand Division."

While the people were in a state of excitement over the receipt of this demand for the surrender of their town, my troops appeared upon the heights opposite those occupied by the Federals. The alarmed non-combatants heard of my arrival and immediately sent to me the demand of the Federal general. I stated to the town authorities that I did not care to occupy the place for military purposes and there was no reason why it should be shelled by the Federal army. We were there to protect ourselves against the advance of the enemy, and could not allow the town to be occupied by the Federals. The mayor sent to General Sumner a satisfactory statement of the situation and was notified that the threatened shelling would not take place, as the Confederates did not propose to make the town a base of military operations.

Before my troops reached the little city, and before the people of Fredericksburg knew that any part of the Confederate army was near, there was great excitement over the demand

for surrender. No people were in the place except aged and infirm men, and women and children. That they should become alarmed when the surrender of the town was demanded by the Federals was quite natural, and a number proceeded with great haste to board a train then ready to leave. In a tremor of excitement the people were steaming out, when Sumner's batteries on Stafford Heights opened fire on the train and added to the general terror. Fortunately this firing on the fleeing non-combatants resulted in no serious damage. The spectacle was nothing, however, to what we witnessed a short time after. About the 26th or 27th it became evident that Fredericksburg would be the scene of a battle, and we advised the people who were still in the town to prepare to leave, as they would soon be in danger if they remained. The evacuation of the place by the distressed women and helpless men was a painful sight. Many were almost destitute and had nowhere to go, but, yielding to the cruel necessities of war, they collected their portable effects and turned their backs on the town. Many were forced to seek shelter in the woods and brave the icy November nights to escape the approaching assault from the Federal army.

Very soon after I reached Fredericksburg the remainder of my corps arrived from Culpeper Court House, and Jackson was drawn

down from the Blue Ridge as soon as it was known that all the Army of the Potomac was in motion for the prospective scene of battle. In a very short time the Army of Northern Virginia was face to face with the Army of the Potomac.

When Jackson arrived he objected to the position, not that he feared the result of the battle, but because he thought behind the North Anna was a point from which the most fruitful results would follow. He held that we would win a victory at Fredericksburg, but it would be a fruitless one to us, whereas at North Anna, when we drove the Federals back, we could give pursuit to advantage, which we could not do at Fredericksburg. General Lee did not entertain the proposition, however, and we continued our preparations to meet the enemy at the latter place.\*

At a point just above the town, a range of hills begins, extending from the river edge out a short distance and bearing around the valley somewhat in the form of a crescent. On the opposite side are the noted Stafford Heights, then occupied by the Federals. At the foot of these hills flows the Rappahannock River. On the Confederate side nestled Fredericksburg, and around it stretched the fertile bottoms from which fine crops had been gathered and upon which the Federal troops were to mass and give battle to the Confederates. On the Confederate side nearest the river was Taylor's Hill, and south of it the now famous Marye's Hill; next, Telegraph Hill, the highest of the elevations on the Confederate side and later known as Lee's Hill, because during the battle General Lee was most of the time there where I had my headquarters in the field; next was a declination through which Deep Run creek passed on its way to the Rappahannock River; and next was the gentle elevation at Hamilton's Crossing, which had never been dignified

with a name, but upon which Stonewall Jackson massed thirty thousand men. It was upon these hills that the Confederates made their preparations to receive Burnside whenever he might choose to cross the Rappahannock. The Confederates were stationed as follows: On Taylor's Hill next the river and forming my left, R. H. Anderson's division; on Marye's Hill, Ransom's and McLaws's divisions; on Telegraph Hill, Pickett's division; to the right and about Deep Run creek, Hood's division, the latter stretching across Deep Run bottom.

On the hill occupied by Jackson's corps were the divisions of A. P. Hill, Early, and Taliaferro, that of D. H. Hill being in reserve on the extreme right. To the Washington artillery, on Marye's Hill, was assigned the service of advising the army at the earliest possible moment of the Federal advance. General



WELFORD'S MILL ON HAZEL RUN AND THE TELEGRAPH ROAD.  
(FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH.)

The southern slope of Willis's Hill is seen in the background.

Barksdale, with his Mississippi brigade, was on picket duty in front of Fredericksburg on the night of the advance.

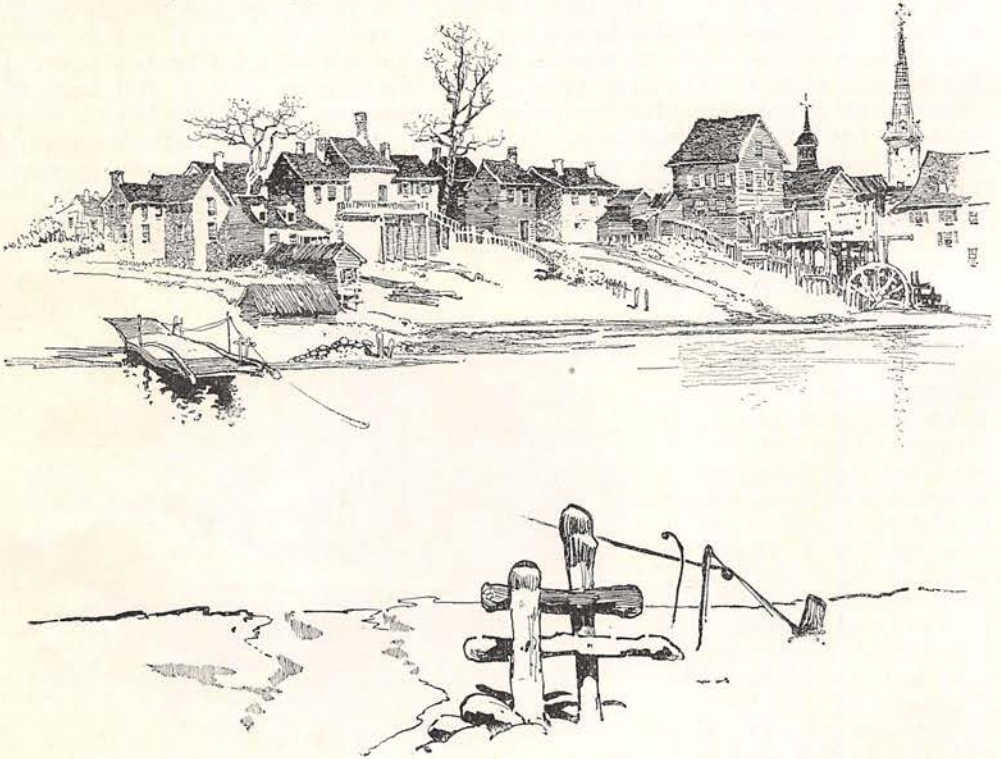
The hills occupied by the Confederate forces, although overcrowded by the heights of Stafford, were so distant as to be outside the range of effective fire by the Federal guns, and, with

\* That General Lee was not quite satisfied with the place of battle is shown by a dispatch to the Richmond authorities on the second day after the battle, when it was uncertain what Burnside's next move would be. In that dispatch he says: "Should the enemy cross at Port Royal in force, before I can get this army in position to meet him, I think it more advantageous to retire to the Annas and give battle, than on the banks of the Rappahannock. My design was to have done so in the first instance. My purpose was changed not from any advantage in this position,

but from an unwillingness to open more of our country to depredation than possible, and also with a view of collecting such forage and provisions as could be obtained in the Rappahannock Valley. With the numerous army opposed to me, and the bridges and transportation at its command, the crossing of the Rappahannock, where it is as narrow and winding as in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, can be made at almost any point without molestation. It will, therefore, be more advantageous to us to draw him farther away from his base of operations."—EDITOR.

the lower receding grounds between them, formed a defensive series that may be likened to natural bastions. Taylor's Hill was unassailable; Marye's Hill was more advanced towards the town, was of a gradual ascent and of less height than the others, and we considered it the point most assailable, and guarded it accordingly. The events which followed proved the correctness of our opinion on that point. Lee's Hill, with its rugged sides retired

plain where the bloody conflict was soon to be. In the mean time the Federals had figured along the banks of the river, looking for the most available points for crossing. President Lincoln had been down with General Halleck, and it had been suggested by the latter to cross at Hoop-Pole Ferry, about twenty-eight or thirty miles below Fredericksburg. We discovered the movement, however, and prepared to meet it, and Burnside



FREDERICKSBURG FROM THE EAST BANK OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK — L.

from Marye's and rising higher than its companions, was comparatively safe.

This was the situation of the sixty-five thousand Confederates massed around Fredericksburg, and they had twenty odd days in which to prepare for the approaching battle.

The Federals on Stafford Heights carefully matured their plans of advance and attack. General Hunt, chief of artillery, skillfully posted one hundred and forty-seven guns to cover the bottoms upon which the infantry was to form for the attack, and at the same time play upon the Confederate batteries as circumstances would allow. Franklin and Hooker had joined Sumner, and Stafford Heights held the Federal army, a hundred and twenty thousand strong, watching with eagle eyes the

abandoned the idea and turned his attention to Fredericksburg, under the impression that many of our troops were down at Hoop-Pole, too far away to return in time for his battle.\*

The soldiers of both armies were in good fighting condition, and there was every indication that we would have a desperate battle. We were confident that Burnside could not dislodge us, and patiently awaited the attack.

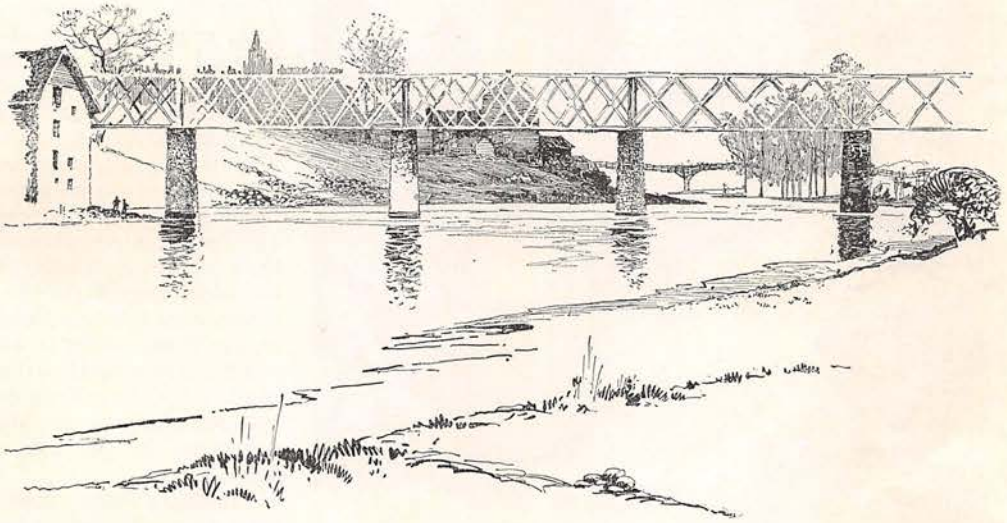
On the morning of the 11th of December, 1862, an hour or so before daylight, the slumbering Confederates were awakened by a solitary cannon thundering on the heights of Marye's Hill. Again it boomed, and instantly the aroused Confederates recognized the signal of the Washington artillery and knew that the Federal troops were preparing to cross the purpose of drawing some of our troops from the points he had really selected for his crossing.—J. L.

\* It is more than probable that Burnside accepted the proposition to move by Hoop-Pole Ferry for the

Rappahannock and give us the expected battle. The Federals came down to the river's edge and began the construction of their bridges, when Barksdale opened fire with such effect that they were forced to retire. Again and again they made an effort to cross, but each time they met the well-directed bullets of the Mississippians, until their boats and the river were strewn with corpses. Until one o'clock this contest lasted, when the Federals, with angry desperation, turned their whole force of artillery on the little city, and sent down from the heights a perfect storm of shot

The Federals then constructed their pontoons without molestation, and the grand division of Sumner passed over into Fredericksburg.

About a mile and a half below the town, where the Deep Run empties into the Rappahannock, General Franklin had been allowed without serious opposition to throw two pontoon bridges, and his grand division passed over and massed on the level bottoms opposite Hamilton's Crossing, thus placing himself in front of Stonewall Jackson's corps. The 11th and 12th were thus spent by the Federals in crossing the river and preparing for battle.



FREDERICKSBURG FROM THE EAST BANK OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK—II.

and shell, crushing the houses with a cyclone of fiery metal. From our position on the heights we saw the batteries hurling an avalanche upon the town whose only offense was that near its edge in a snug retreat nestled three thousand Confederate hornets that were stinging the Army of the Potomac into a frenzy. It was terrific, the pandemonium which that little squad of Confederates had provoked. The town caught fire in several places, shells crashed and burst, and solid shot rained like hail. In the midst of the successive crashes could be heard the shouts and yells of those engaged in the struggle, while the smoke rose from the burning city and the flames leaped about, making a scene which can never be effaced from the memory of those who saw it. But in the midst of all this fury, the little brigade of Mississippians clung to their work. At last, when I had everything in readiness, I sent a peremptory order to Barksdale to withdraw, which he did, fighting as he retired before the Federals, who had by that time succeeded in landing a number of their troops.

Opposite Fredericksburg, the formation along the river bank was such that the Federals were concealed in their approaches, and, availing themselves of this advantage, they succeeded in crossing and concealing the grand division of Sumner and, later, a part of Hooker's grand division in the city of Fredericksburg, and so disposing of Franklin in the open plain below as to give out the impression that the great force was with the latter and about to oppose Jackson.

Before daylight on the morning of the eventful 13th, I rode to the right of my line held by Hood's division. General Hood was at his post in plain hearing of the Federals south of Deep Run, who were marching their troops into position for the attack. The morning was cold and misty, and everything was obscured from view, but so distinctly did the mist bear to us the sounds of the moving Federals that Hood thought the advance was against him. He was relieved, however, when I assured him that the enemy, to reach him, would have to put himself in a pocket and be



BARKSDALE'S MISSISSIPPIANS OPPOSING THE LAYING OF THE PONTOON BRIDGES.

subjected to attack from Jackson on one side, Pickett and McLaws on the other, and Hood's own men in front. The position of Franklin's men on the 12th with the configuration of the ground had left no doubt in my mind as to Franklin's intentions. I explained all this to Hood, assuring him that the attack would be on Jackson. At the same time I ordered Hood, in case Jackson's line was broken, to wheel around to his right and strike in on the attacking bodies, telling him that Pickett, with his division, would be ordered to join in the flank movement. These orders were given to both division generals, and at the same time they were advised that I would be attacked near my left center, and that I must be at that point to meet my part of the battle. They were also advised that my position was so well defended I could have no other need of their troops. I then returned to Lee's Hill, reaching there soon after sunrise.

Thus we stood at the eve of the great battle. Along the Stafford Heights a hundred and forty-seven guns were turned on us, and on the level plain below, in the town, and hidden on the opposite bank ready to cross, nearly a hundred thousand men were assembled, eager to begin the combat. Secure in our hills, we grimly awaited the onslaught. The valley, the mountaintops, everything was enveloped in the thickest fog, and the preparation for the fight was made as if under cover of night. The mist brought to us the sounds of the preparation for battle, but we were blind to the movements of the Federals. Suddenly, at ten o'clock, as if the elements were taking a hand in the drama about to be enacted, the warmth of the sun brushed the mist away and revealed the mighty panorama in the valley below.

Franklin's forty thousand men, reinforced by two divisions of Hooker's grand division, were in front of Jackson's thirty thousand. The flags of the Federals fluttered gayly, the polished arms shone brightly in the sunlight, and the beautiful uniforms of the buoyant troops gave to the scene the air of a holiday occasion rather than the spectacle of a great army about to be thrown into the tumult of battle. From my place on Lee's Hill I could see almost every soldier Franklin had, and a splendid array it was. But off in the distance was Jackson's ragged infantry, and beyond was Stuart's battered cavalry, with their soiled hats and yellow butternut suits, a striking contrast to the handsomely equipped troops of the Federals.

About the city, here and there, a few soldiers could be seen, but there was no indication of the heavy masses that were concealed by the houses. Those of Franklin's men who were in front of Jackson stretched well up towards Lee's Hill, and were almost in reach of our best guns, and at the other end they stretched out in the east until they came well

under the fire of Stuart's horse artillery under Major John Pelham, a brave and gallant officer almost a boy in years. As the mist rose, the Confederates saw the movement against their right near Hamilton's crossing. Major Pelham opened fire upon Franklin's command and gave him lively work, which was kept up until Jackson ordered Pelham to retire. Franklin then advanced rapidly to the hill

much for it, and the counter-attack drove the Federals back to the railroad and beyond the reach of our guns on the left. Some of our troops following up this repulse got too far out, and were in turn much discomfited when left to the enemy's superior numbers, and were obliged to retire in poor condition. A Federal brigade advancing under cover of Deep Run was discovered at this time

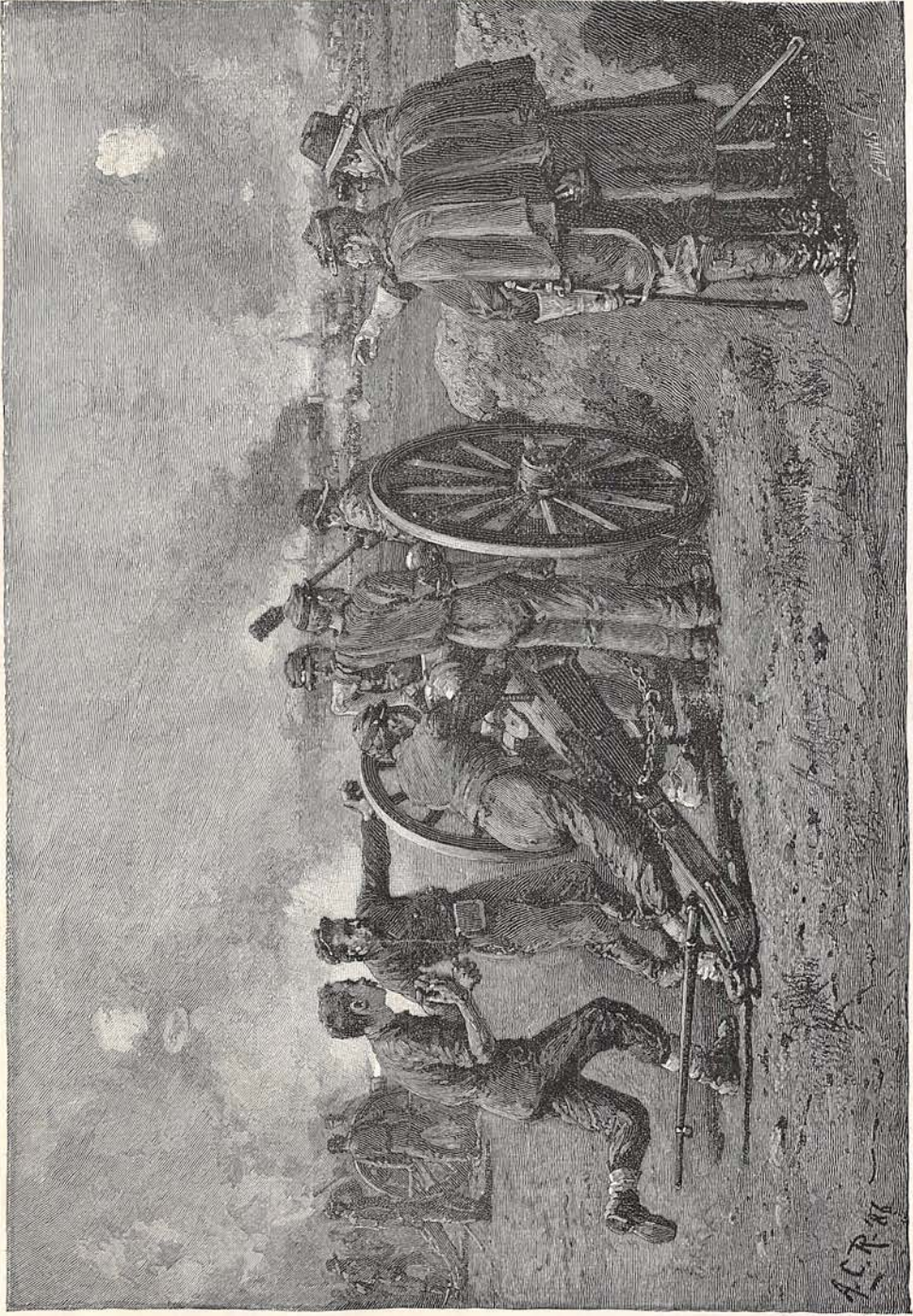


CONFEDERATE WORKS ON WILLIS'S HILL, NOW THE SITE OF THE NATIONAL CEMETERY. (FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH.)

where Jackson's troops had been stationed, feeling the woods with shot as he progressed. Silently Jackson awaited the approach of the Federals until they were within good range, and then he opened a terrific fire which threw the Federals into some confusion. The enemy again massed and advanced, pressing through a gap between Archer and Lane. This broke Jackson's line and threatened very serious trouble. The Federals who had wedged themselves in through that gap came upon Gregg's brigade, and then the severe encounter ensued in which the latter general was mortally wounded. Archer and Lane very soon received reinforcements and, rallying, joined in the counter-attack and recovered their lost ground. The concentration of Taliaferro's and Early's divisions against this attack was too

and attacked by regiments of Pender's and Law's brigades, the former of A. P. Hill's and the latter of Hood's division, and Jackson's second line advancing, the Federals were forced to retire. This series of demonstrations and attacks, the partial success and final discomfiture of the Federals, constitute the hostile movements between the Confederate right and the Federal left.

I have described, in the opening of this article, the situation of the Confederate left. In front of Marye's Hill is a plateau, and immediately at the base of the hill there is a sunken road known as the Telegraph road. On the side of the road next to the town was a stone wall, shoulder high, against which the earth was banked, forming an almost unapproachable defense. It was impossible for

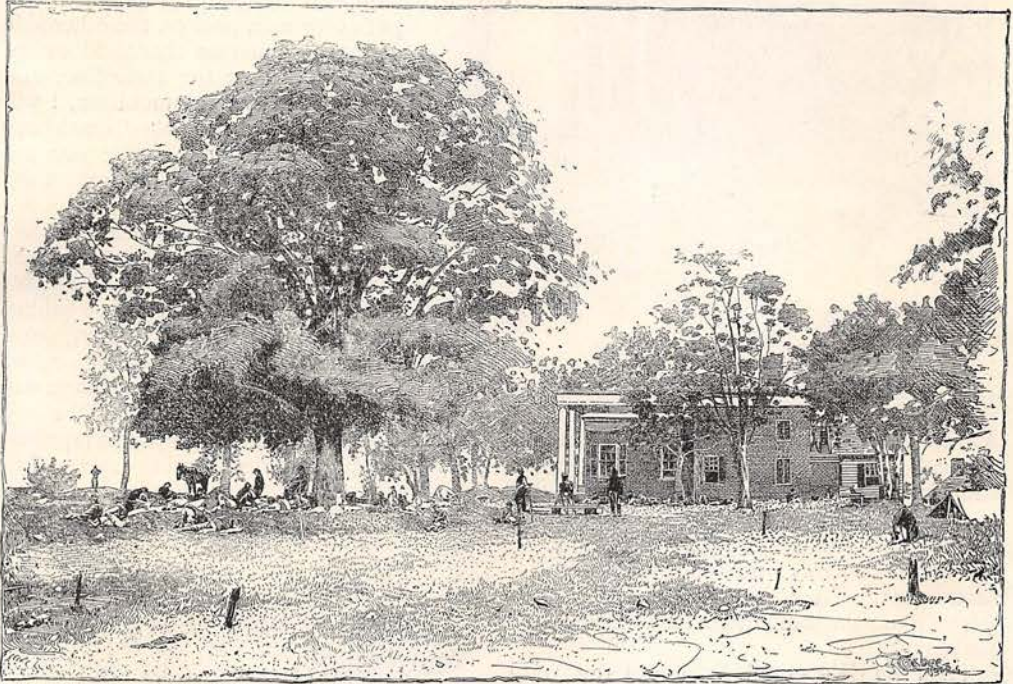


THE WASHINGTON ARTILLERY ON MARYE'S HILL FIRING UPON THE FEDERALS FORMING FOR THE ASSAULT.



the troops occupying it to expose more than a small portion of their bodies. Behind this stone wall I had placed about twenty-five hundred men, being all of General T. R. R. Cobb's brigade, and a portion of the brigade of General Kershaw, both of McLaws's division. It must now be understood that the Federals, to reach what appeared to be my weakest point, would have to pass directly over this wall held by Cobb's infantry.

filed out of the city like bees out of a hive, coming in double-quick march and filling the edge of the field in front of Cobb. This was just where we had expected attack and I was prepared to meet it. As the troops massed before us, they were much annoyed by the fire of our batteries. The field was literally packed with Federals from the vast number of troops that had been massed in the town. From the moment of their appearance began the most



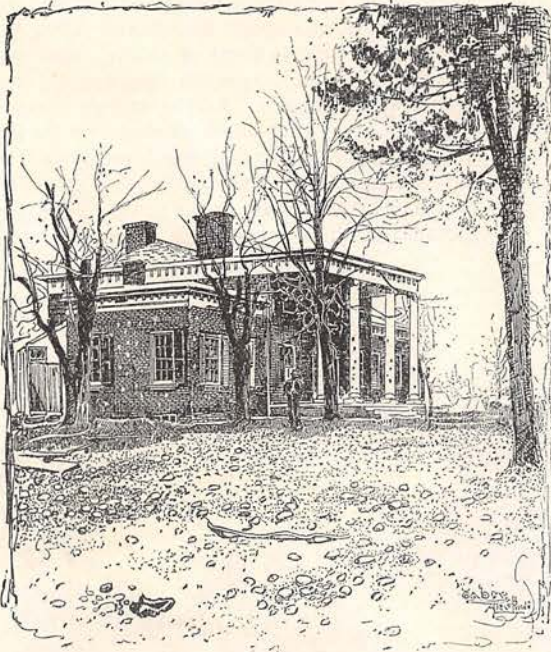
MANSION AND GROUNDS ON MARYE'S HILL.

This sketch is from a photograph taken during the Wilderness Campaign when the mansion and grounds were filled with Union wounded. The portico faces Fredericksburg, and a few paces in front of it the hill drops abruptly to the sunken Telegraph road and stone wall.—EDITOR.

An idea of how well Marye's Hill was protected may be obtained from the following incident. General E. P. Alexander, my engineer and superintendent of artillery, had been placing the guns, and in going over the field with him before the battle, I noticed an idle cannon. I suggested that he place it so as to aid in covering the plain in front of Marye's Hill. He answered, "General, we cover that ground now so well that we will comb it as if with a fine-tooth comb. A chicken could not live on that field when we open on it."

A little before noon, I sent orders to all my batteries to open fire through the streets or at any points where the troops were seen about the city, as a diversion in favor of Jackson. This fire began at once to develop the work in hand for myself. The Federal troops

fearful carnage. With our artillery from the front, right, and left tearing through their ranks, the Federals pressed forward with almost invincible determination, maintaining their steady step and closing up their broken ranks. Thus resolutely they marched upon the stone fence behind where quietly awaited the Confederate brigade of General Cobb. As the Federals came within reach of this brigade, a storm of lead was poured into their advancing ranks and they were swept from the field like chaff before the wind. A cloud of smoke shut out the scene for a moment, and, rising, revealed the shattered fragments recoiling from their gallant but hopeless charge. The artillery still plowed through the ranks of the retreating Federals and sought the places of concealment into which the troops had plunged.



FRONT OF THE MARVE MANSION. (FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH.)

A vast number went pell-mell into an old railroad cut, to escape fire from the right and front. A battery on Lee's Hill saw this and turned its fire into the entire length of the cut, and the shells began to pour down upon the Federals with the most frightful destruction. They found their position of refuge more uncomfortable than the field of the assault.

Thus the right grand division of the Army of the Potomac found itself repulsed and shattered on its first attempt to drive us from Marye's Hill. Hardly was this attack off the field before we saw the determined Federals again filing out of Fredericksburg and preparing for another charge. The Confederates under Cobb reserved their fire and quietly awaited the approach of the enemy. The Federals came nearer than before, but were forced to retire before the well-directed guns of Cobb's brigade and the fire of the artillery on the heights. By that time the field in front of Cobb was thickly strewn with the dead and dying Federals, but again they formed with desperate courage and renewed the attack and were again driven off. At each attack the slaughter was so great that by the time the third attack was repulsed, the ground was so

\* In his official report General McLaws says: "The body of one man, believed to be an officer, was found within about thirty yards of the stone wall, and other single bodies were scattered at increased distances until the main mass of the dead lay thickly strewn

thickly strewn with dead that the bodies seriously impeded the approach of the Federals. General Lee, who was with me on Lee's Hill, became uneasy when he saw the attacks so promptly renewed and pushed forward with such persistence, and feared the Federals might break through our line. After the third charge he said to me: "General, they are massing very heavily and will break your line, I am afraid." "General," I replied, "if you put every man now on the other side of the Potomac on that field to approach me over the same line, and give me plenty of ammunition, I will kill them all before they reach my line. Look to your right; you are in some danger there, but not on my line."

I think the fourth time the Federals came, a gallant fellow reached within one hundred feet of Cobb's position and then fell. Close behind him came some few scattering ones, but they were either killed or fled from certain death.\* This charge was the only effort that looked like any real danger to Cobb, and after it was repulsed I felt no apprehension, assuring myself that there were enough of the dead Federals on



HOUSE BY THE STONE WALL, IN WHICH GENERAL COBB DIED.

over the ground at something over one hundred yards off, and extending to the ravine, commencing at the point where our men would allow the enemy's column to approach before opening fire, and beyond which no organized body of men was able to pass." — EDITOR.

the field to give me half the battle. The anxiety shown by General Lee, however, induced me to bring up two or three brigades, to be on hand, and General Kershaw was ordered, with the remainder of his brigade, down to the stone wall, but rather to carry

ammunition than as a reënforcement for Cobb. Kershaw dashed down the declivity in time to succeed Cobb, who fell from a wound in the thigh and died in a few minutes from loss of blood.

A fifth time the Federals formed and



THE SUNKEN ROAD UNDER MARVE'S HILL. (FROM A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH.)

In the background is seen the continuation of Hanover street, which on the left ascends the hill to the Marye Mansion. The little square field lies in the fork made by the former road and the Telegraph road (see map page 622). Nearly all that is left of the stone wall is seen in the right of the picture. The horses are in the road, which is a continuation of the street south of Hanover street, and on which is the brick house (see map). Following at that time the Telegraph road, we would next have the house in which General Cobb died, and finally the long stretch of stone wall seen on page 624, little if any of which is now to be seen, the stone having been used for the gate-house of the National Cemetery.

In his official report General Kershaw, who succeeded General Cobb, thus describes the situation during the battle in that part of the road seen in the picture: "The road is about twenty-five feet wide, and is faced by a stone wall about four feet high on the city side. The road having been cut out of the side of the hill, in many places this last wall is not visible above the surface of the ground. The road falls off rapidly to almost a level surface which extends about one hundred and fifty yards, then, with another abrupt fall of a few feet, to another plain which extends some two hundred yards, and then falls off abruptly into a wide ravine, which extends along the whole front of the city and discharges into Hazel Run. I found, on my arrival, that Cobb's brigade, Colonel McMillan commanding, occupied our entire front, and my troops could only get into position by doubling on them. This was accordingly done, and the formation along most of the line during the engagement was consequently four deep. As an evidence of the coolness of the

command, I may mention here that, notwithstanding that their fire was the most rapid and continuous I have ever witnessed, not a man was injured by the fire of his comrades. . . . In the mean time line after line of the enemy deployed in the ravine, and advanced to the attack at intervals of not more than fifteen minutes until about 4:30 o'clock, when there was a lull of about a half hour, during which a mass of artillery was placed in position in front of the town and opened upon our position. At this time I brought up Colonel De Saussure's regiment. Our batteries on the hill were silent, having exhausted their ammunition, and the Washington Artillery were relieved by a part of Colonel Alexander's battalion. Under cover of this artillery fire, the most formidable column of attack was formed, which, about five o'clock, emerged from the ravine and, no longer impeded by our artillery, impetuously assailed our whole front. From this time until after six o'clock the attack was continuous, and the fire on both sides terrific. Some few, chiefly officers, got within thirty yards of our lines, but in every instance their columns were shattered by the time they got within one hundred paces. The firing gradually subsided, and by seven o'clock our pickets were established within thirty yards of those of the enemy.

"Our chief loss after getting into position in the road was from the fire of sharpshooters, who occupied some buildings on my left flank in the early part of the engagement, and were only silenced by Captain [W.] Wallace, of the Second regiment, directing a continuous fire of one company upon the buildings. General Cobb, I learn, was killed by a shot from that quarter. The regiments on the hill suffered most, as they were less perfectly covered."—EDITOR.



COBB'S AND KERSHAW'S TROOPS BEHIND THE STONE WALL.

charged and were repulsed. A sixth time they charged and were driven back, when night came to end the dreadful carnage, and the Federals withdrew, leaving the battle-field literally heaped with the bodies of their dead.

Before the well-directed fire of Cobb's brigade, the Federals had fallen like the steady dripping of rain from the eaves of a house. Our musketry alone had killed and wounded at least five thousand; and these, with the slaughter by the artillery, left over seven thousand killed and wounded before the foot of Marye's Hill. The dead were piled sometimes three deep, and when morning broke, the spectacle that we saw upon the battle-field was one of the most distressing I ever witnessed. The charges had been desperate and bloody, but utterly hopeless. I thought, as I saw the Federals come again and again to their death, that they deserved success if courage and daring could entitle soldiers to victory.

During the night, a Federal strayed beyond his lines and was taken up by some of my troops. On searching him, we found on his person a memorandum of General Burnside's arrangement, and an order for the renewal of the battle the next day. This information was sent to General Lee, and immediately orders were given for a line of rifle-pits on the top of Marye's Hill for Ransom, who had been held somewhat in reserve, and for other guns to be pitted on Taylor's Hill.

We were on our lines before daylight, anxious to receive General Burnside again. As the gray of the morning came without the battle, we became more anxious; yet, as the Federal forces retained position during the 14th and 15th, we were not without hope. There was some little skirmishing, but it did not amount to anything. But when the full light of the next morning revealed an abandoned field, General Lee turned to me, referring in his mind to the dispatch I had captured and which he had just reread, and said: "General, I am losing confidence in your friend General Burnside." We then put it down for a decoy sent into our lines. Afterwards, however, we learned that the order was made in good faith but changed

in consequence of the demoralized condition of the grand divisions in front of Marye's Hill. During the night of the 15th, the Federal troops withdrew; and on the 16th our lines were reestablished along the river.\*



BRIGADIER-GENERAL THOMAS R. R. COBB. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.)

Before the war, General Cobb was a lawyer. He was born in Georgia in 1820. In 1851 he published a "Digest of the Laws of Georgia."

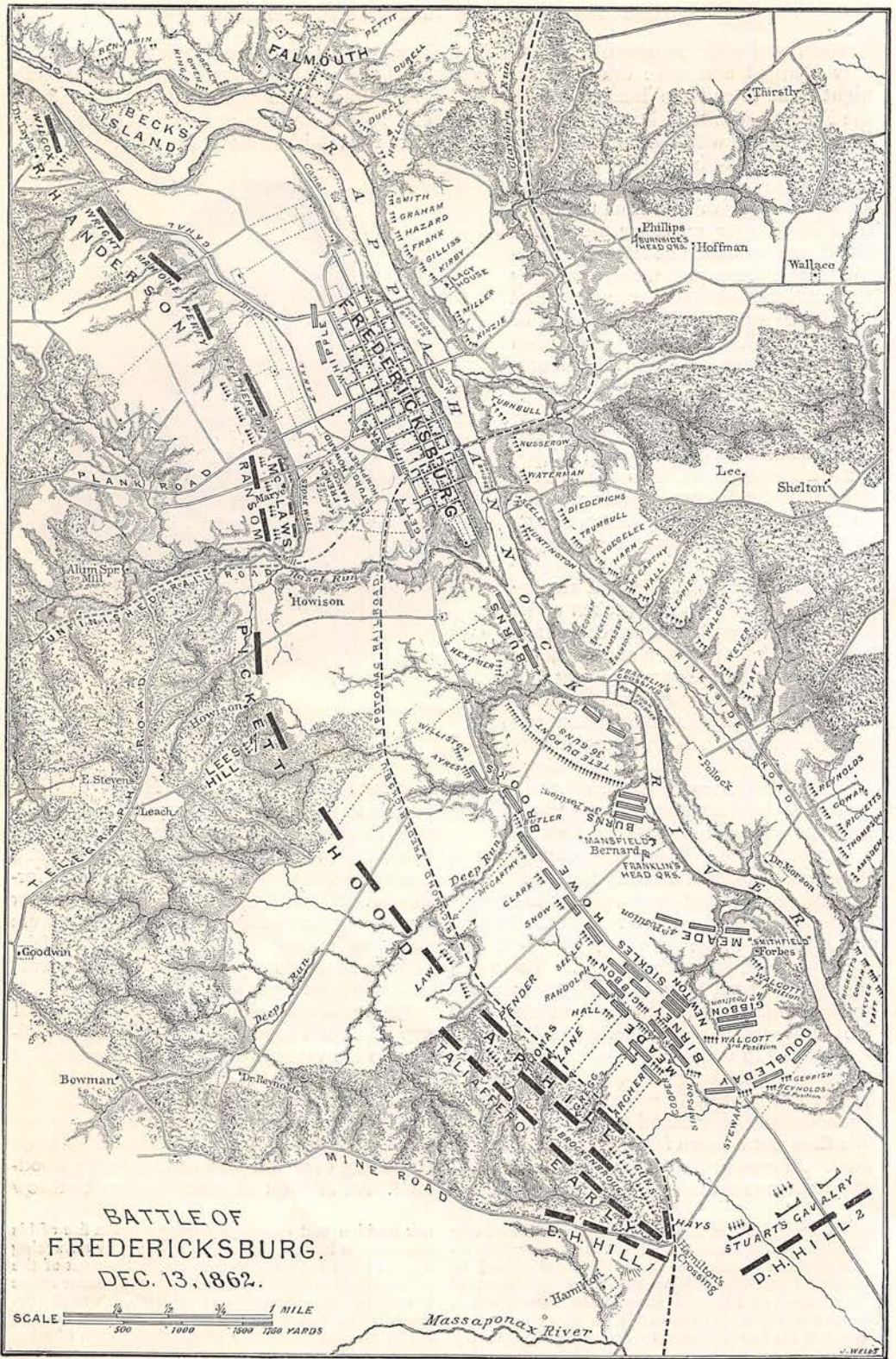
I have heard that General Hooker said, referring to the attack at Marye's Hill while it was in progress, "There has been enough blood shed to satisfy any reasonable man, and it is time to quit." I think myself it was fortunate for Burnside that he had no greater success, for the meeting with such discomfiture gave him an opportunity to get back safely. If he had made any progress, his loss would probably have been greater.

Such was the battle of Fredericksburg as I saw it. It has been asked why we did not follow up the victory. The answer is plain. It goes without saying that the battle of the First Corps, concluded after nightfall, could not have been changed into offensive operations. Our line was about three miles long, extending over hill and dale through woodland. An attempt at concentration to throw

\* General Lee explained officially, as follows, why he expected the attack would be resumed: "The attack on the 13th had been so easily repulsed, and by so small a part of our army, that it was not supposed the enemy would limit his efforts to an attempt which, in view of the magnitude of his preparations and the extent of his force, seemed to be comparatively insignificant.

Believing, therefore, that he would attack us, it was not deemed expedient to lose the advantages of

our position and expose the troops to the fire of his inaccessible batteries beyond the river, by advancing against him; but we were necessarily ignorant of the extent to which he had suffered, and only became aware of it when, on the morning of the 16th, it was discovered that he had availed himself of the darkness of night, and the prevalence of a violent storm of wind and rain, to recross the river. The town was immediately reoccupied and our position on the river bank resumed."—EDITOR.

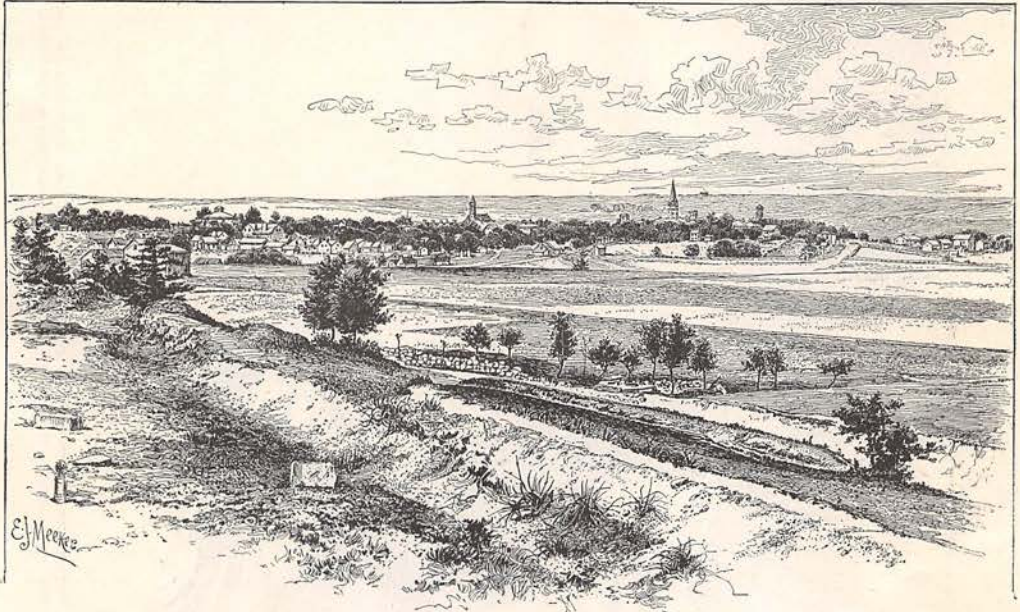


NOTE: The batteries which had position on the outskirts of the town in rear of Sumner's attack were Waterman's, Kusserow's, Kirby's, Hazard's, Frank's, Arnold's, Phillips's, and Dickerson's. In indicating the Union artillery, we have followed an official map made under the direction of General Henry J. Hunt, chief of artillery.—EDITOR.

the troops against the walls of the city at that hour of the night would have been little better than madness. The Confederate field was arranged for defensive battle. Its abrupt termination could not have been anticipated, nor could any skill have marshaled our troops for offensive operations in time to meet the emergency. My line was long and over very broken country, so much so that the troops could not

ous to give counter-attack, the Federal position being about as strong as ours from which we had driven them back. Attempts to break up an army by following on its line of retreat are often hazardous and rarely successful, while movements around, threatening the flanks and rear, increase the demoralization and offer better opportunities for great results.

The condition of a retreating army may be



FREDERICKSBURG FROM THE FOOT OF WILLIS'S HILL. (FROM A WAR-TIME PHOTOGRAPH.)

In the middle-ground is seen the south end of the stone wall, and it may be seen that the front line of defense formed by the wall was continued still further to the right by the sunken Telegraph road. At the base of the hill, this side of the stone wall, is seen an earth-work which was a part of the second line. A

third line (see page 614) was on the brow of this hill, now the National Cemetery. Between the steeples on the outskirts of Fredericksburg is seen the end of Hanover street, by which, and by the street in the right of the picture, the Union forces filed out to form for the assault.—EDITOR.

be promptly handled, offensively. Jackson's corps was in mass, and could he have anticipated the result of my battle, he would have been justified in pressing Franklin to the river when the battle of the latter was lost. Otherwise, pursuit would have been as unwise as the attack he had just driven off. The Federal batteries on Stafford Heights were effectively posted to protect their troops against our advance, and Franklin would have been in good defensive position against attack on the next day. It is well known that after driving off attacking forces, if immediate pursuit can be made so that the victors can go along with the retreating forces pell-mell, it is well enough to do so; but the attack should be immediate. To follow a success by counter-attack against the enemy in position is problematical. In the case of the armies at Fredericksburg it would have been, to say the least, very hazard-

illustrated by a little incident witnessed thirty years ago on the western plains of Texas. A soldier of my regiment essayed to capture a rattlesnake. Being pursued, the reptile took refuge in a prairie-dog's hole, turning his head as he entered it, to defend the sally-port. The soldier coming up in time, seized the tail as it was in the act of passing under cover, and at the same instant the serpent seized the index finger of the soldier's hand. The result was the soldier lost the use of his finger. The wise serpent made successful retreat, and may to this day be the chief ruler and patriarch of the rattlesnake tribe on our western plains. The rear of a retreating army is always its best guarded point.

During the attack upon General Jackson, and immediately after his line was broken, General Pickett rode up to General Hood and suggested that the movement anticipated



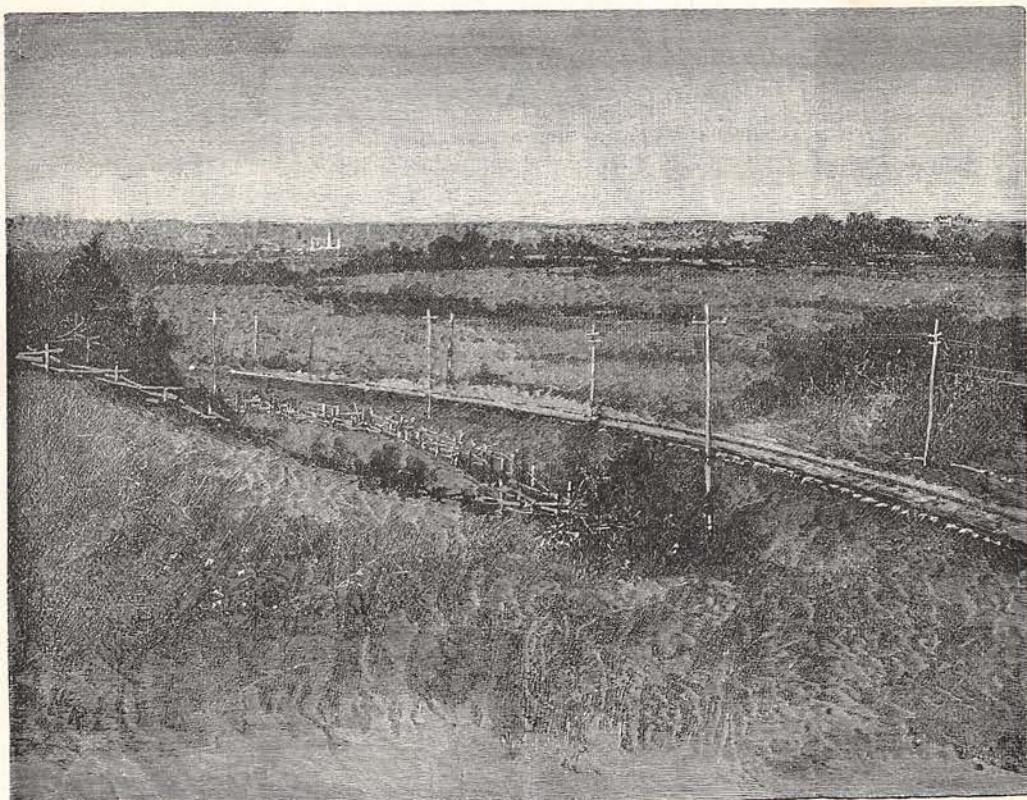
THAT PART OF THE STONE WALL BEYOND THE HOUSE WHERE GENERAL COBB DIED, AND EXTENDING IN THE DIRECTION OF HAZEL RUN.  
(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IMMEDIATELY AFTER MARVE'S HILL WAS CARRIED BY ASSAULT BY TROOPS OF SEDGWICK'S SIXTH CORPS, MAY 3D, 1863.)

3bbew  
New York



by my orders was at hand, and requested that it be executed. Hood did not agree, so the opportunity was allowed to pass. Had Hood sprung to the occasion we would have enveloped Franklin's command, and might possibly have marched it into the Confederate camp. Hood commanded splendid troops, quite fresh

Richmond to suggest other operations, but was assured that the war was virtually over, and that we need not harass our troops by marches and other hardships. Gold had advanced in New York to two hundred, and we were assured by those at the Confederate capital that in thirty or forty days we would



RECENT SKETCH OF FRANKLIN'S BATTLE-FIELD, FROM HAMILTON'S CROSSING—FREDERICKSBURG STEEPLES IN THE DISTANCE.

and eager for occasion to give renewed assurances of their mettle.

It has been reported that the troops attacking Marye's Hill were intoxicated, having been plied with whisky to nerve them to the desperate attack. That can hardly be true. I know nothing of the facts, but no sensible commander will allow his troops strong drink upon going into battle. After a battle is over, the soldier's gill is usually allowed if it is at hand. No troops could have displayed greater courage and resolution than was shown by those brought against Marye's Hill. But they miscalculated the wonderful strength of the brigade behind the stone fence. The position held by Cobb surpassed courage and resolution and was occupied by those who knew well how to hold a comfortable defense.

After the retreat, General Lee went to

be recognized and peace proclaimed. General Lee did not share in this belief.

I have been asked if Burnside could have been victorious at Fredericksburg. Such a thing was hardly possible. Perhaps no general could have accomplished more than Burnside did, and it was possible for him to have suffered greater loss. The battle of Fredericksburg was a great and unprofitable sacrifice of human life made, through the pressure from the rear, against a general who should have known better and who doubtless acted against his judgment. If I had been in General Burnside's place, I would have asked the President to allow me to resign rather than execute his order to force the passage of the river and march the army against Lee in his stronghold.

Viewing the battle after the lapse of more than twenty years, I may say, however,

that Burnside's move might have been made stronger by throwing two of his grand divisions across at the mouth of Deep Run, where Franklin crossed with his grand division and six brigades of Hooker's. Had he thus placed Hooker and Sumner, his sturdiest fighters, and made resolute assault with them in his attack on our right, he would in all probability have given us trouble. The partial success he had at that point might have been pushed vigorously by such a force and might have thrown our right entirely from position, in which event the result would have depended on the skillful handling of the forces. Franklin's grand division could have made sufficient sacrifice at Marye's Hill and come as near success as did Sumner's and two-thirds of Hooker's, combined. I think, however, that the success would have been on our side, and it might have been followed by greater disaster on the side of the Federals; still they would have had the chance of a possible success in their favor, while in the battle as fought it can hardly be claimed that there was a chance.

Burnside made a mistake from the first. He should have gone from Warrenton to Chester

Gap. He might then have held Jackson and fought me, or have held me and fought Jackson, thus taking us in detail. The doubt about the matter was whether or not he could have caught me in that trap before we could concentrate. At any rate, that was the only move on the board that could have benefited him at the time he was assigned to the command of the Army of the Potomac. By interposing between the corps of Lee's army, he would have secured strong ground and advantage of position. With skill equal to the occasion, he should have had success. This was the move about which we felt serious apprehension, and were occupying our minds with plans to meet it, when the move towards Fredericksburg was reported.

General McClellan, in an account recently published, speaks of this move as that upon which he was studying when the order for Burnside's assignment to command reached him.

When Burnside determined to move by Fredericksburg, he should have moved rapidly and occupied the city at once, but this would only have forced us back to the plan preferred by General Jackson.

*James Longstreet.*

#### SUMNER'S "RIGHT GRAND DIVISION."\*



ON the evening of October 15th, 1862, which was a few days after McClellan had placed me in command of the Second Corps, at Harper's Ferry, the commanding general sent an order for Hancock to take his division the next morning on a reconnaissance toward Charlestown, about ten

miles distant. The division started in good season, as directed. About ten in the morning, General McClellan reined up at my headquarters and asked me to go out with him to see what the troops were doing. Our people had met the enemy's outpost five miles from the Ferry, and while artillery shots were being exchanged, both of us dismounted, walked away by our-

\* It is due to General Couch to state that with limited time in which to prepare this paper, he dictated it to a

stenographer in answer to questions by us bearing chiefly on his personal recollections.—EDITOR.

under him, says that at Cashtown an order came from General Lee requiring a cavalry force to be sent to Fairfield, and that in the *absence of General Robertson* he determined to move in that direction at once, and that near there he encountered and routed the 6th United States Regulars. There was *only one* regiment of Federal cavalry there, which thus neutralized two Confederate brigades with two batteries of artillery. If all of our cavalry had been at the front, Meade could not have spared even this one regiment to send after Lee's trains; it would have been all he could do to take care of his own. In the skirmish at Fairfield on July 3d was the first time Robertson's command had seen the enemy since it disappeared from his front at Middleburg, Va., early on the morning of June 26th. Keeping eight days out of sight of the enemy was not exactly the way to carry out Stuart's order *to watch and harass him*. It was his leadership *preceding* the battle that I criticised. In modern war the most important service of cavalry is rendered before a battle begins. General Robertson says that it was at Martinsburg, and not at Ashby's Gap in the Blue Ridge, "*as Colonel Mosby insinuates*," that he received orders from General Lee to join the army. In December, 1877, a letter of his was published in the Philadelphia "Times," in which he justified his delay in Virginia, on the ground that his instructions required him "*to await further orders*," and stated that on June 29th, *at Ashby's Gap*, he received orders from General Lee to join the army, and started forthwith. He fortified this statement by certificates of two members of his staff. The instructions which I recently found among the Confederate archives direct him to hold the mountain gaps "as long as the enemy remains in your [his] front in force." He staid there *three* days after they had gone into Pennsylvania, and now makes no explanation of the delay, but raises an immaterial issue about the skirmish at Fairfield, which simply proves that on the day of battle he was in the rear with the wagon trains. General Robertson says that he gave satisfaction to General Lee. Now, that General Lee was dissatisfied with some one is shown by his report in which he complains that "the movement of the army *preceding* the battle of Gettysburg had been much embarrassed by the absence of the cavalry." I have elsewhere shown that this censure can only apply to the commander of the cavalry who was left with him to observe the enemy. As soon as the army returned to Virginia, General Robertson, at his own request, was relieved of command. No argument in favor of acquittal can be drawn from the leniency that was shown in this case. There was but little of the stern Agamemnon in the character of General Lee.

Jno. S. Mosby.

SAN FRANCISCO, August 24th, 1887.

#### An Anecdote of the Petersburg Crater.

I WAS in Virginia in 1864, and the paragraph in General Grant's Vicksburg paper describing the mine explosion and the frightened negro who was lifted "bout t'ree mile" brings to my mind the mining of the Confederate works before Petersburg in the summer of 1864. Among the prisoners captured was one whose face was greatly begrimed, and as he marched by he was saluted by a blue-coat with the remark, "Say, John-

ny! guess you got blown up." "Well," replied Johnny with an oath, "I should just say so; but somehow I got the start of the other fellows, for when I was coming down I met the regiment going up, and they all called me a blasted straggler!"

Henry R. Howland.

BUFFALO, September 7th, 1885.

#### Ransom's Division at Fredericksburg.

IN the August, 1886, number of THE CENTURY General James Longstreet published what he "saw of the battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December 13th, 1862."

The omissions in that article were so glaring and did such injustice, that I wrote to him and requested him to correct what would produce false impressions. His answer was unsatisfactory, but promised that, "I [Longstreet] expect in the near future to make accounts of all battles and put them in shape, in a form not limited by words, but with full details, when there will be opportunity to elaborate upon all points of interest."

General Lee, in his report of the battle of Fredericksburg, December 13th, 1862, writes as follows:

... "Longstreet's corps constituted our left, with Anderson's division resting upon the river, and those of McLaws, Pickett, and Hood extending to the right in the order named. Ransom's division supported the batteries on Marye's and Willis's hills, at the foot of which Cobb's brigade of McLaws's division and the 24th North Carolina of Ransom's brigade were stationed, protected by a stone wall. *The immediate care of this point was committed to General Ransom.*"

The italics in this paper are all mine. The positions are stated by General Lee exactly as the troops were posted. Lee's report continues, farther on:

... "About 11 A. M., having massed his [the enemy's] troops under cover of the houses of Fredericksburg, he moved forward in strong columns, to seize Marye's and Willis's hills. General Ransom advanced Cooke's brigade to the top of the hill, and placed his own, with the exception of the 24th North Carolina, a short distance in rear."... "In the *third assault*" [his report continues] "the brave and lamented Brigadier-General Thomas R. Cobb fell at the head of his gallant troops, and almost at the same moment Brigadier-General Cooke was borne from the field severely wounded. Fearing that Cobb's brigade might exhaust its ammunition, General Longstreet had directed General Kershaw to take two regiments to its support. Arriving after the fall of Cobb, he assumed command, his troops taking position on the crest and at the foot of the hill, *to which point General Ransom also advanced three other regiments.*"

General Kershaw took command of Cobb's brigade, which I had had supplied with ammunition from my wagons, and I repeated the supply during the day.

General Longstreet in his official report says:

... "General Ransom on Marye's Hill was charged *with the immediate care of the point attacked*, with orders to send forward additional reinforcements, if it should become necessary, and to use Featherston's brigade of Anderson's division, if he should require it." And continuing, "I directed Major-General Pickett to send me two of his brigades: *one, Kemper's, was sent to General Ransom to be placed in some secure position to be ready in case it should be wanted.*" And again, "I would also mention, as particularly distinguished in the engagement of the 13th, Brigadier-Generals Ransom, Kershaw, and Cooke (severely wounded)."

General McLaws was not upon the part of the field in the vicinity of Marye's and Willis's hills during the

battle, but his aide, Captain King, was killed on the front slope of the hill near Marye's house.

My own permanent command was a small division of two brigades of infantry,—my own, containing the 24th, 25th, 35th, and 49th; and Cooke's, the 15th, 27th, 46th, and 48th regiments,—all from North Carolina; and attached to my brigade was Branch's battery, and to Cooke's brigade the battery of Cooper.

At the time the fog began to lift from the field, I was with Generals Lee and Longstreet, on what has since been known as Lee's Hill. Starting to join my command as the Federals began to emerge from the town, General Longstreet said to me, "Remember, general, I place that salient in your keeping. Do what is needed; and call on Anderson if you want help."

I brought up Cooke before the first assault to the crest of the hills, and before that assault ended, Cooke took the 27th and 46th and part of the 15th North Carolina into the sunken road in front. The 48th North Carolina fought on top of the hill all day.

At the third assault I brought up the 25th North Carolina just in time to deliver a few deadly volleys, and then it "took position shoulder to shoulder with Cobb's and Cooke's men in the road."

During this third attack General Cobb was mortally hit, and almost at the same instant, and within two paces of him, General Cooke was severely wounded and borne from the field, Colonel E. D. Hall, 46th North Carolina, assuming command of Cooke's brigade.

At this juncture I sent my adjutant-general, Captain Thomas Rowland, to the sunken road to learn the condition of affairs. "His report was most gratifying, representing the troops in fine spirits and an abundance of ammunition. I had ordered Cobb's brigade supplied from my wagons."

After this third attack I was bringing up the 35th and 49th North Carolina of my brigade, when General Kershaw, by a new road leading from the mill below, came up on horseback with his staff at the head of *one* regiment, which he took in just at Marye's house. He was followed by a second regiment, which halted behind a brick-walled graveyard upon Willis's Hill.

About sundown Brigadier-General Kemper was brought up, and relieved the 24th North Carolina with two of his regiments and held the others in closer supporting distance. On the 20th of December, 1862, he sent me a list of his casualties, with this note:

"HEADQUARTERS KEMPER'S BRIGADE,  
December 20th, 1862.

"GENERAL: I inclose herewith the statement of the losses of my brigade on the 13th and 14th insts. while acting as part of your command. While a report of my losses has been called for by my permanent division commander, and rendered to him, it has occurred to me that a similar one rendered to yourself would be proper and acceptable. Permit me to add, general, that our brief service with you was deeply gratifying to myself and to my entire command. I have the honor to be, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant.

"J. L. KEMPER, BRIGADIER-GENERAL.  
"BRIG.-GEN. RANSOM, COMMANDING DIVISION."

As stated in my letter to General Longstreet dated August 14th, 1866, when I brought to his attention his extraordinary omissions, it gave me unfeigned pleasure to mention properly in my official report the meritorious conduct of those who were a part of my permanent command and those others who that day fell under my direction by reason of my "*immediate care of the point attacked.*" My official report exhibits no self-seeking nor partial discriminations.

Upon a letter from me (of the 17th of December, 1862) to General R. H. Chilton, assistant adjutant-general Army of Northern Virginia, wherein I protest against the ignoring of my command in some telegraphic dispatches to the War Department at Richmond relative to the battle of the 13th, General Longstreet indorses these words: "*General Ransom's division was engaged throughout the battle and was quite as distinguished as any troops upon the field*"; and the same day, the 19th of December, I received from both him and General Chilton notes expressing the regret felt by General Lee at the injustice of which I complained. Those original letters are now among the "Official Records" in Washington.

I may be pardoned for remembering with pride that among the Confederate troops engaged on the *whole* battle-field of Fredericksburg, Va., December 13th, 1862, none were more honorably distinguished than the sons of North Carolina, and those of them who with brother soldiers from other States held the lines at Marye's Hill against almost ten times their number of as brave and determined foes as ever did battle can well trust their fame to history when written from truthful official records.\*

R. Ransom.

\* When credit is not given for quotations, they are from my official report of the battle.—R. R.



THE BAGGAGE GUARD.