

McCLELLAN AT THE HEAD OF THE GRAND ARMY.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A PRIVATE.—VII.†



A DISORGANIZED PRIVATE.
(FROM A PHOTO.)

TWO days after our second defeat at Bull Run, while yet the roads were crowded with stragglers, and despondency overshadowed all, McClellan reassumed command of the army. It was the morning of September 2d, 1862, and reorganization began at once. The demoralizing influences of a battle, whether it is a defeat or a victory, are always very great; but there is no disorganization of the machine known as a brigade, regiment, or company, except in case of utter rout, when the army becomes a mob. As soon as a vacancy occurs in battle the officer next in rank, without assignment or orders, fills the place. An officer, perhaps, finds fighting does not agree with his peculiar temperament, and resigns, or is taken sick and puts himself under the care of some sympathetic surgeon; or the demoralized private, during the fight, throws away his knapsack and fighting equipments in order to increase his speed for the rear. The sick and foot-sore straggle, the cowards skulk, and a more vicious class willfully desert. Those who have by casualty of battle been deprived of gun, or knapsack, or haversack, or canteen, or tin cup, have to be re-supplied. A private, perchance, sees where a bullet has entered his neatly rolled blanket, which when opened out is found better adapted for ventilation than bedding. The whole military machine must be lubricated with general, special, necessary and unnecessary, ornamental and practical orders, and bound together, more or less, with red tape. Incapable officers who have been promoted by the accident of battle are restored to their former positions, and competent ones advanced.

Companies are filled up with recruits. Sometimes two or more companies, thinned by the casualties of battle, are merged into one.

In no direction was the ability of McClellan so conspicuous as in organizing. Even before the soldiers knew he was again in command, they began to detect a new influence around them. In order to bring the troops upon ground with which they were already familiar, they were as far as practicable ordered to the camping-grounds occupied by each corps before the movement to the Peninsula. In a few days the *morale* of the army underwent an astonishing change for the better.

On the 5th of September, with shoes worn out, clothing in rags, and destitute of the necessaries for effective duty, the Army of the Potomac again left the defenses of Washington, while the work of reorganization went on as it marched into Maryland to meet the enemy.

Lee had transferred the theater of operations from the front of Richmond to the front of Washington. The harvest of the fertile valley of the Shenandoah had fallen into his hands, together with stores and munitions of war of great value to the impoverished Confederacy. To secure, as he thought, the full benefit of his victory, he crossed the Potomac into Maryland. By this movement he hoped to arouse a deep sentiment against the war at the North by bringing it nearer to our own hearthstones; to enable the secession element in Maryland to raise the standard of revolt, and recruit his army; and so to manoeuvre as to seize Baltimore or Washington. It was a bold undertaking, and his army was poorly equipped for the task. At no time had it been so destitute and ragged, and so little calculated to impress the imagination of "My Maryland" with the fact that the despot's foot was on her soil. The western counties of Maryland were loyal or lukewarm in their rebel sympathies, and the result showed they hardly aspired to become as miserable as the hungry, tattered horde let loose among them. Yet at no time in its previous history was the Confederate army so worthy of admiration, and of the name of Chivalry. They were heroes in rags!*

* Lieutenant Robert Healy, of the Fifty-fifth Virginia, in Stonewall Jackson's corps, tells the following incident of the march into Maryland. The day before the corps waded the Potomac at White's Ford, they marched through Leesburg, where an old lady

with upraised hands, and tears in her eyes exclaimed: "The Lord bless your dirty, ragged souls!" Lieutenant Healy adds: "Don't think we were any dirtier than the rest, but it was our luck to get the blessing."
—EDITOR.

McClellan, in taking command, had to confront both the enemy and Halleck. The latter was constantly telegraphing his doubts, and fears, and advice. September 9th, he telegraphed that he feared the enemy's object was to draw off the mass of our forces and then attack from the Virginia side. As late as the 13th, he telegraphed: "Until you know more certainly the enemy's force south of the Potomac, you are wrong in thus uncovering the capital." On the 14th, "I fear you are exposing your left and rear." As late as the 16th, he wrote: "I think you will find that the whole force of the enemy in your front has crossed the river."

On September 10th, McClellan wrote to Halleck asking that the ten thousand men garrisoning Harper's Ferry be ordered to join him by the most practicable route. Before he left Washington he had advised that the garrison be withdrawn by way of Hagerstown to aid in covering the Cumberland valley; or cross the river to Maryland Heights, the military key to the position. Halleck chose to consider the possession of the town as of the first importance, and the whole campaign pivots around this fact, which resulted, as might have been expected, in the capture of the garrison. But it also had another far-reaching result not intended, for Harper's Ferry was the point whereon Lee miscalculated and miscarried in his plans. He did not propose to make any direct movement against Washington or Baltimore, but first establishing his communications with Richmond by way of the Shenandoah Valley, and by menacing Pennsylvania, he expected that McClellan would uncover Washington, and be led from his base of supplies. Then if he could defeat McClellan he might seize Baltimore or Washington, or both. Imagine his surprise after he had crossed the Potomac above Harper's Ferry, and rendered the place useless, to find it still occupied. The Federal advance had been up to this time so timid that Lee believed he could capture the garrison and again concentrate his columns before being called upon to give battle. He forthwith ordered Jackson to move by way of Williamsport across the Potomac, advance upon Martinsburg and then descend to Harper's Ferry and attack from the rear, while McLaws should capture Maryland Heights, and a force, under Walker, crossing below, should seize the heights of Loudon. Before the plan succeeded McClellan had arrived at Frederick, and on the 13th, there fell into his hands a copy of Lee's official order, fully disclosing this movement in all its details. Here was an opportunity seldom presented to a general, of throwing his forces between the now

divided army of his antagonist, and destroying him in detail. McClellan ordered a movement towards Maryland Heights, but not rapid enough to effect his purpose. On the 15th, Jackson, having surrounded Harper's Ferry, opened with artillery. In an hour Colonel Dixon S. Miles, who was in command, was killed, the Union guns were silenced, and the post with its twelve thousand men (including two thousand under General Julius White, who had retreated from Martinsburg), and seventy-three pieces of artillery, surrendered at eight o'clock in the morning. Leaving General A. P. Hill to receive the surrender, and losing not a moment, Stonewall Jackson, on the night of the 15th, marched his men seventeen miles, and on the morning of the 16th had united his force with Lee at Sharpsburg.

Behold the contrast between the swift energy of the Confederates, and the leisurely march of the Union force in this great emergency! McClellan, to whom the plans of the Confederates had been revealed by Lee's captured order, was by this knowledge master of the situation. Resolved to avail himself of its advantage, he decided to move his left through Crampton's Gap and debouch into Pleasant Valley in rear and within five miles of Maryland Heights; also with a large force to seize Turner's Gap, six miles further north, before the enemy could concentrate for its defense.

At 6:20 in the afternoon of the 13th, he directed Franklin to march at daybreak upon Crampton's Gap, and closed by saying: "I ask of you, at this important moment, all your intellect and the utmost activity that a general can exercise." With such an immense stake upon the boards, we wonder he did not command Franklin to move that night, immediately on receiving the order. The distance from Franklin's position near Jefferson to the top of Crampton's Gap was but twelve miles. The roads were in good condition, the weather was fine, and we now know that had he marched to the foot of the mountains during the night, he could have debouched into Pleasant Valley, in rear of the Confederates, with little or no opposition, on the morning of the 14th. McLaws, while directing the guns from Maryland Heights upon the defenders of Harper's Ferry, learned of Franklin's advance, and at once sent back Howell Cobb, with instructions to hold the pass to the last man.

Upon Franklin's arrival at the foot of the mountain at Burkittsville, at noon of the 14th, he found the enemy posted behind a stone wall, while the artillery were on the road, well up on the heights. About 3 P. M., Bartlett's brigade, supported by the brigades of Newton and Torbert, all of Slocum's division, advanced upon the enemy, and a severe



J. W. Pope

During the war Major-General Pope wore a full beard. This portrait is from a somewhat recent photograph.—EDITOR.

contest ensued. The enemy, overpowered, fell back up the hill, firing upon our men from behind rocks and the natural defensive positions presented by the ground, until they reached their artillery, where they made a more decided stand. Their riflemen took advantage of every possible cover of ledge and rock and tree. When Slocum's division had become actively engaged Brooks's and Irwin's brigades, of Smith's division, were sent forward and bore a part in the final struggle. Hancock's brigade was held in reserve. After a sharp action of three hours the crest was

carried,—four hundred prisoners, seven hundred stand of arms, one piece of artillery, and three colors were the prizes of the Union army. Our loss was 113 killed, 418 wounded, and 2 missing.

A Vermont soldier told me that during this up-hill fight, while climbing over a ledge, he slipped and fell eighteen or twenty feet between two rocks. Rapid as had been his tumble, upon his arrival he found himself preceded by a Confederate soldier. For an instant they glared angrily at each other, when the "reb" burst out laughing, saying: "We're

both in a fix. You can't gobble me, and I can't gobble you, till we know which is going to lick. Let's wait till the shooting is over, and if your side wins I'm your prisoner, and if we win you're my prisoner!" The bargain was made. "But," said my informant, "didn't that reb feel cheap when he found I'd won him!"

That night the advance of Franklin's corps rested on their arms within three and a half miles of McLaws on Maryland Heights. During the night Couch joined him, and had he attacked McLaws early in the morning (September 15th), it is possible that the garrison at Harper's Ferry would have been saved. An hour after midnight of that morning McClellan had sent orders for Franklin to occupy the road from Rohrer'sville to Harper's Ferry, and hold it against an attack from Boonsboro', or in other words from Longstreet and Hill, and to destroy such force as he found in Pleasant Valley. "You will then proceed," ordered McClellan, "to Boonsboro', . . . and join the main body of the army at that place. Should you find, however, that the enemy have retreated from Boonsboro' towards Sharpsburg you will endeavor to fall upon him and cut off his retreat." But from one cause and another the plans for an overwhelming defeat miscarried.

Our corps (Sumner's) was following Reno's and Hooker's in the advance upon Turner's Gap, five miles north of the fight described above, but I individually did not get up in time to see the last blows struck. Until our arrival at Frederick, and even later, I was a straggler.* The circumstance which caused me to become a demoralized unit of the army may be creditable or otherwise, but I will tell it. Just before the battle of Chantilly (September 1), I, with Wad Rider, and "Joe," the recruit, had retired to the seclusion of a neighboring wood to engage in a war of extermination against an invader of the Union blue. I had partly resumed my clothing but not my shoes. Joe had entirely re-dressed, but Wad Rider was still on undress parade. Suddenly Joe, whose quickness of sight and hearing were remarkable, shouted, "Rebs! Rebs!" Down a cross-road on our left came a squad of the enemy's cavalry. I ran barefoot, with my

cartridge-box and belt over one shoulder, my musket in one hand, and my other hand holding my garments together. As I ran I heard a musket-shot, and turned to view the situation. Wad Rider, dressed in nothing but his cuticle and equipments, had killed the leading cavalryman in the pursuit, and shouting like mad for reinforcements, was retreating in light marching order upon the camp. I dashed through a stump lot, with Joe on my flank and Wad in the rear, still pursued by the enemy, who were calling upon us to surrender. The noise brought the boys swarming from the camp, and when I regained my feet, after a collision with the root of a stump, the rebels were making for the woods. Under a strong escort of comrades we returned to reclaim Wad's uniform and my shoes, but the enemy had gobbled them. Wad stripped the dead cavalryman, and assumed his clothing without saying so much as "poor fellow," and looked grotesque enough in his gray suit. "First thing you'll hear of," said Wad, "some blank fool will be shooting me for a reb!"

As the result of my fall I had the sorest foot in camp. I was ordered to report to the hospital—a place I never had a liking for—but I preferred to limp along in rear of the army like a true straggler. I messed with darky teamsters, or with anybody who had eatables, and would receive me into good-fellowship. In some of the Maryland houses they were nursing the sick soldiers of the Union army, and many farmers gave to the hungry soldiers most of the food upon their farms. Near Middletown a woman gave me a pair of shoes, which I was not then able to wear; while at another place an old lady, after caring for my unheroic wound, presented me with a pair of stockings which she had knit for her own son, who was in the Union army. Maryland was the first place since I had come to the front where we were greeted with smiles from children and women. At a pleasant farm-house, near Damascus, where flowers grew in the garden, and vines climbed around the capacious veranda, a little girl peeped over the gate and said good-morning. I asked her if she was not afraid of so many passing soldiers, and she replied: "No, my father is a soldier in the army

* During the Maryland campaign the Confederates as well as the Federals were greatly weakened by straggling. General Lee advocated severe measures; yet in the face of remarkable discipline his ranks were thinned by straggling. On October 7, twenty days after the battle of Antietam, General Halleck, in a letter to General McClellan, said: "Straggling is the great curse of the army, and must be checked by severe measures. . . . I think, myself, that shooting them while in the act of straggling from their commands, is the only effective remedy that can be applied. If you apply the remedy you will be sustained here. . . .

The country is becoming very impatient at the want of activity of your army, and we must push it on. . . . There is a decided want of legs in our troops. . . . The real difficulty is they are not sufficiently exercised in marching; they lie still in camp too long. After a hard march one day is time enough to rest. Lying still beyond that time does not rest the men. If we compare the average distances marched per month by our troops for the last year, with that of the rebels, or with European armies in the field, we will see why our troops march no better. They are not sufficiently exercised to make them good and efficient soldiers."—EDITOR.



Major T. Hancock

(FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY GURNEY & SON, TAKEN IN WAR TIME, OR SOON AFTER.)

too," and then timidly, as if afraid to dazzle me with his exalted rank, said, "He's a corporal! Do you know him?" Of course we met with some decided contrasts smacking of disloyalty.

I picked up temporary acquaintances of all kinds, but during my third day's ramble I chummed with an artilleryman, who had lost his voice. Near Damascus, we called at a pleasantly situated house, belonging to an old man about sixty or seventy years of age. He was very non-committal in his sentiments. His wife was a lady-like old woman, and her two daughters had evidently seen good society. We propounded the usual conundrum about something to eat, and exhibited money to show that we intended to pay.

The young women, when speaking of the Confederates, spoke of them as "our army," and it leaked out that they had one brother therein, and another in the paymaster's department at Washington. After supper, we were invited into the reception-room, where there was a piano. I asked for a song. One of the young women seated herself at the piano and played "My Maryland" and "Dixie," and then wheeled as if to say: "How do you like that?" My chum hoarsely whispered a request for the "Star-Spangled Banner," and she obligingly complied, and then said in a semi-saucy manner: "Is there anything else?" My friend mentioned a piece from Beethoven. "I never heard of it before," said she; "perhaps if you should whistle it I would recognize it." But my friend's whistle was in as bad tune as his voice. "Perhaps you will

play it yourself!" said the black-eyed miss, for an extinguisher! To my astonishment, no less, seemingly, than theirs, the rusty-looking artilleryman seated himself at the piano and under his hands the instrument was transformed. He played piece after piece and finally improvised a midnight march in which a band of music was heard, receding farther and farther until the whole died away in the distance. Our parting was more cordial than our reception.

Two or three miles south of Frederick, my chum was peppered with pigeon-shot while gathering our supper in a farmer's sweet-potato patch and in the morning refused to march, so I pushed on without him. I joined a party who were driving a herd of cattle for the army. The guard hung their haversacks on the horns, and packed their knapsacks and muskets on the backs of the oxen and cows. It was in this company that I arrived at Frederick and wandered into the hospital, a church, where there were about two hundred sick inmates. Feeling lonesome, I pushed on after my regiment. A battle was imminent, and many stragglers were hurrying forward to be in the fight. It was about noon of the 14th when I caught up with my company, and fell in line, hobbling along towards Turner's Gap, where heavy firing could be heard. At ten in the evening we relieved the force holding the main road of the Gap. During the night we could distinctly hear the rumble of the enemy's artillery, and at early dawn found they had fled, leaving their dead and wounded to our care.

Warren Lee Goss.



RUSH'S LANCERS. FRANKLIN'S ADVANCE SCOUTS. (BY WINSLOW HOMER, AFTER HIS SKETCH MADE DURING THE WAR.)