

SOME MEN OF THE SECOND CORPS WHO FOUGHT AT PETERSBURG.

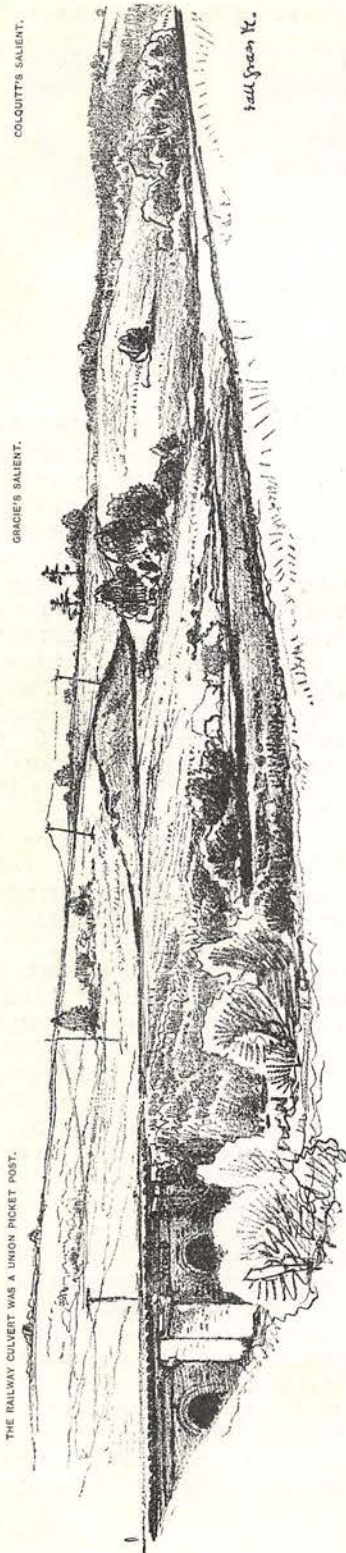
ASSAULT AND REPULSE AT FORT STEDMAN.

TO follow the history of the siege of Petersburg in outline, one should picture the Union army creeping closer and closer to the last citadel of the Confederacy. The commander of that citadel was Lee in person, and with him was a host of veterans. As months rolled by, our line of investment grew from a short streak on the east side of the town, in June, 1864, to a vast entrenched camp with lines sixteen to twenty miles long in the spring of 1865, when the final contests took place. This remarkable attenuation of the line of the Union besiegers involved the weakening of the line at every point, for reinforcements did not come forward as rapidly as there was need of them. During the autumn and winter of 1864-5 our corps, the Ninth, now commanded by Parke, held the original position first occupied the June previous. Here the Stars and Stripes had been planted by the desperate charges, made by Hancock's Second and Burnside's Ninth corps, immediately on the arrival of the army before the town.

After the mine fiasco, July 30th, 1864, the operations of the army were confined to the single object of securing Lee's lines of communications south and south-west of the town. In August a lodgment was secured on the Weldon railroad, running into North Carolina, compelling the Confederates to use the wagon road for some miles. The right of the Union army was pushed forward on the north bank of the James, and in September General Ord took Fort Harrison, one of the outworks of Richmond. In October and November movements were made against the wagon roads between the Weldon railroad and the South Side railroad south and west of Petersburg, and the Confederate positions covering the latter railroad were attacked with some success. It was the completion of this work of cutting the South Side road that Grant was entering upon when the spring campaign was opened by the initiative of Lee.

At the time of which I shall particularly write,—March, 1865,—the eve of the forward movement ending at Appomattox, we could muster but one rank deep on the front line. The Confederates, being on interior lines, could concentrate rapidly. The reader of history has doubtless wondered, as many of us were wont to wonder at the time, why Lee made no attempt during that long siege to break out through the investing columns. Or if not Lee, then his men, for they were cooped up there and all but starving, within sight of plenty. Whenever Confederate soldiers came out from their sheltered camps on the heights and ridges to relieve pickets and guards, their eyes could follow the winding track of our military railway far away to City Point, and could the more readily mark its course by the great stacks of boxes of bread and barrels of meat, sugar, and coffee stored at points convenient to the forts that now dotted the region from the South Side around east and north to the Appomattox River. Such sights might well have created in half-famished men the desperation which goes to recklessness. But to all outward appearance there was nothing to indicate the forging of fiery bolts to be hurled upon our unsuspecting pickets and garrisons. As the mild spring-time came on, a truce was made between the outposts, and a long and bloody campaign of murderous picket-firing ceased for a season. Soldiers of either army basked in the sun, lying peacefully upon the warm sand-bags that topped out the ramparts. This cheering situation was of about ten days' duration, and the cause of it the fact that the troops that had so long been opposed to us in the trenches were at this time relieved, and a new command, John B. Gordon's corps, came to occupy the line. These men introduced the picket truce, and that truce it was that paved the way for Gordon's night sortie at Fort Stedman on the 25th of March.

The ground now occupied by the Ninth Corps had been fought for most desperately

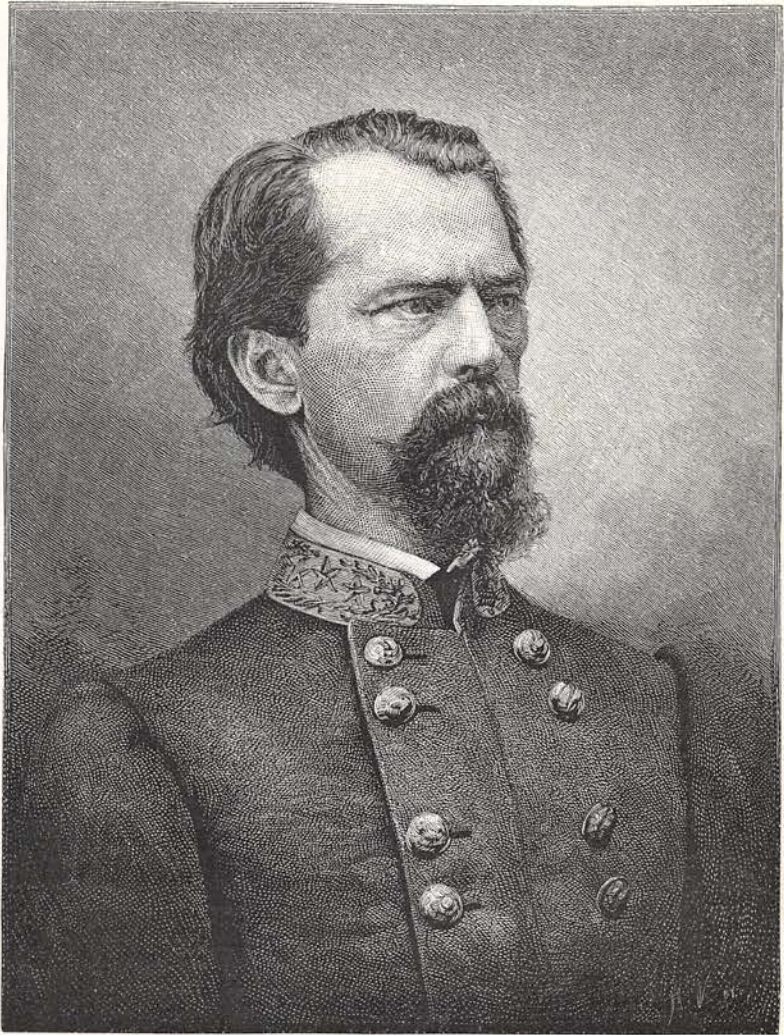


GRACIE'S AND COLQUITT'S SALENTS FROM A POINT ON THE UNION PICKET LINE TO THE FRONT AND LEFT OF FORT HASKELL.—SEE MAP, PAGE 705. (FROM A RECENT SKETCH.)

by Lee at the opening of the investment. It was really his second line of defense as originally planned, and he had been forced away from it back to an interior line on the heights commanding the town and commanding all the railroads so important to the Confederacy. To this last ditch our Ninth Corps batteries and trenches held him. Our works were under Lee's guns, but were so strong that the poundings they got made little impression, and open assault on them was simply foolhardy. Hence we held on there while the movable left wing closed in and tightened the grip. In stratagem, however, the South had a chance, and a point so gained would open to greater things.

The First Division of the Ninth Corps, led by General O. B. Willcox, occupied trenches and forts from Cemetery Hill to the Appomattox. The fort directly facing Cemetery Hill was Morton, a bastioned work, high and impregnable. The next down the line, on lower ground and quite under the best guns Lee had on the crest, was Haskell, a small field redoubt mounting six rifled guns and holding a small infantry garrison. Eighty rods farther was Fort Stedman, a stronger work than Haskell, but not well commanded from Cemetery Hill. Two hundred rods from Stedman was Fort McGilvery, near the river and out of range of Lee's heavy ordnance. In front of Haskell, woods, marshes, and a sluggish stream completely obstructed the passage of men and guns from the enemy's works eastward, but at Stedman, where the lines were but forty rods apart, the ground of both lines and all between was solid and feasible for rapid movements of bodies of every arm of service, even to cavalry, and so here was a road that a master-stroke might open. Stedman and Haskell were garrisoned by the 14th New York Heavy Artillery with muskets, the 3d New Jersey Battery of rifled cannon, and a detachment of the 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery with Cohorn mortars. The men of this Connecticut detachment also carried muskets. The headquarters of the 14th were at Stedman, where our leader, Major George M. Randall, U. S. A., had command. The acting major of the Second Battalion commanded at Fort Haskell. This officer was Charles H. Houghton, a volunteer of 1861, and now a veteran. Houghton had just returned from a furlough at the time of the surprise, and while at home in the North, away from the bustle of trench warfare, he had had a clear vision of things on the line. To his mind, then, it seemed an easy matter for the Confederates to make a sortie from Cemetery Hill. Accordingly, as soon as he reached the front, he increased vigilance all around, doubled the pickets and guards, and ordered the fort under arms at 4 o'clock each morning. The morning of March 25th was heavy and foggy, a good one for sound sleeping, and therefore just the time for a movement of surprise. Fort Haskell stood on a knoll overlooking the rifle-pits of the picket line. The work was guarded by two rows of abatis, and at the gap where the pickets filed out and in the outer sentinel was on duty. The man who served the last watch that morning on this outer post was Private Hough, Company M, 14th Regiment. Soon after Hough went on post at 3 o'clock, the sergeant of the

guard came out on his rounds. This officer was unaccountably nervous and kept consulting his watch, and in a short time started back to the fort to order reveille sounded. It lacked fifteen minutes of the time appointed by Houghton's special order. The sergeant's watch was fast, and he didn't know exactly how it stood, but concluded it was "better to be too early than too late." The call sounded and aroused the garrison, and it proved to be three-quarters of an hour earlier than had been customary on this line for months. When the sergeant went into the fort, Hough looked to the front and saw blue-lights flash up along the picket-pits. He also heard the sound of chopping on the lines between Stedman and the Confederate works on its front. He hallooed to the second



MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN B. GORDON—NOW GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.)

sentinel, whose post was at the bridge across the moat, and again an alarm was called out in the fort. Hough then advanced down the picket trail toward the outposts, and as he did so some guns boomed in Stedman, and the muffled sounds of fighting were heard from that work. Some quiet strokes had been given there, for a handful of daring Confederates were in possession, and Stedman's guns were being turned on friends. The foremost of the Confederate surprisers — for bands of them were at it in earnest — had gotten through the picket and abatis guards in front of our companion fort, and all the serious mischief of the day was to come from that initial stroke. The reason of the enemy's easy surprise has never been made public. It was caused by poker and whisky. There was a game, with the usual accompaniment, going on all night in the quarters of a staff-officer of

the garrison troops, and the sport was cut short in part by the play of cold steel.* Some of the men supposed to be on watch were huddled around that fascinating board, and so but one man was on the outlook along the front of the fort. The pickets were some fifteen yards distant, and they had all been silenced by stratagem. Confederates, under pretense of surrender, had approached the scattered pits simultaneously, and, after a short parley, had pounced upon their would-be benefactors and disarmed them to a man. The first point had been gained, and the blue-lights that Hough had seen from Fort Haskell were signals to announce this fact to the Confederate leaders and reserves. Now two men crawled along the ground toward Stedman, meeting the

* * My authority is a commissioned officer who said he was taking part in the game.— G. L. K.

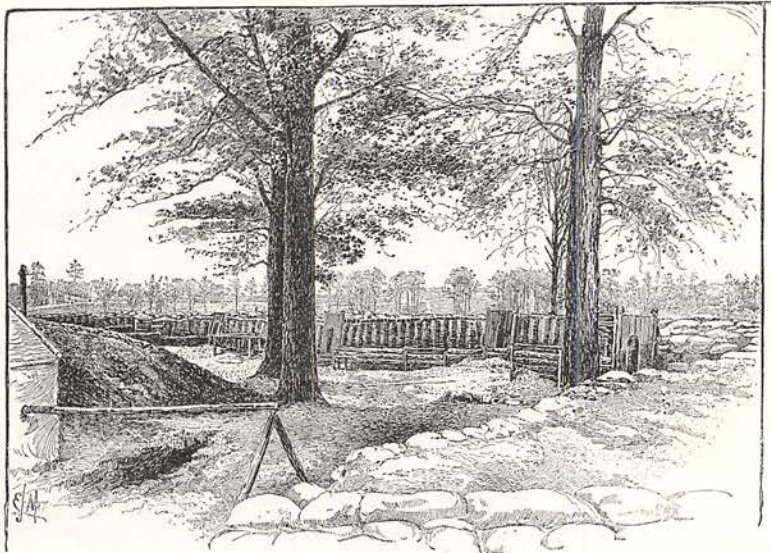
solitary sentinel at the ditch. This guard discovered the intruders when it was too late to shoot, but he put a bayonet through one assailant. The other Confederate knocked the brave guard senseless, and that opened the way to Stedman, and, in fact, to the Union lines, without a shot or serious alarm. A hundred men now passed in to the guns and went prowling about, silencing with noiseless knife or bayonet every man they could find awake or asleep.*

A strange face looked in at the poker players' hut, and the gamblers dropped their cards and cups and reached for weapons. The stranger vanished, but before those astonished men could get ready for defense more of the intruders came up, and in a straggling free fight there in the dark many of the

garrison were killed or taken. The enemy now controlled Stedman, and in a few moments reversed its guns. It was this *mélée* and the guns that were being fired on reversed range which had startled Hough as he passed from Fort Haskell toward the picket-lines. Between the fort and pickets was a long slope, and on this slope Hough met a column of men moving stealthily up to surprise Haskell. The party was in two ranks, and had filed into our lines through the gap in front of Stedman, and was moving upon us unopposed, for they were between us and our pickets. These Confederates supposed that they were approaching the rear of the little fort, and were moving very confidently, expecting an easy triumph. They should have gone through Fort Stedman itself, and then swung around to our rear, but they had miscalculated the situation. Three howitzers double-shotted with grape were trained upon the ground where they boldly marched, and if some traitor had divulged their secret movement hours in advance the doomed column could not have been at greater disadvantage than they now were by the chances of war.

* I led the burial detail after the fight, and here record what I authenticated at the time as to the manner of their death.—G. L. K.

Hough, unseen by the enemy, ran back to the fort to advise the gunners. But the sergeant's erratic watch had anticipated him and had done telling service. The garrison was ready,—doing a rehearsal, as it were, with the infantry along the parapets, the gunners at their pieces. Hough confirmed our suspicions, and we had



INTERIOR OF FORT STEDMAN. (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.)

The fort was named after Colonel Griffin A. Stedman of the 11th Connecticut, who was mortally wounded in front of Petersburg on August 5th, 1864.

not long to wait. As the assailants neared the abatis we could hear their steps and whispers. "Wait," said Major Houghton, "wait till you see them, then fire." A breath seemed an age, for we knew nothing of the numbers before us. Finally, the Confederate leader whispered to his men, "Steady! We'll have their works. Steady, my men!" Our nerves rebelled, and like a flash the thought passed along the parapet, "Now!" Not a word was spoken, but in perfect concert the cannon belched forth grape and our muskets were discharged upon the hapless band. It was an awful surprise for the surprisers, and fifty mangled bodies lay there in the abatis, victims of a guide's blunder and the fate of battle. But this repulse did not end it; the survivors closed up and tried it again. Then they split into squads and moved on the flanks, keeping up the by-play until there were none left. Daylight now gave us perfect aim, and their game was useless. This storming-party was of picked men, and Southern authority states that not a man ever returned to the Confederate camps to tell the story which I now relate. They had risked and met annihilation.

This bloody and effectual repulse of the assailants at Haskell was a grand thing for the

cause, but proved to be a sort of boomerang for ourselves just there in the fort. We had roused the tiger's fierceness by doing our work too well, as it were, for the capture of Fort Haskell at the outset was absolutely essential to the success of the Confederate sortie.

The Confederate plan was far-reaching, and it will be in place to quote here a letter from General Jubal Early to the writer concerning the views General Lee had of the military situation, with the Union army securely planted before Petersburg. General Early says:

"A short time before I was detached from the army confronting Grant, near Cold Harbor (1864), General Lee stated to me that it was necessary to do something to defeat Grant's army before it reached the James, for if it succeeded in so doing, the operations would become a siege, and then it would be a mere question of time as to the fate of Richmond. In the month of August, 1864, he detached a division of infantry and one of cavalry to Culpeper Court House under General R. H. Anderson, and he informed me that his object was to induce Grant to detach troops from his army, and if he succeeded in that he would make further detachments, with the view of causing the siege of Richmond and Petersburg to be raised in the same manner that Richmond had been relieved of the threatening position of McClellan's army in August, 1862."

This programme had been adhered to by the Confederates, without, however, loosening the Union hold on the Appomattox and James.

"About the 15th of March, 1865 [General Early continues], I went out to General Lee's headquarters near Petersburg, and he then informed me that unless the progress of Sherman's army in North Carolina could be arrested he (Lee) would be compelled to withdraw from the defenses of Richmond and Petersburg in the direction of Danville, and he desired that with the remnant of my command I should hold south-western Virginia on his left, so as to protect the lead-mines and salt-works in that region. I presume, therefore, that finding Sherman's progress could not be arrested, the assault of March 25th was a desperate effort to break Grant's lines. General Lee's entire force at that time was very little over 30,000, as I was informed."

Topographical considerations made the ground at Fort Stedman the point best suited for Lee's initial stroke. But beyond Stedman toward the railway and the bluffs, where the heavy Union guns were planted, was low ground and plains. Now, if Stedman and all the works north of it to the river were cut away by the enemy, so long as Fort Haskell remained intact it projected our line into the center of the vast open space which must necessarily become the main field of action. This work then would be close on the flank of Confederate columns while passing through the breach at Stedman, and for some distance in their movements against our interior lines, and this position would enable her guns to sweep the invaders with grape and case for a long interval before their great objective on the rear bluffs should be reached. The stunning blow given to the great movement by

the men of Haskell occurred just as a division of Confederates which had filed into the works at Stedman had started on a rapid conquest along the trenches toward Fort McGilvery. We could see from Haskell the flashing of rifles as these men moved on and on through the camps of the parapet guards. Another division, encouraged by the success of the first, started also from Stedman along the breastworks linking our two forts. This division aimed to take Haskell in the right rear. At the very outset, this last movement met with momentary check, for it fell upon two concealed batteries and two Massachusetts regiments now under arms. Meanwhile there was a lull around Haskell; but it was of short duration, for it was so light that the enemy could observe from his main line every point on the scene of conflict. He opened on Haskell with Stedman's guns, and also with his own in front. Our little garrison divided, one half guarding the front parapet, the remainder rallying along the right wall to meet the onslaught threatened by the division coming against it from Stedman. At this juncture, Major Woerner, a veteran German artilleryist and commander of the 3d New Jersey Battery, came into the fort and took charge of the artillery. He placed one piece in the right rear angle, where the embrasure admitted the working of it with an oblique as well as a direct range. The venturesome Confederate column had borne down all opposition, and with closed-up ranks came bounding along. At a point thirty rods from us the ground was cut by a ravine, and from there it rose in a gentle grade up to the fort. Woerner's one angle gun and about 50 muskets were all we could summon to repel this column, and there were probably an even 60 cannon and 1000 muskets at Stedman and on the main Confederate line concentrating their fire upon Haskell to cover this charge.* The advancing troops reserved their fire. Our thin line mounted the banquettes,—the wounded and sick men loading the muskets, while those with sound arms stood to the parapets and blazed away. The foremost assailants recoiled and scattered. This success again stirred up the tiger. The Confederate forts opposite to us gave us a response more fierce than ever, and a body of sharpshooters posted within easy range sent us showers of minies. The air was full of shells, and on glancing up one saw, as it were, a flock of blackbirds with blazing tails beating about in a gale. At first the shells did not explode. Their fuses were too long, so they fell intact, and the fires went out. Sometimes they

* In an artillery duel shortly before this we counted twenty-four mortar bombs in the air at once with pathway directly over the fort.—G. L. K.

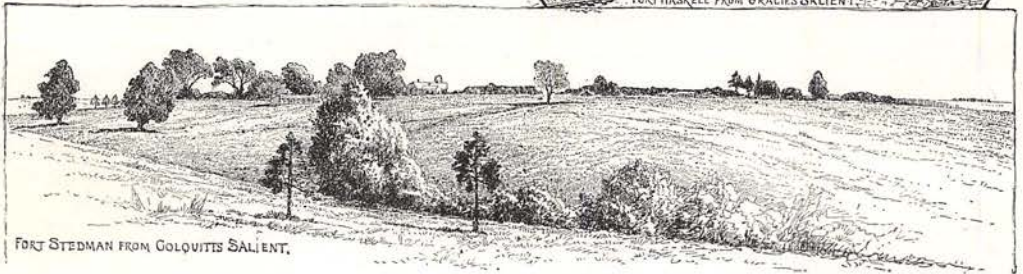
rolled about like foot-balls, or bounded along the parapet and landed in the watery ditch. But when at last the Confederate gunners got the range, their shots became murderous. We held the battalion flag in the center of the right parapet, and a shell aimed there exploded on the mark. A sergeant of the color company was hoisted bodily into the air by the concussion. Strange to say, he was unharmed, but two of his fellow-sergeants were killed, and the commandant, Houghton, who stood near the flag, was prostrated with a shattered thigh. This was all the work of one shell. Before the wounded major could be removed, a second shell wounded him in the head and in the hand,—three blows in as many minutes.

The charging column was now well up the slope, and Major Woerner aided our muskets by some well-directed case-shot. Each check on this column by our effective firing was a

pole had been shot away, and the post colors were down. To make matters still worse, one of our own batteries, a long-range siege-work away back on the bluff near the railroad, began to toss shell into the fort. We were isolated, as



FORT HASKELL FROM GRACIES SALIENT.



FORT STEDMAN FROM COLQUITTS SALIENT.

(FROM RECENT SKETCHES.)

spur for the Confederates at a distance to increase the fury of their fire. They poured in solid shot and case, and had twelve Cohorn mortar batteries sending bombs, and of these Haskell received its full complement. Lieutenant Tuerk, of Woerner's battery, had an arm torn off by a shell while he was sighting that angle gun. Major Woerner relieved him, and mounted the gun-carriage, glass in hand, to fix a more destructive range. He then left the piece with a corporal, the highest subordinate fit for duty, with instructions to continue working it on the elevation just set, while he himself went to prepare another gun for closer quarters. The corporal leaped upon the gun-staging and was brained by a bullet before he could fire a shot. The Confederate column was preceded, as usual, by sharp-shooters, and these, using the blockhouses of the cantonments along the trenches for shelter, succeeded in getting their bullets plumb into the fort, and also in gaining command of our rear sally-port. We took up the planks from the bridge stringers over the moat and began to think of our bayonets. All of our outside supports had been driven off, and not a friendly musket, sword, or cannon was within a quarter of a mile or more of us, and we were practically surrounded. The flag-

all could see; our flag was from time to time, by shot and casualties as I have related, depressed below the ramparts, or if floating was enveloped in smoke; we were reserving our little stock of ammunition for the last emergency, the hand-to-hand struggle which seemed inevitable. The rear batteries interpreted the situation with us as a sign that Haskell had yielded or was about to.*

Our leader, Houghton, was permanently disabled, but Randall, the commander of the regiment, had escaped from his captors in Fort Stedman before daylight, and had worked his way along a blind trench to Haskell. He joined us shortly after Houghton fell. He had our regimental colors wrapped around him under a private's jacket. Randall now called for a volunteer guard to sally forth and make a demonstration to show our friends outside that the old flag was still there. Fort Haskell's color-bearer, Kiley, and eight men responded to the call. Randall led the way across a bridge stringer, and the flag was flaunted in the eyes of the astounded Confederates who hung about the rear of the fort. Better than all, the standard

* A message to this effect was taken to one of the distant siege-batteries, with the request to fire upon us. The commandant refused.—G. L. K.

waved conspicuously in view of our second line. Four of the guard were hit, one mortally, but the fire in the rear ceased.

The assaulting column from Stedman now broke under the fire of our muskets and Woerner's well-aimed guns. But the men found some shelter behind the infantry parapets along which they moved, and also in the deep trenches and among the breastwork huts, while the boldest came within speaking distance and hailed us to surrender. The main body hung back beyond canister range, near the ravine at the base of the slope. Our bullets could reach there. Major Woerner at last held his fire, having all the pieces loaded with grape. Suddenly a great number of little parties or squads of three to six men each, arose with a yell from their hidings down along those connecting parapets, and dashed toward us. The parapets joined on to the fort, and on these the Confederates leaped, intending thus to scale our walls. But Woerner had anticipated this. The rear angle embrasure had been contrived for the emergency. The major let go his grape. Some of the squads were cut down, while others ran off to cover, and not a few passed on beyond our right wall to the rear of the work and out of reach of the guns. With this the aggressive spirit of that famous movement melted away forever. The sortie was a failure, and daylight found the invaders stalled in the breach. They could not advance; death or capture awaited them where they lay; and in order to return to their own lines they must run the gauntlet of guns which had cross and enfilading range over the only way of retreat.

The combat now changed, but was none the less exciting in the new phase than it had been thus far. The roar of cannon had waxed louder and louder as the gunners on each side sighted the true situation. As the infantry movements ceased, the artillery duel became terrific. It was the ground for such engagements, and had witnessed hundreds, but never on such a scale as this. The whole space of rolling surface between our front line and the second on the bluff near the railroad, was dominated by the enemy's guns on his main line. When the Confederate infantry columns disappeared from around Haskell, all those guns opened upon this field where the morning's manœuvres had been made. Our guns back on the bluff, and at Fort Morton, the work next south of Haskell, took part, and swelled the cannonade to a deafening warfare of Titans. The air was full of flying balls and shells clashing and bursting far above us and raining fragments. The Confederates opened with all their available pieces on little Haskell, and it now became impossible for us to move safely within the fort. Every man must have been ground

to earth had we been forced away from the sheltering walls and parallels. The *terre-plein*, or open surface, offered no shelter whatever, for mortar-bombs came upon us almost perpendicularly. Tents, timbers, gun-carriages were flattened to earth. The exterior surfaces of the fort fared no better. The heaviest guns pounded away to reduce it by battering, and their projectiles plowed the embankments, tossing the logs and sand-bags as though they were feathers. The Confederate problem of the day was reduced to the silencing of Haskell, and it was the target of more guns than had been concentrated upon one point during the siege. Here, for once, after all the prosy months of stupid carnage, was a realization of the grand and the terrible in war.

It was now no longer a question of forging ahead for Gordon, the dashing leader of the sortie,—but of getting back out of the net into which he had plunged in the darkness. A cordon of fortified batteries commanded all the ground whereon his ranks were spread, and our artillery reserves stationed between the main batteries created an unbroken chain of cannon barring him from the railway. Supporting these guns was a solid line of infantry just gathered hastily from the left, and covering every avenue of advance. The way of retreat was back over the ridge before Stedman. This was swept by two withering fires, for Fort Haskell commanded the southern slope of the ridge and McGilvery the northern. With either slope uncovered the retreat would be comparatively easy and safe for Gordon, and the Haskell battery was the one at once able to effect the severest injury to his retreating ranks, and apparently the easiest to silence. The rifle and mortar batteries and sharpshooters in our front took for a target the right forward angle of Haskell, the only point from which Woerner could reach that coveted slope. A murderous fire was poured into this angle, and the Confederate troops in Stedman began to scramble back to their own lines. Woerner removed his ammunition to the magazine out of reach of the bombs that were dropping all about the gun. His men cut time-fuses below and brought up the shell as needed. The brave major mounted the breastworks with his glass and signaled to the gunner for every discharge, and he made that slope between Stedman and the Confederate salient (Colquitt's) a pen of fearful slaughter. The whole mind sickens at the memory of it, for the victims were not fighting, but were struggling between death and home. Suddenly an officer on a white horse rode out under the range of Woerner's gun and attempted to rally the panic-stricken mass. He soon wheeled about, followed by some three hundred men. He drew them back

out of range, halted, and formed for a charge to silence that fatal gun. The movement was distinctly observed by us in Haskell, and Woerner continued to pound away at the slope, while the infantry once more formed on the parapets. The storming-party moved direct on our center, as if determined now to avoid contact with the guns of either angle. But our muskets were well aimed, and the new ranks were thinned out with every volley. The party crossed the ravine, and there the leader fell, shot through the head. Many of his men fell near him, and the last spasm of the Confederate assault was ended. Gradually the fire on both sides slackened, and the Confederates who were still within our lines laid down their arms. The battle had lasted four hours, and about 8 o'clock the Union reserves under Hartranft advanced and reoccupied the lines.*

Randall, the commander ousted from Stedman, and a band of his followers had left our fort some time before the counter-assault, and they went into their old quarters at the head of the advancing reserves. Randall claimed and secured the right of reoccupancy with his own men. Outside spectators of this fight wondered that any man in Haskell survived. Major Houghton was borne away at once on a stretcher, and as he passed the various headquarters was greeted with cheers and congratulations. The garrison of the work was sparse, about one hundred and fifty men. They had all been on duty around the sheltered guns and the parapets, spots purposely protected and the safest in the fort. But, as it was, Major Woerner says he slipped many times that morning in the blood that covered his gun-staging.

The story of resistance to Gordon's surprise, aside from that already told, is brief. The men in Haskell alone stood up to their posts, and held on from beginning to end, remaining in orderly action under their officers' commands. The surprise was complete at all points between Haskell and McGilvery, and the whole brigade was thrown back under much demoralization. General N. B. McLaughlen, the com-

mander, was captured near Stedman while trying to rally the scattering troops. At McGilvery the Confederates made one attempt, but the admirable work of Major Roemer's artillery repulsed them effectually. In the trenches and smaller outworks near Fort Stedman the struggle was short and one-sided, and before daylight the Confederates had gained all the ground they held during the morning. The impression made upon our men elsewhere than at Haskell was that the enemy counted on a complete surprise all around, but when they saw how it failed at one point they became disheartened, and would not advance until that one point yielded. Three times the leaders put their men boldly upon Haskell, and the other columns watched the result. Conspicuous failure here disheartened the bravest, and their fighting valor waned before they abandoned the captured lines. The contest was really so much harder than had been expected that only a determined few came to the point of facing our guns at close quarters.

This account of the left flank at Stedman covers all that was *done in defense* of our line that morning excepting what was accomplished by artillery from our rear batteries at long range. All else was straggling and ineffectual. Had this battle occurred at another time than at the wind-up of the war it would have a larger space in history. The men of three army corps could see this fight. An old schoolmate, who was on the outside where he could look down upon us, greets me when we meet with the salutation, "There is a man who went through hell alive!" Fort Haskell was the size of an ocean steamer's deck, and one may imagine that scores of cannon and hundreds of rifles playing upon such a space for hours would make it a hot spot. During the engagement, I was stationed in four different positions in the work, and saw every phase of the conflict. As soon as it ended, I went with reinforcements to Stedman, and got notes on the course of events there, both from Confederate prisoners and from my own comrades.†

George L. Kilmer.

* General Gordon, during an interview had with him by the writer, in 1878, stated that his purposes in making this assault had been "to roll up the Union line" from left to right, beginning with Fort Haskell, and as soon as he saw that Haskell could not be silenced he determined to withdraw. He did not do this immediately because he required Lee's sanction. The Union counter-assault, as it had been called, did not expel him nor hasten his movement, but simply de-

stroyed and captured such of his command as had not retreated. Henry W. Grady, an intimate friend and companion of the general, who was present at this interview, subsequently stated that General Gordon always gave this version of the fight and desired it to stand so in history.

† The entire loss of the Union army in the operations of March 25th is estimated at about 2200, and that of the Confederate army at nearly 4000.—EDITOR.