

The Wilderness Campaign

By JOHN McELROY.

CHAPTER I.

The Winter at Culpeper.

The terrific fighting of 1862-63 had demonstrated beyond doubt that the line of the Rappahannock was the true line of defense of Richmond and the south Atlantic seaboard. Rising in the Blue Ridge, the Rapidan flows in a long curve, thru deepening gorges cut in the underlying granite by the attrition of ages, until it falls into the Rappahannock, 10 miles above Fredericksburg. It was as fine a defensive line as ever sheltered an army, and presented serious obstacles to the advance of its enemy. It lay before Richmond like a great wet ditch in front of a fortress. This was none the less true because Richmond was 70 miles away, since its sheltering effect was the same, and the ground in the rear of a fortress was broken, rough and wooded, where the tactical formations had to be small, and there seemed to be a necessity for smaller units under several men hav-

ing much-enduring and still hopeful Army of the Potomac was also raised to its highest pitch of efficiency. The decimated ranks of the old regiments were filled up with recruits, new regiments were put into the old brigades, and the five corps were consolidated into three. This was done with much harshness and disregard of well-earned honors, and its utility has been strongly questioned. It is true that Lee had had a decided advantage at Gettysburg in having his 80,000 men divided into three corps, where the Union army was separated into seven. That, however, was an open field fight, where masses could be used with the greatest effect. The country into which the Army of the Potomac was now to advance was broken, rough and wooded, where the tactical formations had to be small, and there seemed to be a necessity for smaller units under several men hav-



MAP OF EASTERN VIRGINIA.

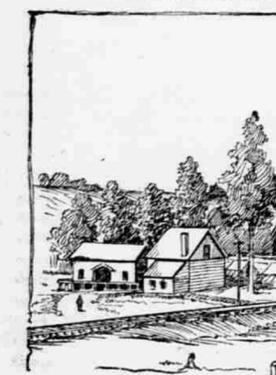
ing the authority and discretion of a corps commander. The First Corps, which had made such a magnificent fight at Gettysburg, was consolidated into two divisions and made part of the Fifth Corps. The wounded pride of the wearers of the round patch was only imperfectly consoled by permission to continue to wear it while serving in the same corps with those whose caps and breasts bore the Maltese cross. The First Corps men felt they had much more reason to be proud of their history, and of Reynolds, than the Fifth Corps had in any history they had made up to that time. Hooker, Reynolds, the Second Manassas, Antietam, Fredericksburg and Summery Ridge were thrilling memories which they considered were imperfectly matched by Fitz John Porter, Sykes and Groveton, the reserve at Antietam, and the left flank at Gettysburg.

The Third Corps, "as we understand it," the wearers of their well-earned badge, conscious of their well-earned fame on the Peninsula, at Chancellorsville, Chantilly, and on the Emmitsburg road, of Heintzelman, Kearny and Sickles, went reluctantly into the Second Corps with two divisions, leaving the Third, French's new division, to be transferred to the Sixth Corps. This consolidation was not approved by the Secretary of War, upon Gen. Meade's recommendation, March 4, 1864.

Lament of the First Corps. The feelings of all the members of the plans dear to President Lincoln's heart of advancing from Cincinnati to East Tennessee to relieve the loyal people of that country, and to cut one of the great railroads leading from Richmond to the Southwest. Before it could start on this mission, the First Corps reinforcing Grant at Vicksburg had drawn off two of its divisions. When the river citadel fell, the divisions came back to make the march into East Tennessee. Burnside did not fulfill expectations as a Department Commander, but, being a loyal, zealous man, desired to be employed, and he came back with his corps to take part in what was understood to be the main campaign of the year against the rebellion.

There was an awkwardness about this. Burnside was a Regular, and not even his loyalty could make him forget that he was a Regular. He had come into command in the Army of the Potomac since he had left it. Having been made a Major-General for his capture of Roanoke Island, (commission dated March 18, 1862), he outranked not only Meade by five months, but also nearly all the Major-Generals of Volunteers in active service. Therefore, when he joined the Army of the Potomac it was as an independent command, and the orders to Meade had to be delegated to him. The President had a different view. The Ninth Corps contained two features. To the bronzed, experienced veterans, who had fought in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee, was added a Fourth Division made up of seven regiments of colored troops, well organized and thoroughly drilled, under the command of white officers. Different grades from Brigadier-Generals to Second Lieutenants, who had won their promotions by good service in the field. Another feature was the magnificent regiments of heavy artillery which for years had been guarding the fortifica-

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BRANDY STATION—HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

Enslaved the Confederacy had a large fund with which to buy clothing, arms, ammunition and even provisions across the water to be brought back by other blockade runners. The Army of Northern Virginia was as well supplied with the latest rifles from the English arsenals at Enfield, and ammunition from the same source, as the Union army was from the great arsenal at Springfield. Wherever the Union army advanced, they found in the Confederate works and camps Enfield rifles with boxes of cartridges with the Tower mark upon them. The Army of the Potomac. The splendid old hard-fighting,

RAPID HISTORY-MAKING.

A Swift Pace in Washington Now-a-Days—The President's Efforts for Party Harmony.

The race is swift in Washington these January days. One who slips a few hours gets out of touch with the march of events. History is making, political history, and perhaps National history. For the things that are paramount just now will apparently be not forgotten a week, or a month, or a generation from now.

The President is busy trying to iron the wrinkles out of an Administration crisis, and, indeed, of a Republican Party crisis. It is giving him opportunity to demonstrate the deftness of his hand. Matters were drifting. The situation was going from bad to worse. That meant party demoralization. No one seemed able to call a halt upon the consequent demoralization. It had begun to look like a demoralization that would affect the much-talked-of legislative program and the much-talked-of Congressional elections, now little more than nine months away.

The wise men of politics were shaking their heads now on safe ground. They struck the Republican crest in the last decade and a half. It was weathered by hook or by crook, but undoubtedly the party had been running higher than ever before since the last Department of the Government passed out of Democratic control. Men were saying that they could not see any other way out of the situation. The party had become resigned to what was in store for them. And while there were still many people believing that brighter days would follow the storm the feeling of despair prevailed.

majority and have the committee announced by the Speaker, but they have abandoned that plan, which they could probably have carried out. The vote which the Speaker has overridden stood 149 to 146. As the caucuses have settled it, the insurgents and the Democrats get three members and the regulars get three members. That is eminently fair. The Speaker gladly consented to it. His feelings are not hurt. The Democrats are satisfied. The insurgents are satisfied.

Now the President is turning to the greater work of getting an agreement for a caucus on his legislative bills. He has defined the provisions of these bills in the special messages which have gone to Congress in recent days. Congress and the country know pretty well what the provisions of these bills favored in the Republican platform, are. He has the assent of the House regulars to take the measures into caucus, one by one as the time arises for their consideration. The more radical of the insurgents are still holding out. The more conservative of them have as good as assented to the plan. A dozen of them are pressing a willingness to go into caucus. There can be no doubt about the Republicans having a clear majority. This gives the party legislative assurance, which can be but gratifying to the White House.

More Hopeful of Party Harmony. Accordingly President Taft entered upon the present week of efforts at party harmony in a decidedly hopeful frame of mind. He entered upon the outposts of opposition by his amicable arrangement for the choice of the Ballinger-Pinchot investigators. This plainly gave his caucus momentum.

And yet the biggest task ahead of him. The insurgents are still thunders their suspicions of the interstate commerce amendments, as framed in the exhaustive Administration bill which Senator Elkins and Representative Townsend have introduced. They are voicing dissatisfaction over the Federal incorporation bill which has not been made public officially, although its language has been fully reported thru unofficial sources.

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The President Took the Helm. He rested with the President to take the helm. He met the task without flinching. Temporarily at least he has stayed the peril. He entered upon a decisive program for a show of harmony. Just now he seems in part to have succeeded. The majority in the House has not yet taken a vote. There is no slip up, he will have paved the way within a few days for the success of his party in the popular legislative arena.

The troubles have been most acute in the House. The big outbreak came there. The insurgents, who number about 26 men, had been badly split in the early part of the session. A succession of political happenings brought them together and solidified their ranks. They are all proverbially angry with the Administration. They are all angry with the President. The "no patronage" order and the course in conducting the Ballinger-Pinchot investigation were big factors in bringing that situation about.

At the last moment, as it seemed, the President stepped in. He urged insurgents to return to the fold. He pleaded the importance of party harmony. He urged that the Republican platform be adopted. That was his basic argument. The platform had been adopted by a majority of the party. It had been approved by President Roosevelt and by himself. They had gone before the people in that platform and had won the most triumphant endorsement. The decree was plain. Certainly, neither insurgents nor regulars could dissent from the platform. The platform was the platform of both factions who were invited to the White House offices to "talk it over" had to agree to that.

Attractive to the Insurgents. This proposition had attractive features. To be sure it meant that the regulars would outvote the insurgents, but as the topics of tremendous importance to be voted upon there are to be the President's bills, which the Republicans favor, the insurgents would certainly conduct to decision as to whether the people's recommendations should be honored. The insurgents do not wish to be considered outside the party. If they participated in the caucus, even the bills did not fully meet with their sanction, it could be said that they (the insurgents) were in accord with the majority, expressed in the most authentic manner, for which party machinery provides.

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A Traveler and His Reflections.

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The Conservation Policy. The Pinchot Matter Dropping Out of Sight—Opposition to Conservation. Strangely enough, the Pinchot incident seems to be rapidly dropping into the background of Washington affairs. The President sent his long-awaited conservation message to Congress. It met with general approval in many quarters, and there has been more talk about it than about the dismissal of the Forester who had stood forth as the most conspicuous champion of conservation ideas.

The insurgents appear willing to accept the recommendations for conservation legislation as reiterated by the President. These include an issue of \$20,000,000 of 10-year bonds for the furtherance of irrigation projects, legislation to authorize the classification of public lands, and the development of water powers upon the public domain, and the retention of title to mineral deposits on public lands, whether these minerals be oil, coal or phosphate. The President would separate by law the ownership of title to such lands, and the ownership of rights to mine. These in substance are among the lines of recommendations made by Secretary of the Interior Ballinger.

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Spoken in the Houses. The practice of having spokesmen upon the floor of Senate and House seems to have passed out entirely. Roosevelt had one or two such spokesmen, but they did not exercise the influence in defensive debate that he had in the days of the McKinley Administration. At the present time there is no Senator or Representative recognized sufficiently as the personal friend of the President who could make a speech that would be taken as reflecting the President's views unless he ventured to label it as such.

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General Public Approval. The impression grows that there will be more general approval of the measures President Taft is advocating than the public comes to know a little better what they are. He made the round of many cities during the autumn, outlining his legislative doctrine. He issued no striking note of disapproval thereto. Very much that he said was commended as well as the President's own spread utterances, as voiced thru the press, was over his Boston and Winona speeches. These speeches, however, had to do with the tariff and the tariff, not with the matters of prospective legislation for the session of Congress.

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The Vice President Influential. Few men enjoy the President's confidence more on political matters. The Vice President is in a position to discuss politics with great frankness. He understands Congress. He has the confidence of the Speaker, whose right-hand man he is in the House for a number of years. It was the Speaker, in fact, who brought Mr. Sherman's nomination on the ticket with Taft about at the last moment. The Vice President was a big official in the Republican Congressional Committee for a long time and was Chairman thereof when he was nominated for Vice President. He is very familiar with Congressional politics.

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