

THE BATTLE OF FAIR OAKS.

Another Account of the Two Days Fighting in Front of Richmond.

THE PREVIOUS STORM AND ITS EFFECTS.

THE ATTACK OF THE REBELS.

Opening and Close of the Battle.

SOMETHING FOR HISTORY.

McClellan and the French Princes.

OUR SICK SOLDIERS IN RICHMOND.

THE REBEL WOUNDED, &c., &c., &c.

INTRODUCTORY OPERATIONS. GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE BATTLE.

The battle of Fair Oaks, fought on the afternoon of Saturday, the last day of May, and the morning of Sunday, the first day of June, was, without exception, the greatest battle of the war. Larger than that fought in front of Williamsburg, on this peninsula, on the 26th of May, it surpassed in extent and importance the battle of Pittsburg Landing in the West. The battle of Fair Oaks has clearly demonstrated the utter inability of the rebels to defeat the Union Army of the Potomac. It was the enemy's battle, not ours. He chose his own time and place for the assault; formed his attacking lines and supporting columns of the very flower of the rebel army, led by the most distinguished representatives of Southern chivalry, and threw them with furious force and almost unprecedented pertinacity against the poorest division in our army. After his sudden dash it seemed as though the enemy might yet really be triumphant, because he had captured eight pieces of artillery, had driven back our advanced division in considerable disorder, and was pouring his flanking forces with their fearful enfilading fire down the right and left of General Keyes' corps; but before the sun had set that evening the better portion of those troops, materially assisted by some of our most splendid soldiers, had arrested the progress of the enemy, with fearful loss of life, while on the succeeding Sabbath morning he was pushed at the point of the bayonet from the ground he had momentarily taken, and was signally defeated.

For the sake of continuity in the statement, it is proper to remark that when the enemy evacuated his position at Yorktown, just one month ago, it was his avowed intention to fall back to a new defensive line, beyond the influence of our gunboats, within the borders of the Old Dominion. It was understood that this new defensive line would be formed near the low lands and marshes through which the Chickahominy river runs. The rebels had said, in peculiar parlance, that they were going to give us a "shucking" near the banks of the Chickahominy. When they had crossed it in their retreat towards Richmond, they burned all the bridges over it, so as to prevent a swift pursuit. Therefore, when our army reached that point it was absolutely necessary for it to pause awhile for the purpose of constructing new bridges, as well for the passage of troops and artillery as for the transportation of supplies. Although in some places the stream was fordable, bridges were indispensable for the passage of the artillery and the transportation of those supplies. Several bridges were constructed, principally by the regiments composing General Woodbury's Engineer brigade. That work consumed considerable time, of course. Indeed, I apprehend that the masses of the people scarcely fully realize the insuperable difficulties connected with the moving of an army of such magnitude as this, where it has to carry every article of subsistence for men and horses along the country over which it marches.

The result of the battle of Fair Oaks on the evening of Saturday and Sunday, on Friday afternoon and the morning of Saturday, was, without exception, the greatest battle of the war. Larger than that fought in front of Williamsburg, on this peninsula, on the 26th of May, it surpassed in extent and importance the battle of Pittsburg Landing in the West. The battle of Fair Oaks has clearly demonstrated the utter inability of the rebels to defeat the Union Army of the Potomac. It was the enemy's battle, not ours. He chose his own time and place for the assault; formed his attacking lines and supporting columns of the very flower of the rebel army, led by the most distinguished representatives of Southern chivalry, and threw them with furious force and almost unprecedented pertinacity against the poorest division in our army. After his sudden dash it seemed as though the enemy might yet really be triumphant, because he had captured eight pieces of artillery, had driven back our advanced division in considerable disorder, and was pouring his flanking forces with their fearful enfilading fire down the right and left of General Keyes' corps; but before the sun had set that evening the better portion of those troops, materially assisted by some of our most splendid soldiers, had arrested the progress of the enemy, with fearful loss of life, while on the succeeding Sabbath morning he was pushed at the point of the bayonet from the ground he had momentarily taken, and was signally defeated.

and determined to bring forward about sixty thousand of his best troops to the attack. Prisoners say that when the movement was initiated by the leaders, some of the rebel officers rather remonstrated against it, for the reason, as they believed, that they never would be able to accomplish their object, because their better policy would be to remain behind their works in the more immediate vicinity of Richmond. But it was deliberately resolved to risk a desperate battle, in the hopes of the rebellion would be a great success, rested on the issue. For several miles of some out at the head of the attacking column, and numerous private valiantly brought curious spectators from the rebel capital to see, as some who were captured have since informed us, "the Yankees driven into the Chickahominy."

The roads were rendered so bad by the storm that the enemy did not get his attacking troops in line until nearly noon. The point chosen for the attack was the main road, the New Mill road, and also its right and left, in front of General Keyes' corps. This should bring me immediately to the consideration of a subject which has already been the cause of considerable conversation. It is General Keyes' corps, especially the conduct of General Casey's division. The first reports of the battle, published in other newspapers, have evidently done injustice to those troops.

Let me first remark, that as one individual can see so little of a battle, it is more difficult than most people imagine to obtain in detail strictly accurate information of what was done by the various divisions, brigades and regiments engaged. Troops and their commanders are terribly tenacious of honors now. Every one expects to receive full credit for what he may have done. I find, too, every thing said magnanimously in the case of the army. Each desires to get all the glory he can, and some are not over scrupulous as to how they get it. Some would even sacrifice the reputation of brother commanders in order to enhance their own. Generals are jealous of each other. There are some very honorable exceptions, however. Still I am inclined to the opinion that, in the large majority of cases, this spirit of jealousy which I have noticed arises not so much from feelings of malice as from a desire for justice. It is exceedingly annoying to officers and soldiers to see some receive honorable mention, while others who did equally well, or better even, are not spoken of at all. I introduce the following observations for the purpose of attracting attention to the merits of the various divisions, brigades and regiments, and what a delicate task it is to cut and carve and polish the statements of various parties, who see the same thing, but in a different light, so that the truth will shine out clear and unquestioned. It is to this delicate task that I now address myself, though I can hardly hope, even with the best intentions, to do in the strictest sense "equal and exact justice to all."

General Casey's division occupied the advanced position on the left of the Union line. Remember, I do not desire to offer an apology for Casey—the Army of the Potomac needs no apology. I only wish to explain how he came into that position. Gen. Nagle, commanding the first brigade in that division, having been in the advance on the left, he was the first to cross the Chickahominy, in pushing forward to the front had several skirmishes with the enemy. He was ordered directly by General McClellan to make a reconnaissance to the Seven Pines, on the Richmond road, and to Fair Oaks station, on the railroad. Having successfully carried out the instructions of the General Commanding, and being familiar with that front, he was directed to hold that important point. The distribution of the forces previous to the battle is important. The Eleventh Maine, Colonel Pickett; the 100th New York, Colonel Brown, and the 164th Pennsylvania, Colonel Davis, in the First brigade, were encamped just in advance of and on a line with the nine mile road, and between the turnpike and the railroad. The Fifty-seventh New York, Colonel Dodge, was stationed on the same road beyond Fair Oaks station. The picket line in front of the brigade extended from the bridge over the Chickahominy, a distance of about three miles. The Fifty-sixth New York, Colonel Van Wyck, was supporting the pickets, and had bivouacked a little to the left of the railroad, and within eight hundred yards of the front of the picket line, which was about three-quarters of a mile in advance of the main body of the brigade. The Second brigade, General Wessels, was encamped on the left of the turnpike in two columns. The first column consisted of the One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania, Major Gazzam, commanding; the Ninety-sixth New York, Colonel Fairman, and the Second of the One Hundred and First Pennsylvania, Lieutenant Colonel Morris, and the Eighty-fifth Pennsylvania, Colonel Howell, commanding. The Third brigade, General Palmer, was stationed still further to the left. The Ninety-eighth New York, Colonel Tutten, was on the extreme left, and in order, from left to right, the Eighty-first New York, Colonel Belknap; Ninety-second New York, Colonel Hunt, and the Eighty-first New York, Lieutenant Colonel DeForest. The batteries under Colonel Bailey were placed in proper position in the encampment. The camp was being intruded; a redoubt which had been thrown up contained three pieces of artillery. Under Lieutenant Hart; rifle pits had been dug in the open field, and timber in front had been and was still being cut down. This fallen timber formed an obstacle to the enemy's approach. Another entrenched camp, somewhat similar, half a mile in the rear, was occupied by General Couch, with General Keyes' headquarters, and the headquarters of the First, Second, and Third brigades, several miles behind. The remainder of the army formed a continuation of the line, and on the other side of the Chickahominy. But since then, let me remark, the disposition of our troops has been considerably changed, and we are prepared at any moment to meet the enemy again.

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THE BATTLE.

The Fight on Saturday.

For two days, the rebel force, which was quite a large one, had been drawn up in line of battle, with their artillery, in a cultivated field in front of this position. On Saturday morning, the day the fight commenced, Colonel Hunt, general officer of the day, reported that the railroad cars had been running all night. The fact was communicated to General Keyes. The enemy was evidently bringing up strong reinforcements from Richmond prior to the attack. On that same Saturday morning, Lieut. J. Banoll Washington, aid-de-camp to the rebel General Johnston, while looking for a branch road leading from the Nine Mile road to the Richmond turnpike, was captured by our pickets and sent to Gen. Keyes' headquarters.

THE ENEMY APPEARING ON OUR FRONT.

The pickets also reported to General Casey that the enemy was showing himself in force in front. This had been a common thing for several days before. The One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania regiment, however, under Major Gazzam, was immediately sent out to their support. Soon some rebel shells were thrown, and an occasional musket shot was heard in front. Presently a vidette came dashing in and announced that the enemy were moving in strong lines and heavy columns on our pickets. The working parties were recalled, and the division was immediately ordered under arms. Four pieces of artillery, under Captain Spratt, the One Hundred and Fourth Pennsylvania, the Ninety-eighth New York, Colonel Hunt, and the One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania, were sent by General Casey about a quarter of a mile ahead on the Richmond road to meet the advancing enemy. This was about noon, some of the men being at dinner and officers at lunch. When the sound of the rebel artillery was heard—probably the signal given for the general advance and attack—a pleasing emotion was seen on the countenance of General Johnston's aid, General Keyes, who was writing a despatch, finished it immediately, sent the young man off to General McClellan, and, from the indications, supposing that a demonstration might be made where the enemy had been repeatedly seen in force on the right, and where General Johnston's aid had been captured, gave orders for his whole command to get under arms, and rode off himself in that direction. He had proceeded but a short distance when he was informed that the enemy was appearing, not near Fair Oaks station, but further to our left. The sound of the musketry, which was now quite sharp in front, gave the direction of the firing, and he proceeded to superintend the disposition of his command.

DISPOSITION OF THE FORCES.

The 100th New York, 164th Pennsylvania and four companies of the Eleventh Maine were placed on the right of Captain Spratt's battery, while the Fifty-sixth New York and Fifty-second Pennsylvania formed in line close by the pickets. They occupied in the encampment two miles in front of the picket line, and had been detached and sent, under Captain Gillette, to the left of the Richmond road in front, to meet some of the enemy who were appearing at that point. The Captain, who was one of the ablest officers in the regiment, was killed, the remainder of the regiment under the Major, having many officers killed already, fell back a short distance

and then the whole regiment broke in disorder and came pouring down tumultuously to the rear. That was all the service that regiment rendered that day. It scattered everywhere, and members of it, as well as of other regiments, were seen wandering down towards Bottom's Bridge during the whole afternoon. Some went even further, and have not returned to their encampment yet.

General Wessels' brigade was also distributed in line of battle. The Ninety-sixth New York, Colonel Fairman, was ordered to the front. The One Hundred and First Pennsylvania, Lieutenant Colonel Morris, followed speedily and took up a position on the right, while the Eighty-fifth Pennsylvania occupied the rifle pits on the left of the Richmond road, the One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania having previously gone far in front and melted away before the enfilading fire which the enemy had fastened round it.

General Palmer's brigade was likewise placed in position. The Eighty-first New York was sent to the left to deploy in the open field, the Ninety-eighth and Eighty-second New York went into the rifle pits, and the Ninety-sixth New York, having on the immediate ground less than two hundred men, went off to the right.

The enemy was seen coming down in tremendous force in three separate lines. The first line would fire and fall, then the second and then the third, and by that time the front line had reloaded, advanced and was ready to re-again. Thus a continuous stream of death was poured upon our men. At the first fire Lieutenant Colonel De Forest, the Major and several officers of the Eighty-first New York, fell dead upon the ground. Lieutenant Colonel Wellman, of the Eighty-fifth, and Colonel Hunt, of the Ninety-second, were disabled; all the field officers of the One Hundred and Fourth were lost, and many of the officers, as well as scores of privates in other regiments, were killed and wounded.

In the movement our batteries had opened fire on the enemy, and the rapid rattle of musketry was doing not less execution in his ranks than ours. General Nagle, and Colonel Bailey, Chief of Artillery in the division, who had been down to the Chickahominy superintending the construction of some bridges, shortly arrived. The General advanced to the front and exhorted his men to fight like heroes and stand their ground. General Casey was also on the spot and continued to send for reinforcements, which were furnished by General Keyes until he could spare no more without weakening the second line. The main portion of those troops held their ground for perhaps a couple of hours, while the enemy was still sweeping down like a torrent upon them. All did not stand, as well by those who shamefully deserted their posts as by those who were shot down. In this just but necessary implication officers are largely included. The reply to those who endeavored to rally the men was, "We are following our officers;" or, "Our officers are killed, and the regiment is out to pieces, because the rebels came down in tremendous force upon us." Then the guns in the redoubt and two other pieces which were brought up poured in a destructive fire into the advancing enemy. The One Hundred and Fourth Pennsylvania and Eleventh Maine fell back fighting with three pieces of Captain Spratt's battery, one of them being left because the horses had been killed. The Fifty-seventh New York, Colonel Tutten, and the Ninety-eighth New York, Colonel Tutten, were brought up by General Nagle, placed on the right of the road, and with the others, fought as best they could for nearly an hour. Colonel Bailey, who went forward to give directions for spiking the guns in case it should be necessary to leave them, was shot dead, the ball passing through his head. Soon his Major (Van Valkenburg), who was attending to a similar service, was also killed. General Nagle, in order to save two batteries which were on the right of the Richmond road, ordered them to the rear. The prologues were so arranged that the guns retired firing with their pieces. At the same time the guns in the redoubt were spiked. The rebels were ordered to the rear, but the ammunition having been expended, the horses killed, and the supporting troops having retired, there was no alternative but to spike them. This was only partially accomplished, for subsequently when the redoubt was captured, two of the guns were turned against us. It was then that some of our cannon were taken.

GENERAL COUCH'S DIVISION.

General Couch's division, which was encamped half a mile in the rear, had in the meantime gotten into action. Captain Birney's battery and two regiments of General Abernethy's brigade had been detached before the battle to guard Fair Oaks station. In the beginning of the action Gen. Keyes had taken Gen. Peck's brigade and placed it on the road connecting the Richmond road with the Charles City road, so as to guard our rear flank. With this brigade and a portion of the remainder of Gen. Couch's division Gen. Keyes formed his second line of battle. The Ninety-third Pennsylvania, Col. McCarter, was sent to the front, on the left of Gen. Casey's position, and held his ground until compelled to fall back with the others. A part of Gen. Peck's command bravely held the approaches to the Richmond road on the left, while one of his regiments (the Sixty-second) had been sent to Gen. Couch at Fair Oaks station, and another (the Ninety-eighth) was away with Gen. Stevens.

General Stevens' brigade was also prepared for action. About one o'clock the Tenth Massachusetts, Col. Briggs, was ordered to the front, and placed in the rifle pits on the right of Capt. McCarty's battery and on the left of the Richmond road. The Thirty-sixth New York moved up the road, and, filing to the right, three companies were placed in the rifle pits while the remaining five companies lay down in the open field in front of Captain Flood's artillery. Soon afterwards the Tenth was moved forward to the fallen timber, from which it was soon driven back into the rifle pits, and subsequently taken by Gen. Keyes to the right. General Peck was wounded by a ball in the thigh, and the Tenth regiment became considerably scattered. The First Long Island, Col. Adams, about the same time took up a position on the right of the right of the rifle pits, and Captain Miller's battery, afterwards removed towards the railroad to meet an advancing force, and, being flanked by a superior body of rebels, after losing nine officers killed and wounded out of twenty-six engaged, was compelled to fall to the rear.

THE REBELS RETURNING ON.

Our forces in front had now been long engaged for at least three hours with the fresh regiments of the enemy, which could be seen coming down in overpowering numbers, and the skirmishers pressing forward like a dense impetuosity, and the shells from their batteries in the rear had burst over the rifle pits. This had the effect of multiplying the disadvantages and increasing the stampede among our men. General Nagle, about four o'clock, finding a few of the Fifty-sixth New York, and four companies of the Eleventh Maine, which had retired, placed them in a slight depression in the ground between the Richmond road and the railroad. Colonel Van Wyck had been carried from the field. It was thought, severely wounded, though afterwards his injuries, if any, were found to be slight. The Fifty-sixth and Eleventh were then near the First Long Island. They had been there less than half an hour when the fearful fire from the enemy, sweeping down on right and left, together with a few shells from the redoubt, which he had captured, rendered it perfectly impossible for them to stand, and they retired in confusion. At this time a fragment of the One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania came along the road near where the First Long Island was fighting, but receiving a deadly volley the remainder was soon sent retreating to the rear as quickly as possible. It was then that the First Long Island also retired to the second line, which formed General Couch's defensible position.

HEINZELMAN AND KEYES.

Meanwhile, when General McClellan was first informed of the affair, he telegraphed General Heintzelman and General Sumner to proceed to the support of General Keyes. General Heintzelman's corps was already on that side of the Chickahominy, while General Sumner's was on this. General Heintzelman had sent orders to General Kearney to get his division into action. Simultaneously with a stream of weapons and fugitives coming to the rear, came one of Heintzelman's aids, who, dashing along at a furious speed, stopped a moment and informed General Kearney that he had been a personal witness of a most disgraceful scene; that he had been in front in the vicinity of Casey's line, heard a little firing, which he supposed to be the ordinary picket firing, and on going forward to witness it, beheld a well organized line of the enemy's troops issue from the woods and advance across the plain, that they delivered volley after volley as they came, and had driven General Casey's troops in confusion before them. General Kearney, in front of the Third Michigan regiment, Colonel Kearney, in General Berry's brigade, and a portion of one of his own regiments, and got the enemy to take the enemy in the rear. He does not hesitate to expose either himself or them. Most people believe him to be inconsiderate in this respect. It will be remembered that two of his staff officers were killed at Williamsburg. Captain Potter, General Jameson's Assistant Adjutant, was scarcely less distinguished for his services in the action than his

further orders. Two companies of the Second Michigan were sent, under Major Dilman, to take a position on the flank of the Thirty-seventh New York, which was guarding the adjacent outworks to the south and north. In accordance with General Heintzelman's instructions, messengers were also despatched by General Kearney to hasten up General Jameson's brigade, which was near the depot on Bottom's Bridge. General Heintzelman, Kearney and Berry, accompanied by members of their staff, proceeded immediately to the front, as well as to assist in rallying the wavering lines of the other troops as to direct the movements of their own now going into action. General Heintzelman and General Kearney reached the field about three o'clock, and, with General Keyes and other generals present, used their personal efforts to great advantage in inspiring our soldiers with confidence. At this time the enemy was still pouring in upon us their multiplying numbers, which were sweeping round to the right and left, as well as down the centre, and Gen. Couch's command was beginning to manifest the unfavorable influence calculated to be caused by the demoralizing conduct of some of General Casey's. Still it should not be forgotten that those soldiers, for the most part, fought as bravely as could possibly be expected, that they were being borne down by much more numerous forces. As soon as Gen. Kearney arrived on the field, Gen. Casey said to him in language as near as I can remember: "General, the enemy have my line camp in front; if you can recover it, the day will still be ours."

GENERAL BERRY'S BRIGADE.

Then it was that Gen. Kearney, accompanied by Gen. Berry, led the gallant Third Michigan into action. It moved into the woods on the left, and at once engaged the enemy, who were checking in that direction, and, in the neighborhood, but compelling him to retire before the excellent aim and deadly fire of our Western soldiers. Presently the Fifth Michigan, Col. Terry, came up, and was conducted by Gen. Berry to the relief of the Third, which was then partially relieved, while the Fifth only continued the work, which the Third had so gallantly begun. Colonel Champness was wounded in the hip, and some valuable officers also fell upon the field. Colonel Poe had collected his regiment from where it had been guarding passes to the White Oak Swamp, on the left and rear, and was moving up to the scene of conflict.

General Jameson, who by Colonel Poe in person into action on the right of the Richmond road, and did excellent service, while three companies had been detached, by order of General Heintzelman, to form a line across the road and prevent the progress of the fugitives. At the same time part of General Jameson's command, which was moving up, was deployed for the same purpose. General Heintzelman had given orders to drive them back at the point of the bayonet, and General Kearney, I believe, had given instructions to artillery officers to fire on them. The instructions were not regarded in the light of a positive order, and the artillery officers did not fire. Had they done so, the course of Kearney would not have been without precedent, although in circumstances, as subsequent information has developed that General Keyes had such an extraordinary alternative. Georgey, Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian forces when Kosuth was President, turned his artillery on some of the fugitive Hungarian volunteers, and Marshal Vaino pointed his guns at the timid column which was falling back when led to the assault of Tarragona. These measures were productive of good results. But, as I have already mentioned, I doubt that the circumstances would warrant so harsh a course in the present instance.

GENERAL JAMESON'S BRIGADE.

General Jameson, at the head of his first command, having moved up the railroad as far as Savage's station, Captain McKeever, General Heintzelman's Adjutant, instructed him to leave that point with three regiments and move off to the left and up the Richmond road, while the Fourth regiment and the Fifty-seventh Pennsylvania, Colonel Campbell, should continue up the railroad and report to General Birney, who it will be subsequently seen, had been previously ordered up the railroad. It must have been after five o'clock when General Jameson had gotten his command on the field ready for action. By order of General Heintzelman, the Eighty-seventh New York, Colonel Dodge, was dispatched to the right of the Richmond road to support General Peck, whose command, like all our forces on the field, was still actively engaged. The One Hundred and First Pennsylvania, Colonel McKnight, fled off the Richmond road to the left to the edge of the woods, and moving up a pathway skirting it, but covered by the timber, and, deploying to the left, joined the command of General Berry, which was doing effective service. Scarcely had it secured its position in the fallen timber before the Sixty-third Pennsylvania, Colonel Hays, arrived, and was placed on the right and left of the Richmond road in the same fallen timber. Now it was that one of the batteries in the rear again fired into some of our own men in the rifle pits. General Kearney, with his accustomed impetuosity, was seen dashing down the road to correct the error. Just as he was leaving the men in the rifle pits he was struck by a shell from the rear that heavy squads of skirmishers were pressing towards them, prolonging the enemy's line of battle on the right, while at the same time equally heavy masses of skirmishers were coming down in front and running round to the left. A regiment in the centre rallied to the rear. General Kearney, endeavoring to rally them, exclaimed, "My boys, this is the wrong road to Richmond; the enemy are on the other side. Follow me!" and succeeded in re-establishing them in action. At this time the enemy was steadily advancing, about two rebel brigades being seen in line, with the heads of columns appearing in the rear. Stragglers and others who were unable to keep up, were being captured, wounded—and there were many such human volunteers at that period—were rallied by a number of our generals, and when the enemy came out and defiantly plied his battle fire before them, they held him in check for a time; but soon the rebels kept coming on like an avalanche. The Thirty-seventh New York, Colonel Harman, which had been partly in reserve, was now ordered into vigorous action. The enemy met the onset with determined courage. Supporting columns could be observed wheeling into line and bearing to the left, with the evident design of cutting a portion of our army off by the White Oak Swamp, while other forces were coming down on the right, in the direction of the railroad. There was a general and determined move along the whole rebel line. The commands of Generals Berry and Jameson, "two stout Generals from the stout State of Maine," were gradually moving forward, killing large numbers of the enemy, while some of the troops in General Keyes' corps, which fought bravely, notwithstanding the implications against the whole command by reason of bad conduct of a few, also killed hundreds of rebels, as the ground in front of their positions fully attested next day. These two commands were moving forward like a machine, the left gradually sweeping round, the rebels retiring before it; when driven more upon our centre, the enemy came down with fearful fury, and our central force gave way. At this time General Jameson, with a portion of one of his own regiments, and a part of Colonel Poe's, charged on a body of rebels, but they were finally compelled to retire. Thus, in order to prevent being cut off, it was necessary for the left also to retire. General Jameson and Berry's troops having seen tremendous execution among the enemy retired in splendid style, though they had lost quite a number of valuable officers.

ARRIVAL OF GENERAL SUMNER'S COMMAND.

I now return to the most important part of the day's operations, and the successful close of the conflict for the night. Having been ordered by General McClellan early in the afternoon, soon after the action commenced, to cross his corps and proceed to the support of Heintzelman and Keyes, General Sumner had his command immediately under arms, and it was soon on the road to the Chickahominy. General Sedgwick's division took the lead, followed by General Richardson's. The roads were heavy and the travel necessarily difficult and slow. The grapevine bridge over which he crossed, had been most swept away by the rain, arriving at the bridge, it was almost impossible to bring over the artillery; the horses floundered and fell, and at first only Kirby's battery of Napoleon guns were crossed. When passing Dr. Trent's house Gen. Sumner was met by Gen. Abernethy's Quartermaster, who then told his tale of how Gen. Couch, with four regiments and a battery, had been separated on the right from the main body, was being pressed by superior numbers, and was in need of immediate reinforcements. The column was pushed along as rapidly as possible, part of the time a portion of it going on the double quick. Gen. Gorman's brigade was in the advance. Arriving near the Adams House, not far from Fair Oaks station, the Union troops in that vicinity were perceived in position. General Sumner made a most admirable disposition of his forces.

GENERAL GORMAN'S BRIGADE.

General Gorman's brigade was immediately placed in position to relieve the troops already engaged. The First Minnesota, Colonel Bailey, which was first on the ground, arriving at twenty minutes past four o'clock, was formed, the right resting on Robert Courtney's house and the left on the adjacent woods. The heavy lines and columns of the enemy, preceded by a numerous body of skirmishers as before, were perceived in front. Soon the firing commenced, and the First Minnesota having sustained the first of the fire, assisted by the battery, the other regiments in the brigade speedily joined in the fight. On first coming up they were formed in three parallel lines, the Thirty-fourth New York, Colonel Butler, in front; the Eighty-second New York, Colonel H. W. Hudson, and the Fifteenth Massachusetts, Lieutenant Colonel Kitchin, in the middle; Colonel Ward, who was captured at Ball's Bluff, being at home for a season in the rear. Soon the Fifteenth Massachusetts was detached to support a battery. The Eighty-first, followed by the Thirty-fourth, were then ordered forward, when they changed front, and with a right wheel moved forward through the woods and commenced driving back the enemy. The Fifteenth Massachusetts was withdrawn behind a battery, and was not brought into action.

GENERAL MAURUMER ATTEMPT TO TAKE A BATTERY.

While Lieutenant Kirby's battery was being placed in position the enemy came out in force and made a desperate attempt to capture it. It was the same artillery

accomplished General. His division to his command has heretofore induced him to refuse the colonelcy of a regiment. General Berry, as I have said, lost his gallant and promising young adjutant. I also understand, though I cannot state with so much certainty, that General Keyes' staff officers and those of the generals under him were not less gallant and valuable than their position demanded of them.

OPERATIONS ON THE RIGHT.

While the battle is closing on the left, let me proceed to a narration of the important events which have already transpired and are still transpiring on the right—

AT FAIR OAKS STATION.

Soon after the engagement commenced—in obedience to instructions given by General Keyes—General Couch proceeded in person to Fair Oaks station, where General Abernethy and General Devins were, with detachments from their command. Fair Oaks is situated on the railroad, about three-quarters of a mile from the junction of the Nine Mile road with the Richmond turnpike, which place is known as the Seven Pines. When the enemy was coming down, impetuous current down our course, a part of the column bore away to the right in the direction of Fair Oaks station. When the First Long Island regiment was in the rifle pits on the right of the Richmond road, the Twenty-third Pennsylvania, Colonel Neal, and the Sixty-first Pennsylvania, Colonel Rippey, were stationed in the woods between the right of the First Long Island and the railroad, and the United States Chasseurs, commanded by the gallant Colonel Cochrane, and the Thirty-first Pennsylvania, Colonel Williams, were placed on the right of the railroad for its protection, while Captain Brady's battery was posted in a commanding position, supported by these regiments, to intercept the enemy on the right.

The enemy was discovered in great force behind a belt of woods, moving down apparently towards Fair Oaks station. Our detachments immediately engaged them, and the contest was hot and heavy for some time, until our regiments—some of which were considerably cut up—were compelled to fall back. This they did, contesting the ground as they retired. The tempestuous columns of the enemy were now fast pressing down near the railroad, and separating those four regiments and the battery from the remainder of General Keyes' command. Perceiving how the tide of battle was flowing fast against us, General Couch had well nigh determined to cut his way through at every cost, and rejoin the remainder of our forces. General Abernethy, however, an older soldier than General Couch, counseled otherwise, and the younger General, with his accustomed modesty, gracefully yielded to the suggestions of his senior in years, though his junior in command. But just at that most critical period in the battle, although they did not know it, the point so severely pressed, as will be subsequently seen, was about being reinforced by a portion of General Sumner's command.

OPERATIONS OF GENERAL BIRNEY'S BRIGADE.

It will have been perceived that at this time General Keyes' division was ordered to the front. General Heintzelman had sent one brigade to the support of General Birney's command. It appears, however, that while in motion General Birney was soon met by General Kearney, who directed him to man the rifle pits. The Fortieth New York was placed in them, and the Fourth Maine deployed as skirmishers to the right of the Fortieth, on the railroad, while Captain Sturges, General Kearney's Chief of Staff, followed the line of the track with the Third Maine and Thirty-eighth New York. Presently, however, in accordance with instructions now given by Gen. Kearney, Gen. Birney halted the two regiments on the railroad, where being directed to await further orders, he placed the Third Maine in the rifle pits, and General Birney, who had been ordered to the support of General Keyes, moved to the right as skirmishers. At half-past four, or a quarter to five, Lieutenant Hunt came with further orders from Gen. Heintzelman for Gen. Birney to proceed up the railroad to the support of General Couch and Casey, now sorely pressed. At this time the Fifty-seventh Pennsylvania, Col. Campbell, which had been detached from Gen. Jameson's brigade at Savage's station, appeared on the railroad, and the Colonel, being without special orders, joined Gen. Birney's command. Having marched with his brigade and this regiment about a mile and a half further up, he found the First Long Island and other troops being driven back by the enemy on the left, while at the same time the enemy sped fire on his front. The First of the First Long Islanders was about being turned when the Fifty-seventh New York was immediately formed in line and placed on the left of that regiment. The Fifty-seventh was soon engaged; it acquitted itself splendidly, and in driving back the enemy from that point the dashing Colonel was wounded and the gallant Major killed. The remainder of the command was stationed in line of battle, the extreme right regiment being across the railroad. At this moment Captain Brady, of the artillery, in General Couch's division, rode up and said, "General Couch has been cut off by the enemy; but he has found a road by which he can retreat, provided you can hold this position." The General signified his ability and willingness to hold it. But now one of General Keyes' aids came with an order from General Heintzelman still urging General Birney to continue his course up the railroad. Leaving the Fifty-seventh engaged he went on to Fair Oaks station, where he found General Sedgwick already engaging the enemy. At this point Captain Hasler, of General Jameson's staff, came with orders from General Kearney directing General Birney to retire immediately to the point from which he had proceeded. Having sent an aid to inform General Kearney of Gen. Heintzelman's orders, and to ask whether, under the circumstances, he should obey the instructions of the division or the corps commander, General Kearney reported his order to fall back, which was obeyed, and proper dispositions being made for the night, the brigade was joined on the right by General Sumner's command. I have given this record of General Birney's movements, because on the following morning he was placed under arrest by General Heintzelman for disobedience of orders.

THE FIGHT ON SUNDAY.

THE OPPOSING ARMY SLEEPING WITHIN FIFTEEN MILES.

I need not detail the order of the bivouac. Suffice it to say that General Richardson's division in the centre was made to connect with General Sumner's corps on the right and General Heintzelman's corps on the left. An order of the rebel General Anderson was found directing the troops to move during the night, appointing a rendezvous where the ammunition wagons would be found, and instructing the commanding officer of each regiment to see that the young men in his command were furnished with a piece of white cotton cloth, half a yard long, the use of which would be explained hereafter. Probably the enemy intended a night attack, but subsequently changed his plans. Some of the prisoners taken on Sunday had the cotton bands referred to fastened on their caps. In the meantime General Richardson's division had been arriving, having experienced even more than equal difficulties in getting on the ground. After dark the troops bivouacked close to the rebel lines. Large bodies of either army actually slept within pistol shot of each other during the night. On the following morning the conflict was continued. General Richardson's division, General Birney's brigade, of General Hooker's division, who were of the New Jersey regiments, were the first to engage in General Heintzelman's corps, were the troops which fought the battle on Sunday morning. The firing, I believe, began at different points simultaneously. At all events the tide of battle ran from left to right as before.

GENERAL HOOKER'S COMMAND.

About seven o'clock, when the firing commenced, General Hooker, being ordered to the front, led the Fifth New Jersey, Colonel Starr, and the Sixth New Jersey, Colonel Mett, up the Williamsburg road, having previously ordered General Sickles to follow with his brigade. The firing had already commenced on the right and was running down the line of the railroad. The enemy was first found in a piece of woods to the left of the railroad, and the command was furnished in action to the right of the Seven Pines, General Hooker came upon General Birney's brigade, under command of the gallant Colonel Ward, drawn up in line of battle, and finding then that the Excelsior brigade had been ordered into action in another spot, he joined his regiments with those under Colonel Ward and assumed command. The New Jersey regiments were placed on the left, and Colonel Ward's command, which now numbered less than a thousand men, were stationed on the right of those regiments, and on the left of the railroad in the same order in which they had been placed on the previous night. Charging forward on the right battalion to meet the enemy's fire, the command was soon actively engaged.

GENERAL BIRNEY'S BRIGADE.

The New Jersey regiments were thinning the rebel ranks, while another body of the enemy came down in regiments by the flank into the woods and commenced moving forward into line. As each rebel regiment, or portion of a regiment, got into position it commenced firing. Before they were fully formed, however, Colonel Ward, with the Thirty-eighth New York, under Major Baird; the Third Maine, Colonel Staples, and the Fortieth New York, Lieutenant Colonel Egan—Col. Biely having been relieved of the command the day previous—advanced in line, and his men, with tremendous cheers, rushed through the woods driving the rebels before them. Many fell on each side, however. As the rebels were driven into the field beyond, they called a telling cross fire from the Fourth Maine, Colonel Walker, and Seventh Massachusetts, Colonel Russell, which were further in advance than the railroad. The rebels were driven before the point of the bayonet, and many of them were captured in a desperate position, where they offered a desperate resistance before they finally retired.