HIGHLY IMPORTANT EVENTS.

Series of Battles Before Richmond.

The Preliminary Skirmish Beyond Fair Oaks.

The Consummate Strategy of McClellan.

Our Special Accounts from the Scene of Operations.

SEVERE LOSSES ON BOTH SIDES.

Names of Some of the Killed and Wounded.

Important Strategical Points Gained the Union Army.

Military Skill Displayed on the Battle Field.

Indomitable Courage of the Union Troops.

The 13th, 14th, 25th, 36th and 44th New York Regiments in the Fight.

STAMPEDE OF THE CIVILIANS AND SUTLERS.

INCIDENTS OF THE STRUGGLE,

&c., &c., &c.

THE LATE FIGHT BEYOND FAIR OAKS.

Additional Accounts of the Affair—Advance of Our Troops Towards Richmond—Brilliant Charges with the Bayonet—Gallantry of Hooker's and Kearney's Divisions—Two Horses Shot Under Gen. Sickles—Difficulties Between North Carolina and Virginia Troops,

&c., &c., &c.

CAMP LIBERTY, NEAR RICHMOND, June 25, 1862.

The rebels seem to be fully satisfied that they can gain nothing, but must lose everything, by collisions with the Army of the Potomac. Besides, they have a wholesome terror of General McClellan, and say they cannot comprehend his method of conducting war. Hence, for the past few days, the enemy's attacks on our lines have almost entirely ceased, and, until this morning, open hostilities have been lately confined, even in this department, to the usual affairs between pickets and the occasional dropping of a shell among the enemy.

In a violent thunder storm which raged yesterday the scene presented was one of awful grandeur. One of our batteries was busy shelling the enemy. The guns were large and the explosions loud. They were fully rivalled by the artillery of nature, however, which was the loudest I ever heard, and the flashes from our large guns, reflected on the dark clouds, were far surpassed by the flashes of lightning which darted through the heavens. There were also sharp cracks of musketry and sharp crashing thunder simultaneously with it, so that it was sometimes difficult to discern which was thunder and which was musketry.

Our troops have been engaged in clearing the woods in our front, and considerable progress towards Richmond has lately been made in this way. In one direction, after a handsome skirmish, in which the rebels in force were driven before us from rifle pits and abatis. General Hooker's column advanced this morning three-quarters of a mile towards Richmond, and have since maintained their ground. A new line of intrenchments may be established on this new ground, and by means of them we can outflank "the hill in front of the old tavern," upon which the enemy have erected a fort, and which is thought to be the key to the doomed city. To-morrow will, perhaps, decide how soon the advantageous position will be ours. Our loss in the skirmish of to-day, which I have mentioned, was quite serious—report puts it as high as two hundred killed and wounded; but that of the enemy was heavier. Your correspondence from that corps will doubtless furnish an account of the affair, however.

As I write the rebels have made a dash at the pickets in front of General Sumner's corps, and the retreat of the moment compels me to discontinue writing for the present.

WHITE HOUSE, VA., June 26, 1862.

The battle of yesterday was not so sanguinary in its character as was first supposed. Our lost in killed and wounded will not number over three hundred men. Compared with the important result achieved it was cheaply bought, and was a complete triumph of our arms. Our army has made a general advance on the enemy one or two miles beyond the place where they were for the past two weeks. The "coils of the serpent" are closely environing the enemy's position, and the spires of the church steeples of Richmond are in sight of a portion of our lines. General McClellan is now in his second line of seige parallels, in an impregnable position to any force the rebels may bring against him.

One railroad train load of wounded from yesterday's battle were brought down here late last night. They were immediately placed on board the hospital steamboat Knickerbocker, and left for Fortress Monroe at daylight this morning. The Louisiana is now taking on board another detachment of the wounded.

Captain Spencer, of the United States Army, lately doing duty with the Army of the Potomac, was arrested, it is alleged, by order of Gen. McClellan, and placed in close confinement. He was brought to this port and put on board the gunboat Marblehead. The alleged charge against the accused is disloyalty to the Union. It appears that the uncle of the prisoner is a Judge in the State of Maryland, and was recently arrested for some irregularity in his official conduct tending to disloyalty. Capt. Spencer, who was educated under the fostering care of his uncle, upon learning of the arrest of his benefactor, laid down his sword and refused duty. The prisoner will be sent to Fort Lafayette.

The White House, the property of Fitz Hugh Lee, about which so much fuss has been made by a few meddlesome fault finding Congressmen, is now occupied by the Sisters of Charity, who have come here as hospital nurses. The building was unsuitable for hospital purposes, it being entirely too small. Hence its disposal, as I have already stated.

IN FRONT OF RICHMOND, June 26, 1862.

On Tuesday night the regiments composing Hooker's division received orders to fold their blankets at an early hour the following morning, provide one day's rations in their haversacks, and move to the front at seven o'clock. Each order was promptly attended to, and at that hour the whole division was drawn up in line of battle. About eight o'clock the attack commenced. The line, composed of the First Massachusetts regiment, Col. Caritom, deployed as skirmishers, advanced across an open field in front of the woods which the rebels occupied. Firing between the pickets now commenced, and the First Massachusetts still advancing, the rebels fell back upon their reserve. Our reserves, composed of the Excelsior and New Jersey brigades, assisted by a portion of General Grover's brigades, the First, Eleventh and Sixteenth Massachusetts, Second New Hampshire and the Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania, now came up, driving the rebels out of the woods which they occupied into a peach orchard beyond. Our men then advanced to the woods and held them, though the rebels continued their musketry fire. It was now about eleven o'clock, and all firing had ceased, except a few stray shots between the pickets. At this time there was but very little loss on each side, when two Napoleon guns, used for throwing grape, canister and shrapnel, were moved into the woods, opening fire upon the enemy and doing great execution. Between twelve and one o'clock an order to advance was received, and the whole advanced in line of battle and moved forward to take the rebel rifle pits. They advanced in good order, and were received with a volley of musketry, which was promptly returned by our men. The musketry firing was continued on both sides for nearly three-quarters of an hour, volley following volley in rapid succession by regiments and brigades, when the rebels made a bayonet charge, fixing their guns in position and starting towards our men in double-quick. Our men—the First and Eleventh Massachusetts, and the Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania regiments—stood ready to receive them. On came the rebels, yelling like a pack of devils, towards our brave boys, who were in line of battle. When the enemy arrived in front, and were in the act of crossing bayonets, they were alarmed at the firm front and courage of our soldiers, breaking line and retreating in great disorder. On their heels were the Union troops, who drove them more than half a mile at the point of the bayonet, forcing them into their own rifle pits, and, continuing the charge, compelled them to evacuate the rifle pits and take shelter in the woods beyond. Our men then took possession of the rifle pits and held them, continuing to do so until reinforced, and at a late hour last night they were still held by our men. The enemy fell in heaps in this glorious charge, the ground being covered with the fallen rebels. They managed, however, to remove most of their killed and wounded in their retreat, so that their actual loss is not known; but from 75 to 100 killed and wounded were picked up by our men.

The wounded were sent to the various hospitals, and received the same care as our men. It is thought that more fell in this charge than the splendid one at the battle of Fair Oaks. Artillery now poured its deadly fire upon them from every direction; shot and shell flying thick and fast in the woods where the rebels had retreated to, who replied by repeated volleys of musketry, with but little heavy firing. About half-past four o'clock the enemy undertook a flank movement on the left to capture one of our batteries, but were repulsed by General Kearney's division, with a very heavy loss on their side.

An account of one of the first of our wounded says:—After we were drawn up in line of battle, firing commenced. The whole of Hooker's division were drawn up in line, except a brigade which was holding a redoubt, and which were held in reserve. They were afterwards brought into action. Lieutenant Sched, of Company F, Seventh regiment New Jersey Volunteers, was one of the first killed. The First Massachusetts took the advance, and Company B of the Second New Hampshire regiment (sharpshooter) were ordered to the front with them. When I was carried off we had taken one of the rebel redoubts.

Another of the wounded, James McCarthy, of company D, Second regiment, Excelsior Brigade, says that the Eleventh Massachusetts made a bayonet charge, and drove the rebels out of some woods which they occupied, the rebels retreating panic stricken.

He also said that General Sickles had two horses shot under him, and that the last he saw of him he was in the woods, sword in hand, without a horse, and encouraging his men forward.

A rebel, named Roberts, belonging to the Fourth Georgia regiment, was captured. He was badly wounded in the left arm, near the shoulder, so that amputation was necessary. He was one of the first shot on the other side. He says that when our men commenced the attack the Fourth Georgia regiment were on picket, and that our firing was returned by the rebels. He adds that previous to the attack there was some firing between the pickets, the rebels commencing. They were answered by firing from our pickets.

One of the Nineteenth Massachusetts, which suffered very severely in killed and wounded, says:—"Between eight and nine o'clock the regiment, under command of Colonel Edward W. Hinks, was drawn up in line of battle, and soon after entered the woods directly in front, near the centre; Company K, the right flank company, were thrown out as skirmishers. Two or three advances were made by the regiment, in all advancing about two hundred feet, obliquely to the right, and finally forming on the right of Sickles' brigade, where they shortly after received the fire of the enemy. They fought until eleven o'clock, and lost, in killed, wounded and missing, nearly sixty men. Company K, who acted as skirmishers on the right, drew the fire of the whole brigade of the enemy, and received several volleys from entire regiments. The enemy had sharpshooters in the trees, who fired upon us with deadly aim, killing and wounding several. First Lieutenant James H. Rice, of Company F, was one of the first wounded in this way, receiving a severe flesh wound in the thigh."

Colonel A. G. Morrison volunteered his services on General Palmer's staff. He was wounded in the left arm, and had two fingers amputated. His horse was also shot under him. He was formerly a resident of Richmond, was familiar with the roads, and was attempting to keep the right flank from ambuscade when he was shot in the hand.

I learn that on Tuesday night last a skirmish occurred between the pickets of the enemy and those under command of Captain Clark, of company A, Twenty-ninth Massachusetts. Our pickets were attacked, and a man wounded and taken prisoner. The fire was promptly returned by our men, who fell back on their reserves. It is reported that nine of the enemy were killed.

The day previous the pickets under command of Captain Leach Company C of the same regiment, were also attacked by the pickets of the enemy. One of our men, named George Brown, was killed, and another, named Klenham Charles, wounded in the hip, shattering the bone slightly. Brown was shot in the neck, the ball coming out on the opposite side, killing him almost instantly. His equipments, gun, watch, and about forty dollars in money, were stolen from him by the rebels.

A report has been in circulation here for the last two or three days that there was a fight in Richmond on Monday night last between some North Carolina and Virginia troops, and that they used both grape and canister. Several were killed.

CAMP VICTORY, NEAR RICHMOND, June 26, 1862.

There has been some lively skirmishing in front of our lines within the past twenty-four hours. In addition to the skirmish which occurred in General Hooker's division yesterday morning, we had two brisk ones yesterday afternoon about four o'clock, and this morning about one o'clock. While the rebels were assailing and driving in the pickets of Hooker's division the Sixty-third regiment New York Volunteers, Colonel John Burke, had orders to push forward yesterday afternoon as far as they could, and to hold the ground that they should gain. They did push forward, and drove the enemy before them gallantly, and gained half a mile which they have since held. By appearing suddenly on the left flank of the enemy they also took him by surprise, and checked considerably the impetuosity of his assault upon General Hooker's pickets. The loss of the Sixty-third in this affair was only five men wounded.

More or less skirmishing took place now in all directions, and batteries were brought into play on both sides. The rebels soon discontinued the fight, and retired, however, and several of our batteries bombarded their camp for upwards of an hour without eliciting a response. The loss of the rebels was severe, and I understand that the loss in Hooker's division was also considerable. Till ten o'clock P. M. all was now comparatively quiet. At that hour the rebels made a dash at our working parties, who were detailed to clear away the woods in our front; but were repulsed by our pickets. The click of the axes against the stately sons of the forrest, or the crash of falling timber, mingled now with the crack of a distant rifle in the advanced pickets through the stillness of a lonely night. There was no moonlight, and little light of any kind till one o'clock this morning, when the camp was startled by what seemed to me at first a close crash of thunder; but when it was repeated again and again, and the sleep was fairly shaken from my eyes, I perceived it was heavy volleys of musketry. The enemy had attacked Hooker's division in force to regain the ground they had lost yesterday, and to try and capture or disperse our working parties. So close were the volleys that I feared for a moment the enemy had succeeded in reaching the camp of the Seventy-first regiment, in which I was sleeping. A desperate battle occurred in Hooker's column. Colonel Burke was protecting the working parties in our front, with three companies of his regiment deployed as skirmishers, and the balance held about forty paces in reserve. The rebels adopted a new and masterly plan for wiping them out this time. They advanced in column by regiments, four or five in number. The advanced regiment fired and threw themselves on the ground, and the second in advance did the same, and so on till their last regiment had fired. This was all the work of a quarter of a minute. They then rose, thinking, doubtless, our pickets were annihilated; but our men, by Burke's orders, threw themselves on the ground, behind logs, at the enemy's first discharge, and remained there till his last regiment had fired, when, to the astonishment of their foes, they raised themselves suddenly and opened a dreadfully accurate fire upon the enemy by companies, which was maintained with so much spirit that the whole force of the enemy were soon compelled to give way before it and fly in hot haste, leaving the ground strewn with their dead and dying. The enemy's masses were so dense that our fire told upon him at this point with frightful effect, and the ground was so swampy and uneven that he could not escape till numbers of his men had fallen. The effect of our firing on this occasion may be judged from the fact that from the instant it commenced the rebels never attempted anything but panic stricken flight. The battle commenced with a rebel yell and ended with a Union cheer. The stillness of early morning again succeeded this stormy scene, and the working parties continued their labors without further interruption, while to the former sounds were now added the moans of the wounded soldiers. So far this morning all has been quiet, except the occasional throwing of a bomb on the mass, or a rifle in the hands of a picket. The following are the names of some of the wounded in the Sixty-third regiment. Their total loss was fifteen men wounded in the affair of this morning:—Robert N. Sawen, Bernard Foley, Charles McCarty, Sergeant Hart, John Humpley, Thos. Connery, Luke Kavanagh, John Madden and Michael McCarthy.

Our lines have been advanced considerably since yesterday, and every day brings fresh evidence that the doom of the besieged capital of the rebellion is close at hand.

THE LAST SANGUINARY FIGHTS

The Battles of Thursday, Friday and Saturday,

&c., &c., &c.

THE FIRST DAY.

BATTLE FIELD NEAR MECHANICSVILLE, June 26, 1862.

The right wing of the Potomac army has been the scene of a battle to-day of more than common duration and fierceness. The result has only been the carrying out to fuller confirmation the remark of General McClellan—that the Army of the Potomac has never yet sustained a check. We have beaten the enemy, and a glorious victory is ours. Our loss, considering the time we were engaged, is small, about two hundred killed, wounded and missing being the present estimate. There is every reason to believe that the loss of the enemy is more than double ours, and that notwithstanding they had nearly twice as many man in the action.

The enemy made the attack. A demonstration had been looked for from them for several days, and hence our men were in readiness—and when are they otherwise—to repel the attack. About two o'clock this afternoon the rebels were seen advancing in large force across the Chickahominy, near the railroad, close by Mechanicsville, where General McCall has been encamped since occupying a position on our front lines. Planting their batteries in good position on our rear, they opened fire. Quietly the batteries of this division were wheeled into place, and a vigorous response began. The roar of artillery was deafening, but soon the crack of volleys of musketry united in swelling the tumultuous roar of the battle.

GENERAL M'CALL'S BOLDNESS.

Our men were drawn up in line of battle directly facing the enemy. It was a bold piece of work, seeing that the enemy were manifestly largely superior to us in numbers. It was no determination or wish of the regiments constituting the Pennsylvania reserves to seek the protecting cover of woods or marshes, either of which they might have selected, but come out in square, open fight. The work soon waxed warm, as the enemy showed a disposition to accept the challenge to open combat—an acceptance, doubtless, based, however, on full confidence in their capacity to come out first best in the fight.

THE BUCKTAILS SURROUNDED.

The First Pennsylvania Rifles (Bucktails) were on picket duty as the enemy first marched on us, making a rapid advance through the intervening lowlands and forests. The first thing the Bucktails knew they were almost completely surrounded. Seeing the position they were in, and having no disposition to go to Richmond in advance of the grand army, they set themselves at work vigorously to get out of the difficulty. It was no easy job, but they did more toward accomplishing their purpose than ten rebel regiments similarly situated could have done. They cut their way fairly out, but most of company K, who happened to be the first surrounded, were taken prisoners. The rest were soon in rifle pits, and they peppered the enemy with a sauciness carrying with it a feeling of revenge. And they had their revenge. The rebels left as many dead on the field shot by Bucktail rifles as members of the regiment they bore away captive with them.

HEAT OF THE BATTLE.

About six o'clock the battle raged with fiercest fury Advancing down at the rear of Mechanicsville, on a low, swampy pice of ground, where our men were drawn up behind earthworks and rifle pits, the conflict became indescribably terrific. With desperate courage, the rebels attempted to spring forward over the marching ground, but they were mowed down without mercy in their wallowings in the mire.

A charge of cavalry was attempted about this time; but the horses, like the men, became mired. Some of our cavalry seeing their condition charged down the hill; the rebel equestrians left their horses and took to their heels.

Disappointed in these attempts to win the day, the enemy attempted a flank movement. Now came the time of closest contest. Our men would not yield a rod from their position.

GENERAL MORELL'S DIVISION TO THE RESCUE.

During the height of the cannonading General Morell's division arrived on the ground. They reached the scene of the engagement about six o'clock in the evening. With bold front the reinforcing division marched up in face of the flying shells, General Morell and his staff leading the advancing column. Only one brigade was called into action—the Second brigade—under command of General Griffin, who only three hours before had assumed the command by right of seniority over Colonel McQuade. The brigade came up on double quick, ready and eager to lend a helping hand in securing to our side the fortunes of the day.

The brigade was ordered to relieve the centre of General McCall's column. The Fourth Michigan, Colonel Woodbury, and Fourteenth New York Volunteers, Col. McQuade, formed in line of battle in front, taking the place of two of General McCall's regiments, while behind them, likewise drawn up in line of battle, were the Sixty-second Pennsylvania, Colonel Black, and Ninth Massachusetts regiment, Colonel Cass.

Meantime a battalion of Colonel Berdan's Sharpshooters, who had also been ordered to reinforce General McCall's forces, arrived on the field under command of Lieutenant Colonel Ripley, and were formed in line of battle. Two companies—C, Captain Giroux, and G, Captain Drew, were on detached service with General McCall's division, and had previously been out as pickets and skirmishers. These companies had been stationed by Colonel Berdan two days previous in anticipation of the enemy crossing at the point where they did actually do so. Their orders were not to fire until the enemy actually crossed in force, and then to retreat firing, in order to draw them on until they reached the rifle pits and intrenchments which had been previously placed for the purpose of giving the enemy a warm reception. These orders were carried out to the letter. On the rebels appearing and crossing in force they were led on by the retreating sharpshooters, who fired fired rapidly and fell back, until the rebels suddenly found themselves [illegible] the works and the rifle pits in which they (the sharp shooters) had concealed themselves. The sharp shooters in executing this manœuvre only had two men wounded. Company G was subsequently detached to work with the artillery.

From the time of the arrival of the reinforcements the firing continued without intermission until half-past nine o'clock. Such volies of musketry, so sharp, quick and incessant, have never been surpassed in any battle of the present war. And the roar of artillery was tremendous, constant and deafening. General Griffins regiments each fired about twenty thousand rounds. General Griffin, in the hottest of the fire, rode along the lines frequently, unmindful of the shower of shot and shell. He was so pleased with the coolness and valor of the regiments of his brigade that he remarked to Captain Anchmety, of General Morell's staff, who also rode back and forth with him, equally heedless of the storm of iron rain and leaden hail, "Good God! what have I ever done to have such a fortunate inheritance?" And the men did fight well. They drove back the enemy in front of them. The position of each regiment was on the brow of a hill, happily secured their comparative safety from the musketry of the enemy, while our fire did great execution in the rebel ranks. This accounts for the small list of casualties sustained by this brigdae.

During the progress of the engagement General Merrill was actively moving here and there, superintending the disposition of the brigades of his division to meet any contingency that might require their united services. Of course it will be understood that General Fitz John Porter, who is never so much at home as when supervising an exciting battle, was omnipresent.

GENERAL M'CLELLAN ON THE FIELD.

During the most part of the firing General McClellan was on the field. His presence did much to inspirit the men, and they doubtless fought with more determined resistance than, perhaps, they would have done otherwise, considering the odds against them. Gen. McClellan expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the day's work, and complimented Generals McCall and Morell in person for the handsome manner in which they had managed their men.

The boys had won the day and the praise of their commanders, and were satisfied.

REBEL FORCES.

According to the statements of prisoners, the bulk of the enemy comprised Gen. Hill's division, mostly Georgia and South Carolina regiments. They had twenty thousand men in the action. It was the same party who annoyed Gen. Stoneman in the morning in the direction of Hanover Court House.

THE SCENE TO-NIGHT.

All our men are sleeping on their arms to-night. It is expected that the engagement will be renewed in the morning. Meantime those who are not sleeping are attending to the wounded and dying who survive the day's slaughter.

THE SECOND DAY.

IN THE FIELD NEAR THE CHICKAHOMINY, June 27—10 P. M.

The Potomac army is seeing active service enough now to make up for the masterly inactivity of months past. At every call to duty in the field, and face to face contending with the enemy, most nobly do the men rally to the work. To-day another battle has been fought by our gallant Union troops—another glorious victory to be added to the brilliant records of Wednesday and Thursday. Each new day's fight only shows more strikingly the stern and patriotic stuff our soldiers are made of; that they are gradually fulfilling the brightest expectations entertained of them, and that they must be invincible against any force the enemy can send against us. I call to-day's battle a victory, for so it is set down by those claiming to understand the purpose of the movement. It is possible we got more than we bargained for; and there is ground for the detractors of General McClellan, who—in the depths of their hatred of him, would, doubtless, many of them, rather see our army lose a battle than that he should win it—to allege defeat as the result of the day's struggle. Giving up ground that we had held, and burning commissary and ammunition stores while fleeing from a pursuing enemy, looks like defeat. But it was not defeat—it was part and parcel of a strategic plan. We gave up ground that it was deemed inexpedient, with the force at command, to hold any longer. Our retrograding column fell back to a specified point, made a stand there—fought to hold the point as they had been told to do—fought firmly, bravely, furiously, as it was known they would—held the position against greatly superior numbers, and hold it now. The enemy fought desperately. It was evident they appreciated the importance of the contest. But their desperate valor and keen appreciation of the value of victory were not a sufficient match for the steady, unflinching coolness and courage of our men. Their fighting was the wild lashings of the tiger whose power of fury is nearly expended. Our fighting was the slow, determined, crushing hug of the anaconda upon the victim writhing within its folds.

Our loss in to-day's fighting is estimated at twelve hundred—killed, wounded and missing; that of the enemy is deemed much greater. There is no trusting estimates now, however. Of to-day's contest no definite results can be given. Should all the floating rumors be credited, whole regiments would be recorded as no more, and entire brigades be swept out of being. It is certain that to-day's battle has been one of the fiercest fought in front of the rebel capital. Many officers lie cold in clay to-night, having heroically fallen at the head of their commands. Soldiers unambitious of shoulder straps and chevrons, have reaped the richest reward of the ambitious patriot—death in defence of their country.

In the state of confusion and excitement prevailing to-night, I can only attempt to give a general outline of the day's work. No one could do more than this, and the result of the attempt even must, of necessity, be unsatisfactorily vague and indefinite. It will take two or three days before anything like accurate details can be given, and through such details proper credit accorded to the different divisions, brigades and regiments engaged in the action It is universally yielded that every regiment taking part in the fight conducted itself valorously, so that there is this consolation, that in this regard there is no danger of detracting from the credit due the men either now or in subsequent fuller accounts.

OBJECT OF THE BATTLE.

How this battle occurred, and the particular object of it, should be distinctly stated in the outset. It was a part of the grand march on Richmond. For some time past, as is well known, General Fitz John Porter's corps, comprising Generals McCall's, Morell's and Sykes' divisions and the reserve batteries, have been stationed this side of the Chickahominy—that is, on the opposite side from Richmond, while the other divisions of the army have been across the river, close upon the rebel capital. This disposition of our forces has compelled us to keep up a lengthy line of defence from Mechanicsville for several miles this side of the river to Cold Arbor, Old Church and beyond. Although held in reserve, this corps, experience has shown, in case of an engagement across the river, could not be brought into action without jeopardizing more than the advantage to be gained from their sudden withdrawal in an emergency. For instance, in the great battle at Fair Oaks, our men were submitted to the fearful ordeal of listening to the cannonading and roar of musketry without the ability to go to the relief of the closely pressed troops so near us. Our tents, ammunition and stores could not be left behind without a sacrifice too great to be thought of. It was seen that al our troops must be pushed across the river, and the line of defence this side abandoned. In the meantime it was deemed desirable to open an engagement with the rebel forces facing our right, draw them in pursuit, and if impossible to bag them through their coming upon us in too strong force—press with our left wing with corresponding and perhaps overwhelming vigor upon Richmond itself, the great citadel of the enemy's strength. It is certain that the enemy have followed in larger force than was anticipated; but it is equally certain that they have not been allowed to follow farther that it was designed to allow them. The latter part of the programme—the pressure upon Richmond with our centre and left—it is said, will be entered upon to-morrow. There is another part of the programme which I am not at liberty to unfold—a change in the base of our army's operations. If the fight thus far has not developed the utility of the new plan, a few days more at farthest, and possibly a single day, will reveal it. Our troops once across the Chickahominy, and the rebel army cannot follow after us. Like the bridge of Lodi, a small force can resist the passage of the bridges against vastly superior numbers. This accomplished, and the enemy shut off from molesting us in the rear, all that remains for our army to do is to press with united and invincible strength upon Richmond, and make her ours, as she sooner or later must be—a result I cannot forbear stating, in this connection, that must have been accomplished long before this had not General McClellan's army been crippled of its strength through Congressional intermeddling.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE DAY'S WORK.

Shortly after the close of Thursday's fight came an order from General McClellan to General Fitz John Porter, directing the withdrawal of his corps to a position two miles this side of Gaines' Mill, the ground we now occupy. At three o'clock A. M. the moving back of the corps, who had been sleeping on their arms all night, began. General McCall, in accordance with instructions, opened with his artillery upon the enemy. The latter thought this the renewal of the preceding day's fight, and returned a vigorous response from their guns. Shot and shell flew in antagonistic directions with dangerous liveliness. Gradually Gen. McCall's troops withdrew, which, the enemy naturally mistaking for a victory on their side, caused them to follow on in hot haste. Of course our rear column yielded the ground slowly, the more to make the enemy believe that they were being beaten. Meantime Gen. Sykes' division led the retreating column, followed by Gen. Morell's division. Along the advance there were but little indications of a retreat. The men moved slowly, and all, ignorant of this backward movement, were anxious to know the cause of it.

"We are not beaten, are we?" eagerly asked a Fourth Michigan boy.

"Faith, no! Don't niver b'lave you are whipt till you are whipt yourself," responded a gallant son of Tipperary and fighting "mimber" of the Ninth Massachusetts regiment. "An' sure we are afther only drawing the ribels on."

And so it was; and the rebels continued to come on, a mutual cannonading being continually kept up. The retreat was decidedly against the will and wishes of the bulk of our troops. All feel fully confident of their ability to maintain the position they had gained the previous evening. There was no resisting orders, and so on came batteries, regiments in marching order, a cortege of ambulances, stragglers, convalescents, contrabands, and a miscellaneous coterie of outsiders, who always manage to be in close proximity to a moving army.

BURNING COMMISSARY STORES AND AMMUNITION.

I do not know whether it happened from an unaccountable blunder, and I have not yet found any one able or willing to explain it, but soon a huge column of smoke arose from near the late headquarters of General Sykes, and on the ground occupied by the Second brigade of General Morell's division. At the former place a large quantity of commissary stores were set on fire, and at the latter place commissary stores and ammunition. The rolling up of the huge smokey wreaths increased no doubt the belief of the enemy that our retreat was a necessitous one; it certainly added to the eagerness of their pursuit. I should here state that General McClelland had previously ordered the removal of all tents and commissary and quartermaster's stores across the Chickahominy. This order was given on Thursday, before the first attack on the enemy by General McCall, and shows the object to have been a concentration of all our troops on the other side of the river, in accordance with the programme alluded to above.

WHISKEY TURNED TO GOOD ACCOUNT.

The recent order, cutting off the whiskey rations, left quite an accumulation of barrels of this precious fluid at the Second brigade commissary headquarters. Lieut. Broadhead, Acting Brigade Commissary, turned the fluid to good account. After emptying some of it on his stores to insure their speedy burning, his attention was called to the large chapel tent of the Ninth Massachusetts regiment, still standing. This tent is about the size of a circus tent. The enemy were in sight. Its removal was a work of hazard. Father Skully asked him, if possible, to get it removed.

"Do you see that chapel tent?" Lieutenant Broadhead asked a dozen or more soldiers, who were looking on wistfully at his waste of whiskey.

"We do," was the unanimous response.

"Here, give me your canteens, and I'll fill them with whiskey, and you go and remove that tent across the bridge."

Off came the canteens, and off went the men. The chapel tent was safely removed.

DESTROYING THE BRIDGE AT GAINES' MILLS.

Hardly had the chapel tent bearers crossed the bridge at Gaines' Mills when a squad of axemen appeared to cut it down. The bridge is about twenty feet wide and some fifteen feet above the water. The blows came down rapid and hard; one side of it soon lay angular-wise in the water. There was only one other way for the enemy to cross here, a narrow footpath leading over the dam adjacent. Of course he could not move his artillery over this narrow viaduct, and the only thing he could do was to plant his pieces on the opposite bank, and send his shells over in our direction. This he at once proceeded to do, at the same time waiting for the construction of a means of transit for his cannon. The latter piece of work was prosecuted with some difficulty, as the Ninth Massachusetts regiment blazed away at them from their muskets with destructive effect. Our cannon, too, were not backward in responding to the rebel grape and canister.

ADVANCE TO OUR FINAL POSITION.

From this point our retreating column started on in the same order as heretofore, but soon branching off into divergent roads. General McCall's division, and the troops under General Sykes, went by way of Cold Arbor, while General Morell's men and the batteries took a diagonal road leading to Kidd's mill. Soon the designated place for halting was reached. During the latter part of the march there was less disturbance from rebel cannon and muskets, although they kept within respectable distance, till our men passed into the woods skirting the corn fields and fallow land extending back from the ravine through which runs the creek and pond furnishing the water power to Dr. Gaines' Mill. Beyond these woods the rebels did not show themselves for some time afterwards. It was about ten o'clock when, what afterwards proved to be, the field of the day's contest was reached. It will be seen from this that over six hours were consumed in the backward march from the scene of the preceding day's contest—a distance altogether of less than six miles. The time occupied shows the judicious slowness of our retreat.

THE FIELD OF BATTLE.

The field of battle is a large one. Like Virginia land of similar area in this vicinity, it is made up diversely of level meadows, undulating grain fields, woods, thick with underbrush and clear of it, and marshes and ravines. There are three large farm houses, each in sight of the other, each on a shaded hill, and each got up in the inevitable Virginia style of huge outdoor chimneys at either end. These were first used as head quarters by Generals Porter, McCall and Morell, but afterwards converted into hospitals. The open country, longitudinal in shape, is enveloped with woods. This open space is nearly two miles in length, and a little over a mile in width. Two-thirds are high rolling land and the remainder bottom land and marsh. I enclose a diagram, from which a very intelligible idea of the ground may be obtained, and the position of the opposing forces during the most of the fight. It will be seen, however, from what ensues that our troops and those of the rebels exchanged positions two or three times during the day, according as the tide wavered for or against the contending belligerents.

OUR ORDERS.

From Gen. McClellan the order to Gen. Porter was to draw up his men in line of battle in this field, plant his batteries in the most eligible positions, and not yield the ground on any condition. Gen. Porter essayed to carry out this command, and he did it, in the end, most successfully.

APPEARANCE BEFORE THE FIGHT.

By eleven A. M. each division and brigade, and regiment and gun was in its place. Some were in the broad, open field, and some under cover of the woods and hillsides. The whole presented an animated spectacle—the glorious Stars and Stripes floating in every direction; bright howitzers and bayonets glistening in the sunlight; batteries in readiness for action; cavalry companies eager for dashing charges; generals and their staffs in full uniform on their caparisoned horses, unmindful of the dangerous targets for the enemy's rifles their showy uniforms and equine decorations made them, and regiments of infantry with their arms stacked to be grasped and used at a moment's notice. It was intensely hot. If men suffered then, what must they have suffered when the contest for life and victory waxed hot and hotter a short time afterwards, and when to the discomfits of heat were added those of dust and smoke?

THE ENEMY OPEN FIRE—OUR OPENING RESPONSE.

It was known if the enemy continued their pursuit it must be from the direction of Gaines' Mill. Accordingly, a line of pickets was formed in the wood in our rear. Everything remained very tranquil for over an hour. The arbor tents, two days before vacated by General Butterfield's brigade, were filled with soldiers smoking, talking and catching forty winks of sleep, as compensation for their early morning rising. Every shade had its reclining coterie of soldiers, also laying in a stock of comfort and rest. An occasional crack of musketry in the woods told of the enemy being still near. Pretty soon they become more frequent. At length there came a volley and the roar of artillery. Both proceeded from the enemy. They had opened fire upon us. Three shells, in quick succession, came whizzing through the trees in front of the house used as General Morrell's headquarters. The Virginia proprietor nearly lost his wits from intensity of fright, and a benighted knight of the quill, who was actively attempting to describe passing events with the rapidity of their occurrence, lost his ink and his inclination for this sort of thing. It is to be hoped he may not lose his situation in consequence. The shells scattered themselves about with indiscriminate partiality elsewhere—a shower of leaden hail, more pleasant to read about than to be the subject of its pitiless pelting.

The first artillery firing came from the woods west of General Morell's headquarters. This was quickly followed by cannonading from the roads on the right. Our batteries blazed away in return. This thing was kept up for some time, with no apparent effect on either side. It was a sort of mutual feeling on each side—not that feeling that makes us wondrous kind; but from which wondrous wisdom is attempted to be eliminated. It was evident the enemy was gathered in strong force in these woods, and were determined to hold them. Boldly and steadily, like veterans of the battle field, our men pushed up to these woods and fired into them. Volley after volley was fired, and yet no seeming impression was made and no yielding of the enemy. Our firing brought down the rebels, it is true, by scores; the shelter of the trees was even no protection for them; but as fast as one fell another filled the vacancy. And so it was on our side. Our boys gradually went up to the woods and then into them. For nearly an hour an incessant firing was kept up at these two points. At length our men withdrew, in hopes to draw the enemy out. The withdrawal took place, as if compulsory, on account of the vigor of the enemy's firing. In these woods were sounded the knell of many a departed soul.

BEGINNING OF THE GENERAL ENGAGEMENT.

Between three and four o'clock the general engagement began. The taking no note of time, except from its loss, is ordinarily true. There is no taking note of time, however, in the excitement of battle. I was never so astonished as when I looked at my watch and saw it was seven o'clock. There had been three hours and more of fierce and determined battle; it seemed less than one hour. The ear was full of the roar of cannon and musketry, and shouts of the men; moving artillery, and regiments, and smoke had filled the eye. What had been done in these three hours? No one can tell. The Commanding General, could you catch his ear, might tell his orders, but he could tell no more. He who notes the sparrow as it falls to the ground alone knew the events of those three hours, the names of those whom bullet or shell or bayonet had called to their final account—those who lay gasping and dying from mortal wounds, those who had been taken prisoners; in short, the fluctuating fortunes of the contest. A colonel cannot tell you even about his own regiment, much less a private, and lessed still a reportorial looker on, whose memory of the order, directing a civilian, be he a newspaper correspondent or any other man to keep in the rear, is sure in the heat of battle to be miraculously keen. The firing on both sides was terrific. Attempts were made to break through both our right and left, but both were successfully repulsed.

A RESPITE.

A respite comes. And now the result of the short engagement is partially revealed. Bodies of the slain lay about in every direction. Borne on stretchers and prostrate in moving ambulances and on the ground are men covered with blood and every wound incident to the battle field. Dwellings and barns and sheds are converted into temporary hospitals. We hear of officers who have been killed and privates who have bravely met their death in the face of the enemy. We hear recounted the valorous exploits of this and that regiment and this and that officer; we are told of dozens of regiments that have been cut to pieces, of cross firings and treacherous slaughter through false displays of the Union flag. Who shall be disbelieved? What shall be believed, and what not? As I have said above, all these details can only be gathered within a day or two after the fight, and even then can only be reliably recounted after the official reports are made.

RENEWAL OF THE FIGHT.

The fight was shortly renewed again. It was evident the enemy had been reinforced. They were bolder in their demonstrations, and now came rushing from the woods. Our men were ready to meet them, and again there was desperate fighting—this time more desperate than before. The mutual yells of the men as they advanced to fire upon one another could be heard above the roar of the artillery. This was the most exciting and earnest fight of the day. The cannon let fly grape, shell and canister; the volleys of musketry were incessant, and dashing charges and counter charges were made with bold impetuosity. No battle was ever more earnestly fought. Officers and men acquitted themselves with great gallantry.

At one time our columns pushed the enemy from their position, and then the latter came back with overwhelming force on our troops. Our men gave way but for a moment. With a yell and a bound they would dash again at the enemy. I am satisfied from the recitals of every one that, for deeds of personal daring, no battle of the present war can present more numerous or notable examples. I only regret my inability at present to make their heroism and names known to the public.

ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS.

As mentioned above it, was evident that the enemy had been reinforced. The freshness and vigor of their fighting showed it, and the statements of prisoners confirmed it. They greatly outnumbered us. Only one course remained to prevent defeat, and that was asking for reinforcements. They were asked for and given. I do not know the exact order of their coming, but before the day's work ended there had come across the Chickahominy to our aid General Slocum's division, and Generals Palmer, French and Meagher's brigades, besides two or three deputations of cavalry. The fresh arrivals gave new impetus to the struggle. The new men, like those they aided and relieved, fought with the courage and desperation of old and well trained troops. General Meagher's men went into the fight with coats off and sleeves rolled up, and fought with the fierceness of tigers. All of General