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M'CLELLAN'S OPERATIONS.

SIX BATTLES IN SIX DAYS.

Ninety-Five Thousand Union Troops Opposed to One Hundred and Eighty-Five Thousand Rebels.

Splendid Military Achievements on the Chickahominy.

THE BATTLE OF WHITE OAK SWAMP.

The Famous Rebel General Stonewall Jackson Killed.

Terrible Charge of Heintzelman's Corps.

The Battle at Charles City Cross Roads.

The Union Generals McCall and Reynolds Wounded and Taken Prisoners.

Serious Loss of Cannon and Baggage.

The Brilliant Action of the Gunboats on Monday.

Our Army Safely Located on the Banks of the James River.

The Battles of Peach Orchard, Golding's Farm, Savage's Station, Gaines' Hill and Beaver Dam.

The Rebel General Barnwell Rhett and the Rebel Colonel Lamar, of the Yacht Wanderer, Killed, &c., &c., &c.

CORRESPONDENT'S ACCOUNT.

A fearful crisis in the history of America is past. At last the Army of the Potomac is safely sheltered upon the banks of the James river, and we are permitted to present some account of its bold, masterly and unprecedented movements. Six battles have been fought, and three hundred thousand men engaged. Twenty to thirty thousand of these are dead or bleeding attestations of the valor or desperation that animated them. A retreat, or rather a strategic movement, has transferred the scene of operations from the Chickahominy to a distant point, and all speculations based upon previous positions of the grand army are as vain as the conclusions based upon its present are bewildering.

We know that the army is safe. It has won great victories, though outnumbered by an enemy twice its superior, and holds its columns intact, the spirit of its men still invincible and the faith of its officers unconquerable. If ever the nation should thank God it should be at this time.

The particulars of the battle of Friday are in part known. Whatever may have been designed or whatever may have been necessitated in the vacation of the north bank of the Chickahominy, it was at least certain that said non-occupation would compel the evacuation of White House and the York River Railroad, and therefore oblige a falling back to the James river, as a new source of supplies and a new base of operations.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

Headquarter tents were moved from Dr. Trent's field, on the bank of the Chickahominy, to Savage's station, a mile and a half distant, at dusk on Friday. At night, as the several brigades came over the bridge and clustered on the borders of the swamp, a single tent dotted the hillside, and in this sat General McClellan. At eleven o'clock a council of war was called in front of this tent, and the several corps commanders, the Commander-in-Chief and his aids, the Prince de Joinville, the General of Engineers, with other trusted and faithful counsellors, congregated. A large fire had been lighted just beyond the arbor, and the blaze of the lighted knots lit up the faces of the military men within. They sat in a sort of arbor that had formed a pavilion for one of the tents, and the conference was very long and earnest. Doubtless at that council—the first called on the field since the beginning of the war—Gen. McClellan presented his plans of reaching James river.

THE RETREAT TO THE JAMES RIVER.

Somehow the rumor got abroad at once that the army was to move, and during Friday night the teams went in long and winding array towards Savage's Station, whence they took their way over the hills to the Williamsburg road, and thence to White Oak Swamp. Next morning the procession continued, and the large siege pieces that had reached White House the previous week went passing along, with ambulances, batteries and pontoon trains—all orderly, as if moving in furtherance of the cherished plan towards the city of Richmond. There was a degree of celerity in their advance that only those acquainted with the state of things could remark, and the quartermasters had faces a little anxious, though they said nothing. That it takes much patience to await the tardy march of an army all know, even when the troops are free to go on in advance and the teams follow leisurely; but when the teams take the right of way, blocking up every foot of road, sticking in the bogs and upsetting down the hills, the march is indeed devious and distressing. Such was the case with our route on the several marches of Saturday, Sunday and Monday, when the tedium was more than usually apparent because of our anxiety to go forward.

THE ORDER TO RETREAT.

It was generally understood at daylight on Saturday also that the army was to evacuate its line of entrenchments. To do this with the requisite precipitancy it was necessary to move only the most essential baggage, and leave behind everything that was ponderous or bulky. The officers were given to understand that they must discriminate between necessaries and luxuries, and the sick told that ambulances could be granted to very few, if any. The wounded were told nothing; but the silence was ominous to them, as it foretold them left on contested ground in the hands of heartless traitors, while the army should be receding, column by column, toward the remote and doubtful James. The scene on that memorable Saturday morning can never be forgotten—White House resigned, our supply depot cut off, a part of our line of earthworks deserted, and the army grouped tentless and expectant, in the open field, sleeping after the labors of the battle. Hundreds of soldiers were limping hither and thither, their arms in slings, asking for their regiments. Hundreds of others started upon painful and almost hopeless pilgrimages to the James, where they fondly believed the Union gunboats to be, and felt that under their watchful ports there would be rest, safety and shelter. The long lines of fevered, staggering people struck out for the river, and many a drop of blood spattered the sand as they filed through brook and wood, over hill and dale, nerved by the certainty that every footfall ensured more directly their deliverance. Some of the wounded hobbled ten miles the first day, upon crutches, and we saw one man with a ball through one hip and the other ankle broken that kept up with an ammunition wagon through eleven hours. The ambulances were crowded with men until the springs bent flat upon the axles, and a very common matter to see was several wounded men sitting in the tail of the wagon with bloody feet dripping upon the steps. All day long the wagons went out in foggy files, and the troops sauntered toward the same *ultima thule*. Great siege guns and greater pontoons went ringing in the cortege, and horsemen, teamsters and negroes vied with each other in cursing and swearing.

SATURDAY NIGHT ON THE FIELD.

Very few slept on Saturday night; for the issues of the dawn came upon many with a heavy foreboding, and that solicitude for the army and its General that every individual felt pressed home with a bitter premonition of dangers to come. It was said that the enemy had pushed a great column between us and the James, and that when we reached the river itself Beauregard would be found there, backed by a hundred thousand men to interpose between us and the gunboats. It rained a little during the night and moistened the dusty ground. By three o'clock in the morning the rebel prisoners had been marched off by Major Willard, the teams at headquarters were on their way, and before five o'clock the General and suite were in the saddle, dashing across the open country, turning for a moment their eyes from Richmond to fix them again more tenaciously upon another and better stand point. We left a large number of wounded in the hospital at Savage's, perhaps a thousand and more in all, and these soon experienced a second time the bloody greeting of the enemy.

The Battle of Peach Orchard.

At daylight on Sunday our whole line of earthworks had been deserted, and our artillery removed a mile to the rear. Here it was judiciously disposed, the batteries masked, and the infantry covered by thickets and acres of woods. The spot was a part of the battle ground of Fair Oaks, but it is designated as Peach Orchard Station.

At daylight the enemy came eastward on the Williamsburg road, one column advancing down the railroad. They opened from two batteries on the left; but their firing was awkward and ineffective, as likewise their musketry, which was close and might have been more serious. When they reached a line of march, about three hundred yards from our front, the whole terrible fire of our cannon burst upon them. They staggered, but before the full effect of our discharge was discernible the pieces rang again and their columns were fearfully thinned. For a half hour our fire was so close that it seemed the perpetual echo of a single deafening report—a continuous blaze of flame and hail, to which the Confederates replied feebly, but with some show of determination. Gen. Sumner rode in the thickest of this fight, and the gallant brigade of Meagher was like a wall of shamrock. Indeed Richardson's division vied with Sedgwick's, and Heintzelman's troops were not behindhand in the rapidity of their discharges and the steadiness of their behavior. The whole fight, though it lasted from eight o'clock A. M. to twelve, was like one incident, and it terminated with a loss to our side of not more than one hundred and fifty men, to the rebels of not less than one thousand five hundred. The efforts of the enemy to overreach us on the left were made futilely, for we took pains to cover our line of general retreat along the Williamsburg road, by deploying our left along that road to a creek that crosses it more than a mile in the rear of Savage's. They endeavored to charge through the brigades of Burns, Dana and Gorman; but the steady fire of such regiments as the Massachusetts Twentieth baffled them in that regard. Having held the place until, in the judgment of the generals, our teams, heavy artillery and ambulances were far across White Oak Swamp, our troops fell back leisurely to the neighborhood of Savage's Station, and again draw up in order of action. The fight of Peach Orchard—for so it will be called—was a decisive victory to the Union troops. It was fought with a small force, against immense odds, and in the rear of the main army that was every moment receding. To conduct an action so manfully in view of these gloomy facts argues bravery akin to invulnerability. The large figure of General Sumner, with his long white beard, handsomely mounted and followed by a dashing staff, is a feature of this fight that will be forever imprinted upon the minds of his soldiers. When they saw him galloping down the lines they cried: "Here comes the Old Bull, boys; give him three cheers!" and fought with renewed enthusiasm. The conduct of General Dana is universally approved. Cool, steady and valorous, he exhibited in this action the great self possession that marks him in daily life.

Colonel Sully, a son of the distinguished artist, was acting as General of Gorman's brigade during a part of the battle. He also won encomiums for his generalship.

The Battle of Savage's.

The battle of Savage's was more sanguinary. It commenced about five o'clock in the afternoon and lasted till eleven o'clock at night. The rebels, when we had fallen back from Peach Orchard, filed, with large reinforcements and additional batteries, as well as with several squadrons of cavalry, towards several roads leading to the Chickahominy, and, covered by the thick timber, were enabled to remain concealed until they had reached a wheat field that stretches from Savage's in a dense belt of woods in the direction of the farms of Dr. Trent and Messrs. Mickey, Dudley and Couch. Suddenly appearing out of the edges of the timber, they opened with rifled cannon upon our forces, drawn up in full view to the south of the railroad. Directly they ran out three batteries to commanding points in the wheat field, and opened a rapid enfilading fire of shell and grape. This was at first so staggering that our men could not form, nor our artillerymen bring their batteries into service. The 106th Pennsylvania regiment was seized with momentary panic, but soon recovered and did good service. The first named lost in the beginning of the fight a hundred killed and wounded men, and a regiment of rebel cavalry galloped in and drove the regiment off, so that the wounded had to be resigned. In the mean time a rebel brigade was observed stealing down to the right, as if with the design of flanking our troops by reaching a position on the Williamsburg road. Captain Pettit at once planted two guns on the railroad and swept the column with grape and canister, until it went back to the woods upon a run. Some of the sharpest infantry fighting of the war ensued, in which parts of Sedgwick's, Richardson's, Hooker's, Kearney's and Smith's divisions engaged with various success. The rebels came determinedly across the field, firing as they advanced, until General Sumner ordered our troops up at double quick to a charge. About four thousand of them went off at once with a roar that might have drowned the musketry. The rebels kept their position for a moment, and then fell back to the rear of their batteries. Meagher's brigade, however, succeeded in charging right up to the guns of a Virginia battery, two of which they hauled off, spiked, and chopped the carriages to pieces. The Eighty-eighth, Sixty-third and Sixty-ninth participated in this gallant act. It was here that the brave Col. Pierce, of the Twenty-ninth Massachusetts regiment, formerly General Pierce, of Big Bethel fame, lost an arm. It was taken off by a solid shot.

Night came on, but put no end to the carnage. The steady roar of cannon, and the sharp, quick ring of musketry, now bursting into volleys, now degenerating to that rasping noise made by file firing, filled the whole air. The darkness was lit up by the fitful flashes, and, to complete the awful picture, the woods were set on fire by bursting shells, and conflagration painted fiery terrors on the sky.

THE REBELS FIRE INTO OUR HOSPITALS.

In the battle of Savage's the rebels fired into our hospitals repeatedly, although admonished by the customary red flag, and afterwards by a white flag. Deaf to all appeals for forbearance, they continued to hurl messengers of death among those already past their vengeance, and the wounded were compelled to lie immovably and receive the quietus to their sufferings from the hands that had already maimed them. A few had limped away from the hospitals, but were shot down whenever they were discovered by the bloodthirsty foe.

THE LOSSES AT SAVAGE'S.

The battle of Savage's was much heavier than that on Peach Orchard. We lost, in addition to our wounded—all of whom fell into the possession of the enemy—from seven hundred to a thousand men, the greater part of whom were killed and wounded. Most of the wounded and all of the killed were left behind, as we had no means of transportation for them, and the exigency of the army would not allow of delay in waiting the tardy movements of the wounded. The enemy lost severely, and several of his caissons were blown up by the effectiveness of our firing. During the several parts of the action we took not less than five hundred prisoners, but were compelled to let them go for the same reason that operated in the case of our wounded.

FALLING BACK FROM SAVAGE'S.

The weary but still resolute soldiers received orders at midnight to fall back rapidly from Savage's across White Oak Swamp. The enemy was making furtive attempts to overreach them in this respect, and it was likely to become a tight race between the rebels and Unionists as to which should first cross the creek and gain the high grounds on the other side. If they should be more speedy, and succeed in placing the swamp between ourselves and them, our retreat would be almost inevitably cut off, and almost the whole army butchered or surrendered. Although every soldier and officer felt this dreadful alternative so close, no one acted otherwise than as a Northerner and a man. There was no murmuring, no flinching, no undue hastening, only the subdued talk of soldiers comparing opinions, the steady tramp of battalions, and now and then the gritting of teeth, or the hard drawing of a breath to indicate the bitterness in the hearts of all. Had some lost spirit supplied the torch, there was the requisite fire in the whole army to rush headlong upon immolation at Richmond, and end the campaign with honor if not with consummation. At dawn all had reached the swamp and the enemy was coming on behind.

The Great Battle of White Oak Swamp.

The enemy followed us hard toward White Oak Swamp, the faithful fellows of Heintzelman, Sumner and Franklin protecting our laggard baggage and artillery. These, indeed, were compelled to keep in line of battle across the country along the whole extent of the retreat, for the enemy was forever endeavoring to turn us upon the right and the left. Notwithstanding this, our march exhibited no symptom of haste or fear; the teams went on duly but not riotously, and when finally the last wagon and cannon went plashing through the creek, our teams whitened all the hills on the southern side, and the weary soldiers, having torn up the bridge, laid themselves down to rest. It was now eight o'clock on Monday, a day arid, dusty and closer than the panting but indomitable Northerners could well endure. Many of them were hungry; the water in the swamp was such that the stomach turned at it with loathing, and the wounded hobbled here and there with dry eyes that seemed to plead for drink. White Oak creek runs through a belt of swamp timber, precisely as the Chickahominy flows through its encompassing morass. The creek is not more than four or six feet deep, and had been made passable by the engineers-brigade, who built a good corduroy bridge across it. A strip of bottom land lies on both sides of the swamp, and on the north side a steep hill, crowned with a farm house, formerly the headquarters of Gen. Casey, had been encircled by our own troops with a line of rifle pits. An abatis also stretched across the bottom land. Beyond the stream the country was rising, and two farm houses lay opposite each other at a little distance, where some of our officers stopped to rest and refresh.

Beyond the most eastern house ran a small creek, supported by a thick wood. This was the right of our new line of battle, where General Hancock was posted with his brigade, consisting of the Fifth Wisconsin, Sixth Maine, Forty-third New York and Forty-ninth Pennsylvania. Generals Brooks and Davidson lay close in to Hancock, and the batteries of the division were commanded by Captain Ayres, formerly of Sherman's battery. Generals Sumner, Heintzelman, Porter and, in fact, all, the whole of the army, excepting the corps of Keyes and an immense number of stragglers that had pushed on toward the James and could not be rallied in time to be of service, extended the line of battle upwards of four miles to the left, bordering the whole distance upon the swamp, with batteries ranged upon every commanding hill and a strong picket situated at Charles City Cross Roads, where, it was shrewdly expected, the enemy would attempt to come out in force from Richmond.

Hancock's position was a strong one, and it would have taken a strong enemy to dislodge him. The fire commenced at this point on Monday, when the bridge that the engineers had constructed for the passage of our army, having subserved its purpose, was removed from White Oak creek. Previously the railroad bridge had been burned, the culverts blown up, and a lot of superfluous ammunition and cumbrous baggage run by train into the Chickahominy.

He appeared on White Oak Swamp in strong force, and directly opened from some twenty masked batteries, that blew up several of Captain Mott's caissons, dismounted his pieces, and raised a hubbub generally among teamsters, wagoners, cannoniers and infantry. The Twentieth New York at this time made their celebrated stampede, for which, next day, the Provost Guard, by order of General McClellan, picked them up and took them to headquarters like so many culprits.

However, very soon our light batteries recovered themselves and vigorously responded to the enemy, who was soon at a perceptible disadvantage, so far as accuracy and effect were concerned. Our infantry, too, fell in line, ready to support the batteries or meet half way any attempt of the rebel infantry to push across the creek. Thus the battle progressed till late in the afternoon with serious loss to both sides—more wounds from cannon shot perhaps resulting than at any other time in any battle. The rebels made some desperate efforts to cross the creek, but General Smith brought his men up to close quarters with them whenever they dared the contest, and although in each case some of our best and most beloved soldiers bit the dust, there was no thought of holding off. The cannon firing was incessant but not so fatal as some of the deepest and closest of the war, and the infantry fire extended along whole columns.

THE ENEMY AT CHARLES CITY CROSS ROADS.

The cannonading had continued several hours with fearful effect among our baggage and artillery teams. We had, however, prevented the enemy from crossing the swamp in our front, and fondly hoped that he would be unable to pierce its fastnesses at any other point on our right or left. That this hope was ill founded was soon testified by the appearance of the enemy in great force at Charles City Cross Roads, which lies about four miles from White Oak Swamp, due south, and about a mile and a half or two miles from the James river at Turkey Island Bend. He had advanced direct from Richmond eight brigades, the first under command of the redoubtable General Henry A. Wise, and when discovered at the Cross Roads was endeavoring to work quietly down the river road between our trains, our wounded and the army. Two such attempts might have been successful, ruin and confusion would have ensued. Keyes were ordered up to repel these troops of the former still suffering from Friday in so great a degree that many regiments organization at all and many brigades mental organization. At five o'clock the enemy, hidden by woods and the swell the firing from musketry and field batteries became intense. The rebels did fatal execution some of our most valuable officers fell here, dying. The reports of ordnance had now been heard many days that such chaos seemed the normal condition of nature, and painfully the battle went on. It was scarcely an enthusiastic fight, for all the romance of battle had worn off by reason of its monotony. The men fought well, however, though half dead with heat, thirst and weariness. Some broke for the river and plunged in the cool water for an instant, then, emerging, rushed back to the fray and fought like lions.

Fresh troops and superior numbers seemed bearing the tide of battle against us at five o'clock, and the fate of the army hung trembling in the sunset, when a new advocate—half of God, half of man—came to our relief.

THE GUNBOATS OPEN FIRE.

About five o'clock in the afternoon the gunboats Galena, Aroostook and Jacob Bell opened from Turkey Island Bend, in the James river, with shot and shell from their immense rifled guns. The previous roar of field artillery seemed as faint as the rattle of musketry in comparison with these monsters of ordnance, that literally shook the water and strained the air. The shells seemed to be supplied with eight second fuses, and a considerable interval elapsed between the shock of the report and the subsequent explosion of the shells. They fired about three times a minute, frequently a broadside at a time, and the immense hull of the Galena careened as she delivered her complement of iron and flame. The first few shots went wide, but the man in the Galena's topmast lookout signalled the proper elevation to the guns, and soon they threw among the serried rebels on the hill their ponderous obligations, that cut down whole ranks, spreading confusion, desolation and dismay. The fire went on with the same fatal effects, making music to the ears of our tired men, and consternation among the exultant and bloodthirsty traitors. They—already confident of concluding their work and driving us into the James—began to reel and grow uneasy. Their fire perceptibly slackened; their ranks seemed slow to close up when the naval thunder had torn them apart; disaffection and disappointment had already seized upon them, and every deep tocsin from the Galena added its impetus to the prevailing dread, when

HEINTZELMAN CHARGED!

The whole corps of this famous warrior, confident that a recovery of the fortunes of the time could be made, prepared to give another great effort to retrieve the fortunes of the day and the cause of the country. Waterloo did not know such a charge of horse and foot, while our batteries upon the hill tops far and near played incessantly upon the foe.

Signals were given to the Galena to cease firing when this advance was determined upon, the Galena having already hauled off. This was done by consecutively placed signal officers all the way from the point of battle to the banks of the James river. When the thunder lulled and the great ship rested after her labors, Heintzelman made a little appeal to his generals, telling them that in the dash about to be made their confidence and courage might not only save the army, but do something towards avenging the great number of loyal men who had fallen in the several fatal encounters.

The soldiers, poor, heroic, jaded fellows, responded with a spirit that must have come from hungry hearts, and soon the grand corps of Heintzelman was in line, with the gaunt, gray figure of its commander galloping down its columns. The enemy anticipated some such dash, for they directed their fire upon this part of the line—if possible—more concentratedly than ever. Then Heintzelman passed down the order, and like the surging of a sea long embosomed in a plain the column moved, slowly, certainly, vigorously belching fire and ball at every step; but never halting until they came so close to the rebels that they might have halloed the names of each, man to man, across the little interval. The latter came up bravely to the offered combat; but there was a destructiveness in our fire and a vehemence in our tread that they could not withstand. The fiery brigade of Meagher edged up gallantly on the right, using the musket right soldierly, and General Sickles' Excelsior Brigade, already fearfully cut up, went into the action like a battalion of fresh veterans. The brigade of Hooker was ably lead by that distinguished officer, and General Kearney seemed ubiquitous, as he screamed his orders here and there, always urging his men on to the foe. The brigade of General Grover, including some Massachusetts regiments behaved finely here, but the whole corps was a unit, and Heintzelman was its genius. Pushing steadily ahead, defying all efforts of the enemy to break or turn its line, the corps had at last the satisfaction of seeing the enemy break and fly in confusion to the swamp, totally dispirited and repulsed. We took in this engagement over two thousand prisoners, but as our object had been gained in covering our advance to the James' river, it was not deemed of sufficient importance in view of the risk to be encountered in holding possession of them through the night. A large number of these prisoners, however, remain on our hands, and will serve in some sort to console us for the loss of very many of our own.

THE LOSSES AT WHITE OAK SWAMP.

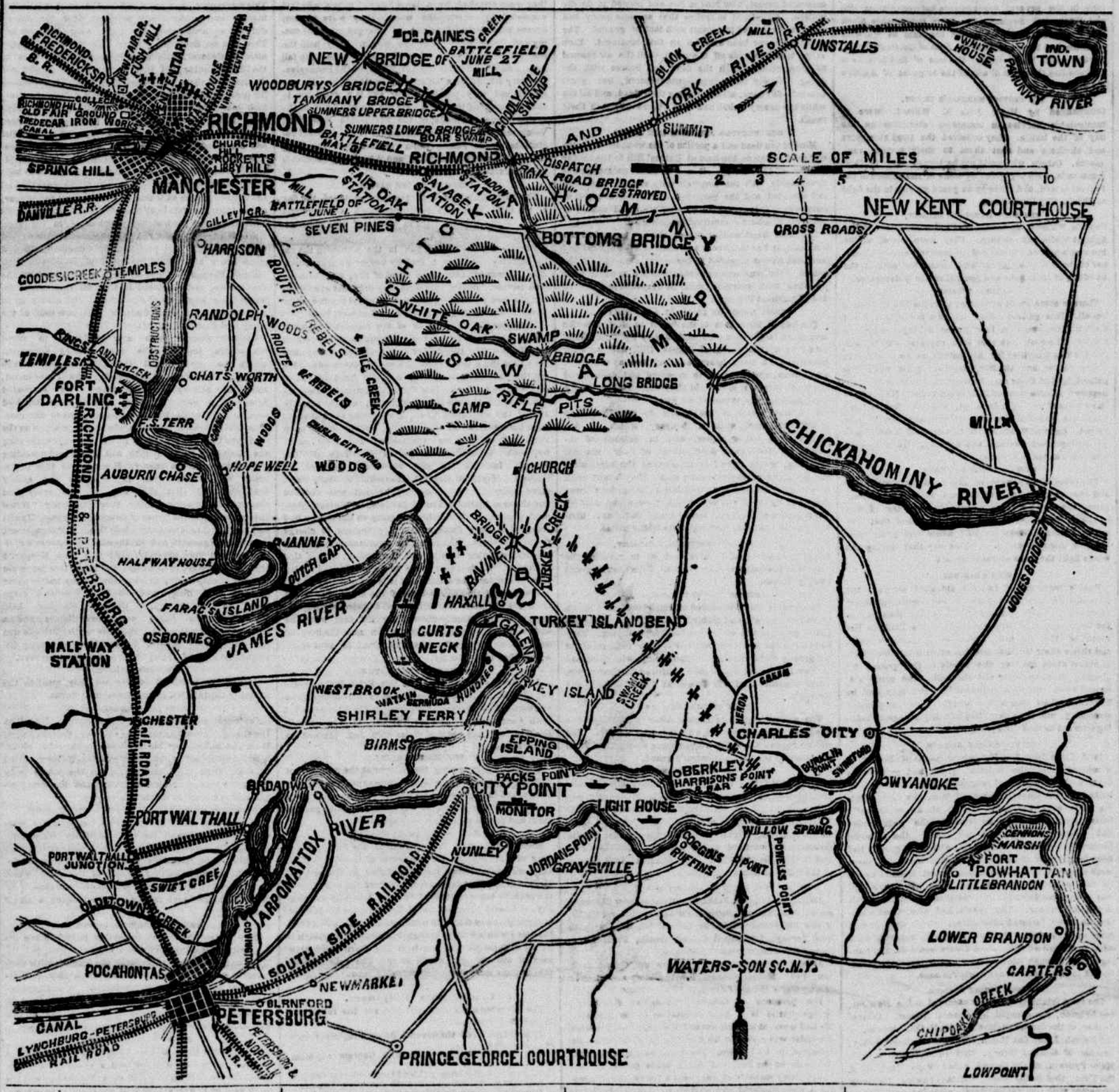
The battle of White Oak Swamp was scarcely second to that of Gaines Hill in point of losses of life, wounded and prisoners. We undoubtedly suffered less than the enemy, who was literally butchered, but our own loss is, nevertheless, enormous. We lost all of Mott's battery, but a single gun, the whole of Randall's battery, one gun, we believe, of Captain Ayres, and several others in various parts of the field. We could not have lost in killed, wounded and prisoners, less than *two thousand five hundred men*, and our loss may reach twice that amount. *But we gained our point and made the James river, despite all the enemy's attempts to cut us off there from.* In falling to do this he suffered the retreat, whereas in the pitch of battle we beat him back with immense loss, and so crippled that he was either unable or unwilling to fire a gun next day. The gunboats Aroostook and Galena are entitled to the most unbounded credit. They came into action just at the right time, and did first rate service. The rebels have so long held our gunboats in awe that their mere presence will produce a panic among them.

THE JAMES SEEN BY THE SOLDIERS.

The region of the James is high, hilly, and bountifully marked by nature with all that vegetable opulence can supply. The ripe wheat fields, and the long, wavy stretches of clover burst like a vision in fever upon the weary eyes of our wounded and footsore. Some fell down by the banks of the river, and lapped the bright water like dogs; others fell upon the margin and wept. Gen. McClellan's tent was pitched by a beautiful farm-house at Cummings', wharf, near Great Turkey Bend, just on the bank of the river. He wrote his despatches here and sent them off by the Stepping Stones, in charge of the French Prince de Joinville, the Duke de Chartres and the Count de Paris. The General spent a part of the afternoon on board of the Galena, and as he passed along the crowded banks in the Commodore's barge, all the troops, even to the haggard wounded, cheered him lustily. He doubtless slept peacefully that night, having saved his army and placed it in a new, more secure and more convenient position. In addition to the loss of our field batteries reported we also lost several of the large siege guns that had reached the army only a few days before the action of Friday. A number of them were spiked, however, and rendered useless for all time to come.

FEELING OPINIONS OF OUR SOLDIERS.

While I was sitting in the shady grove of a quaint old

M'CLELLAN'S NEW FIELD OF OPERATIONS.

The Line of March to the James River---The Battle Fields of Monday and Tuesday, June 30 and July 1, 1862.