Clearfield Republican.

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PRINCIPLES, not MEN.

TERMS—$1 25 per Annum, if paid in advance

VOL. XXXIII.—WHOLE NO 1739 CLEARFIELD, PA WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24, 1862. NEW SERIES—VOL. III.—NO 23

THE WAR NEWS.

DETAILS OF THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG.

THE BATTLE OF SATURDAY.

FREDERICKSBURG, Va., Dec 13 1862.

The occupation of Fredericksburg having been successfully accomplished, the next move was to drive the rebels from their strongholds in the rear of the city. The lines of the rebels, which extended in the form of a semi-circle from Port Royal to a point about six miles above Fredericksburg, were strongly fortified and protected by a range of high hills. Stonewall Jackson occupied the right wing, extending from Port Royal to Guinney's Station (a station on the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad); Gen. Longstreet the centre, extending to the telegraph road; and Generals Lee and Stuart the left, west of Massaponax creek, while Gen. A. P. Hill's corps acted as a reserve. Lee's reason for occupying the left was because he could be on his guard against Sigel, who threatened to outflank him by way of Culpepper. The entire rebel force was estimated at 200,000 men and occupied a front of not less than twenty miles. The troops were for the most part veterans who had fought through all the peninsular campaign, while the officers were the ablest that the South could produce. It was no mean enemy we had to contend with, I assure you.

The disposition of the Union forces excepted the whole of Friday night and Saturday morning, and as General Burnside was anxious to commence the attack at as early an hour as possible, there was not much chance for the troops to rest themselves. A few stragglers, it is true, managed to sneak away for the purpose of pillaging; but the great mass of the soldiers were constantly under arms. Gen Burnside was in the city all night, personally inspecting the troops and directing their movements. It was arranged that General Franklin's corps should cross the river two miles below the city, with the view of turning the enemy's position on Massaponax creek, while Hooker would engage the rebels nearest the centre, and Sumner would turn their right. By this arrangement it will be seen that Franklin was opposed to Stonewall Jackson, while Hooker and Sumner attacked the centre and left of the rebels under Longstreet and Lee.

The eventful morning came, and with it a dense fog, which obscured the movements of the enemy. The balloon was sent up just before daylight, but in consequence of the fog no observation could be had. However, the disposition of the Union forces had been made, and General Burnside determined to commence operations, fog or no fog.

THE LEFT.

Franklin moved his column, consisting of the First and Sixth corps, just before sunrise, his right resting on the outskirts of the city, his centre advanced a mile or so from the river, and his left resting on the Rappahannock about three miles below. Skirmishing commenced a few minutes after daylight on the extreme left.—A rebel battery opened on our troops, and the fire became so annoying that the Ninth regiment New York State Militia were ordered to charge and take the cannon at the point of the bayonet. The order was obeyed with alacrity, but after a fierce struggle the charging party were compelled to fall back. At this critical moment General Tyler, perceiving the disorder into which the Ninth New York were thrown, came to their aid with a brigade. The Ninth were quickly rallied, and, assisted by Tyler's brigade, another attempt was made to storm the rebel batteries, but without success. The fight now became general on the extreme left, and another desperate effort was made to capture the rebel battery by General Tyler's brigade; but the fire of the rebels was so withering in its effect that our brave fellows were unable to gain any advantage. Each charge thinned the ranks at a fearful rate, and the chance of capturing that much coveted battery appeared no better than at first. By noon the whole of Franklin's corps was engaged with the enemy, and a desperate effort was made to turn the enemy's position on the Massaponax and drive him beyond the creek. Gen. Franklin commanded the movement in person, and handled his troops with remarkable judgment. The rebels maintained possession of some small hills with their usual stubbornness, but gradually fell back as the Union troops evinced a determination to go forward. During the afternoon the rebels came to a stand, and for a time assumed the offensive; but as they advanced to meet us they were heavily met and repulsed with heavy loss. It was at this time that some three hundred of Hill's command fell into our hands and were conducted to the rear as prisoners. Still the enemy contested every foot of the ground, and it was only by dint of the hardest kind of fighting that he could be compelled to change his position.

It was during the heat of this engagement that the gallant Bayard was mortally wounded. He was conversing with Gen. Franklin, when a cannon ball struck him in the hip and threw him clean out of the saddle. Poor Bayard, he never dreamt of danger in the thickest of the battle, and never lost his courage, even when his leg was amputated. The surgeons say that he cannot survive many days, and that the operation they have performed can only prolong his agony a short while. But I am digressing from main facts.

The obstinacy with which the rebels held possession of their ground rendered General Franklin's task a very difficult one indeed. He had to cope with Stonewall Jackson and the veterans of Cedar Mountain, Bull run and Antietam—troops who understood their business thoroughly, and were not to be scared by trifles. Hence the task of turning the rebels' position on the Massaponax was no ordinary one. Still the Union commander was not discouraged; he had driven the enemy back several rods and was determined to drive them further. Old Stonewall had met his match this time, and, notwithstanding his troops fought with their usual bravery, they were gradually pushed southward. At sundown Franklin had succeeded in driving the enemy nearly a mile, and his troops occupied the field during the remainder of the night. The movement on the left was a complete success, although to-morrow is required to finishing up the job. The casualties on both sides were very numerous, as the list of the killed and wounded which I have forwarded to you will show.

Reynolds' corps advanced ere the dense fog had lifted itself from the river banks, and about nine o'clock the enemy's infantry were engaged. The opposing columns had fairly got to work when the rebel artillery commenced playing upon us through the fog. The shots were all aimed at random, however, and produced but little effect. Notwithstanding the view was obscured, the rebel artillerists kept up the cannonade for several hours, and, as projectile after projectile came tearing through the air, the effect was terribly sublime. The fire was returned by our batteries in gallant style, and for hours nothing but the roar of artillery could be heard on all sides.—Up to noon, when the fog cleared off and the balloonists were enabled to get a glance at the enemy's works, the fight was an artillery one, and productive of no very important result on either side. As soon as the sunshine showed itself, however, the infantry were brought into play and the work commenced in real earnest. Generals Mead and Gibbon's divisions encountered the right of General A. P. Hill's command and Longstreet's veterans.

The fight raged furiously during the entire day, and our troops suffered terribly from the enemy's artillery. The enemy were posted behind hills of great strength, and at one time it seemed impossible to dislodge them. About noon Gen. Gibbon was relieved by Gen. Doubleday's command. Gen. Mead, who was fighting superior odds, was also reinforced by Gen Stoneman's command, which had the effect of checking the rebels and driving them back a short distance. It was in the midst of this struggle that General Gibbon was wounded and partially disabled. He kept the field, however, during the remainder of the day, and won many laurels by his brilliant conduct. Gen. McClellan's endorsement of Gibbon's dash and ability has been fully borne out by the result of the day's fighting. During the afternoon Gen. Newton's division was moved up to the left of the centre, when the firing, which had ceased in that part of the field, broke out again with redoubled fury. Our troops were here exposed to a plunging fire from the enemy's artillery, which was posted on the neighboring hills, and for a short time the Union soldiers were opposed to a destructive fire. Our artillery returned the fire with deadly effect, and immortalized themselves by their accuracy of aim and unwavering courage.

THE RIGHT.

Consisting of the Seventh and Ninth corps, under Gen. Sumner, earned imperishable honors, and, as the list of the killed and wounded will testify, the laurels were won at a fearful cost. The action on the right commenced about ten o'clock and raged furiously all day long. The enemy occupied the woods and hills in the rear of the city, and in point of advantage the odds were decidedly in their favor. The courage of the Union troops was unbounded, however, and every inch of the ground was hotly contested. It soon became evident that the first ridge of hills on which the enemy were posted behind earthworks, could not be carried except at the point of the bayonet, and accordingly, General Sumner ordered French's division to charge upon the batteries. General Howard's division acted as a support, and the troops sprang forward, to obey the order with much enthusiasm. By this time the atmosphere was clear, except from the smoke of artillery, and a good view could be had of the rebels position and the country adjoining. It was a grand sight to see the devoted column

Seeking the bubble reputation e'en at the cannon's mouth.

Steadily they marched across the plain, and never faltered until they were within a dozen yards of the ridge, when suddenly they were met by a galling fire from the rebel infantry, who were posted behind a stone wall. For a few moments the head of the column exhibited some confusion; but, quickly forming into line, they retired to a ravine within musket shot of the enemy. Here the Union troops were reinforced by a fresh body of infantry, who advanced to the assistence of their comrads in splendid style, notwithstanding large gaps were made in their ranks at every step. The reinforcements having arrived, and the line of assault being again formed, the order "Double quick, with fixed bayonets!" was given, and once more the column advanced to dislodge the artillery.

From the time the storming party left the ravine up to the time they reached the foot of the hills they were exposed to the hottest fire of the enemy. The concentrated fire of Lee's artillery and infantry rained upon their devoted heads in a manner truly terrific. No troops, however disciplined and brave, could withstand the shock, and after suffering terribly our soldiers were thrown into disorder and brought to a sudden halt. At this juncture the centre of the column gave way and fled in dismay, but they were afterwards rallied and brought back. A second and third attempt was made to dislodge the rebel artillerists, but in vain, and at each attempt the ranks of the storming party grew thinner and thinner. Sumner now hurled all his available artillery into play, keeping up a hell of shells, but still the rebels held their ground