

ON THE CHICKAHOMINY.

The Comte de Paris on McClellan's Peninsula Campaign.

A HISTORICAL FRENCHMAN'S DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE OF WILLIAMSBURG AND FAIR Oaks—HOW THE COOPER WAS HARASSED BY HIS SUPERIORS.

After the battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac the way was cleared for carrying plans which McClellan had long been musing for changing the base of operations of the Army of the Potomac. The Potomac River became alive with sailing and steam craft, lighted and transports of all sorts, some receiving soldiers at Alexandria, some horses at the Washington Arsenal, and others loading with the various materials of war necessary to the equipment and provisioning of a great army. McClellan had stationed himself at Alexandria in order to give his personal attention to these operations with all their immense mass of detail. He was about to play his trump card. Now that the army's change of base was no longer a secret for any one, the arrival of the first of the vessels at Hampton Roads having revealed to the enemy the proposed point of embarkation the success of the enterprise depended on rapidity of execution.

The selection of beginning the campaign at one could not dissipate the grave preoccupation that possessed the mind of McClellan, as he navigated the broad waters of the Chesapeake. This preoccupation ought to have had other causes than a knowledge of the risks he ran in engaging a formidable and able adversary. Unfortunately it was also caused by a gross overlooking of the difficulties likely to be thrown in his way through the hostility of those who legal advice in chief of need. In regard to this hostility of which Mr. Lincoln was made the only too willing instrument, he had prolonged his leave himself. Before his departure a whole division had been taken from him and sent to Fremont, and in leaving behind him McClellan's corps, for which he had assumed an important rôle in the campaign, he could not prevail on himself not to fear that treason could be taken in hand—so as to divert this corps from its intended duty, and thus to deprive him of a part of his forces absolutely essential to a success.

These fears which he confided to us at the time, were only too promptly realized, at Fair Oaks Court-house, it was at his halting place on the Virginia Peninsula that he learned of the new attempt aimed at his authority. As he had foreseen, the Government, forgetting its promise and believing or failing to believe the safety of the Capital sufficiently guaranteed, recalled McClellan's Corps in the defense of Washington. Besides the many which should have precipitated the enemy's retreat by a simultaneous movement on his two flanks, in the narrow peninsula which separates the James and the York Rivers, was paraded by the presence of the Virginian Norfolk. The garrison armed forces which should have ascended the river estuaries were held fast in Hampton Roads. The only gambit at McClellan's disposition was his determination to be ranked before the water batteries of Yorktown. Deprived of the resources he had counted on to insure a sudden and brisk attack at the beginning of his operations, deceived by the charts and maps, which gave no adequate idea of the topography of the region, McClellan was obliged to advance with extreme caution toward Yorktown, a position he counted on surveying and reducing with as little trouble and loss as Washington and Roachambéau had done in the memorable siege which secured to the United States their independence.

Although in the midst of the general agitation caused by the news from the Capital he preserved his marvelous sang-froid, while he pacified some and mended others, still he was profoundly hurt. The same events may produce in different individuals directly opposite effects, according to the various temperaments of the men interested. The ill-disposed hostility of his Government would have seemed to him an incentive, with any resources at his disposal, a passionate, impudent, ambitious anger like that of Bonaparte. McClellan, confident and bold, was of too methodical a spirit to be led into the trap set for him by the general of the army who had come to him in his confidence. He despised his hide-and-camp.

McClellan mounted his horse and rode rapidly to the banks of the Chickahominy, in the hope of learning something of what was going on, but disappointed, in a balloon he was almost destined to resources.

McClellan in spite of himself, found that he was the uninvited guest of some of his most illustrious adversaries, our first half was at the fine dwelling of Gen. Ewell. Shortly afterward he was at "White House," the abode of Colonel, later General, Lee, and son of our future antagonist. Our march was so to speak, one of discovery, and for want of surprise McClellan was obliged to order a photograph of a survey before the padding of a survey before the padding of the battlefield. These despatches cast a diplomatic and amorous slur on Casey's troops, who, surprised by a greatly superior force, had in reality valiantly defended themselves. I should here notice an incident that, earlier in the day, would have warned us of the danger that threatened our army. In the midst of a strong escort of cavalry arrived an aide-de-camp of Heintzelman, bringing in a handsome young Confederate officer who was presented to us as Lieutenant Washington—in no way, I believe connected with the "Father of His Country," though he bore the name. He was an aide of Johnston, and, having lost his way during the forenoon, had been captured by some of our patrols on the left. There were no despatches about him, but from this it may be inferred that he must have earned verbal orders of an important character, since they had not been committed to paper, and his presence seemed to him in the morning should have been a sufficient hint to us.

Unfortunately, at the left no importance was attached to the capture, and the General was not promptly informed of the fact.

Washington was a graduate of West Point, and consequently a comrade of many of our officers, who intentionally showered him with all sorts of attentions.

But in vain. His mind could not be diverted from the battle then raging, to every sound of which he listened intently as it drew sensibly nearer to us. He alone knew the enemy's secret. He knew where the Confederate troops were massed in order to crush us; but in spite of his evident emotion not a look—not a word—not a gesture betrayed him.

PHILIPS, COMTE DE PARIS.

Father of the French.

Chateau de Paris, France, 1886.

FARMER WADE ENCOUNTERS A Liar.

Farmer Wade, of the Missouri delegation, went into a street shoe store, and in his cheerful Quaker mount way told the dapper young clerk that he had "some time to shoo."

Now, here," said the latter, as he slipped on a No. 9, "a pair of shoes we made for Dr. Smith of Washington. You've heard of him—they didn't quite fit and he wouldn't take 'em. I'll sell 'em to you at the cost of ready-made shoes, and they're a bargain."

CALLED BACK TO WASHINGTON.

The Commanding General was not free from carking cares. And again the cause came from Washington. On the 25th of May, while the cavalry was engaged in securing a difficult position on the Chickahominy, despatches from the President announced the defeat of Banks at Winchester, reported the panic that had set in the Government at Washington, and directed McClellan to abandon everything, and lead back the army to the banks of the Potomac. "I think that you must go up the job and come to our defense."

"Hold on there," shouted Farmer Wade, indignantly, "what do you take me for, a sicker?" "This Dr. Smith of yours must be most darned hard to please."

The clerk stammered an apology, and Farmer Wade, after having had his wrath greatly modified, proceeded to improve the opportunity for a moral lesson.

"Young man," said he, in his most serious Sunday school manner, "did you ever hear of Ammanias?"

"No," was the reply, "I never did. Who was he?" "Did he live in Mis-

sissippi?"

When Farmer Wade came down to the Willard a short time after the shoe store episode, he told Col. Hale confidentially that "the digested fact he ever met lived right here in Washington."

THE BATTLE OF WILLIAMSBURG.

McClellan understood this new task with all the vigor and exuberance of mind which belonged to him. But he could not change the conditions of fact on which his illustrious adversary had counted to baffle the pursuit. The only possible route through the narrow peninsula had been converted into an impracticable ditch by the transit of Johnston's retreating army. The cavalry alone might possibly come up with and harass the enemy's rear-guard at close quarters, and perhaps bring Johnston to a stand-still.

The battle of Williamsburg was fought on the following day, May 5, on the

wooded banks of two small brooks that run in opposite directions, reducing the width of the peninsula to a few hundred yards. I was there. I heard the battle. But I can hardly say with truth that I saw it! Whoever has waged war in America will understand me and will not be surprised at this statement. What was truly surprising was the fact that we had fought and half won a battle without anyone on our side being in command. If I recall this souvenir, it is only to give some idea of the extraordinary difficulties of the situation with which McClellan was obliged to contend. After having buried his squadron of cavalry—after having given his officers the most explicit directions, he himself remained at his headquarters to direct the movements of the unwieldy machine he had set in operation. The presence of the general organizer was essential at this centre, the objective point and fountain head of all important information. It was necessary to prepare for the advance of the remainder of both armies were dug with rain. The roads became soaked and impassable for either wagons or horses. Torrents of muddy water ran through the narrow valleys into the Chickahominy, which rose rapidly. The few natives who had remained with us predicted an inundation by the typhoon illness, could not withstand the rapid and great changes of temperature in the fatigues of body and mind which the situation imposed. Our camps were ravaged by dysentery. He himself was attacked by this malady which deploys the strongest physiques, but fought to conceal his weakness and suffering. Toward mid-day on the 3rd, the wind blowing a gale and howling through the trees, we heard a noise that was not thunder. We listened attentively. It was the roar of cannon. Then came the rattle of musketry, and the pell-mell flight of musket smoke. The whole length of the battle field, with the exception of the two lines of advanced outposts and had passed the whole night in the forest amidst torrents of rain, waiting for daybreak to join his staff. The cold and exposure of this despicable night had assumed the habitual habitation of "The Old Bull," as his soldiers were wont to call him. He gave no command that did not paralyze and render immovable every body of troops within reach of his orders, even the cavalry. The whole length of the battle field, with the exception of the two lines of advanced outposts and had passed the whole night in the forest amidst torrents of rain, waiting for daybreak to join his staff. The cold and exposure of this despicable night had assumed the habitual habitation of "The Old Bull," as his soldiers were wont to call him. He gave no command that did not paralyze and render immovable every body of troops within reach of his orders, even the cavalry.

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in the darkness of the night, and was led by the stars to be sent up York River. But if no one could replace McClellan in the work of quartermaster of the forces, neither could his presence be dispensed with on the field of battle. While he labored in his office before Yorktown, the greatest confusion reigned among troops in front of Williamsburg.

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