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Patriot & Union

HARRISBURG, PA., TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 1863. PRICE TWO CENTS.

The Patriot & Union.

TUESDAY MORNING, APRIL 7, 1863.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF GEN. McCLELLAN.

INCLUDING HIS MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM THE TIME OF THE EVACUATION OF HARRISBURG TO THE CLOSE OF THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM, WHEN LEE WAS DRIVEN OUT OF MARYLAND.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, October 15, 1862.

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit a preliminary report of the military operations under my charge since the evacuation of Harrisburg's Landing.

The measures directed by the General-in-Chief were executed successfully, with entire safety to my command and its material, between the 14th and 19th of August. The line of withdrawal selected was that of the mouth of the Chickohominy, Williamsburg and Yorktown. Upon this line the main body of the army, with all its train, was moved, Heintzelman's corps crossing the Chickohominy at Jones' bridge, and covering by its march the movement of the main column. The passage of the Lower Chickohominy was effected by means of a button-bridge two thousand feet in length. The transfer of the army to Yorktown was completed by the 19th of August. The embarkment of the troops and material at Yorktown and Fort Mifflin was at once commenced, and as rapidly as the means of transportation admitted everything was sent forward to Aquia creek and Alexandria. No mere sketch of an undertaking of such magnitude, and yet of so delicate a military character will suffice to do justice. I must now, however, content myself with a simple notice of it, deferring a full description for my official report of the campaign before Richmond—a labor which I propose to undertake as soon as events will admit me the necessary time. Justice to the achievements of the Army of the Potomac and the brave men who composed it requires that the official record of that campaign should be prepared with more care than circumstances have hitherto permitted me to bestow upon it. The delay will not have been felt as injurious to the public interest, inasmuch as by frequent reports from time to time I have kept the department advised of events as they occurred.

I reached Aquia creek with my staff on the 24th of August, reported my arrival, and asked for orders. On the 27th of August I received, from the General-in-Chief, permission to proceed to Alexandria, where I at once fixed my headquarters. The troops composing the Army of the Potomac were meanwhile ordered forward to reinforce the army under General Pope. So complete was this order carried out that on the 30th of August I had remaining under my command only a camp guard of about one hundred men. Everything else had been sent to reinforce General Pope. In addition, I exhausted all the means at my disposal for forwarding supplies to that officer, my own headquarters teams even being used for that purpose.

Upon the unfortunate issue of that campaign I received an intimation from the General-in-Chief that my services were desired for the purpose of arranging for the defence of the Capital. They were at once cheerfully given, although, while awaiting definite instructions at Alexandria, I had endeavored, as just seen, to promote a favorable result in the operations then pending, and had thus contributed, though indirectly, yet as far as I could, to the defence of Washington. On the 2d of September the formal order of the War Department placed me in command of the fortifications of Washington "and of all the troops for the defence of the Capital." On the 1st of September I had been instructed that I had nothing to do with the troops engaged in active operations, and limited to the immediate garrison of Washington. On the next day, however, I was verbally instructed by the President and the General-in-Chief to assume command of Gen. Pope's troops (including my own Army of the Potomac) as soon as they approached the vicinity of Washington, to go out and meet them, and to post them as I deemed best to repulse the enemy and insure the safety of the city.

At this time the task imposed upon me was limited to the dispositions necessary to resist a direct attack of the enemy upon the Capital. Such, indeed, was the danger naturally resulting from the defeat of our forces in front of the various garrisons, and the troops were disposed as to be readily thrown upon threatened points. New defenses were thrown up where deemed necessary. A few days only had elapsed before a comparative security was felt with regard to our ability to resist any attack upon the city. The disappearance of the enemy from the front of Washington, and their passage into Maryland, enlarged the sphere of operations, and made an active campaign necessary to repulse the enemy, prevent the invasion of Pennsylvania, and drive them out of Maryland. Being honored with the charge of the campaign, I set myself at once upon the additional duties imposed upon me with cheerfulness and zeal, yet not without feeling the weight of the responsibilities thus assumed, and being deeply impressed with the magnitude of the issues involved.

Having made the necessary arrangements for the defence of the city in the new condition of things, I pushed forward the First and Ninth corps, under Gens. Reno and Hooker, forming the right wing, under General Burnside, to Leesburg, on the 5th instant; the Second corps, under General Sigel, and the First corps, by Brookville, on the 6th instant, to Ridgeville, to Frederick, on the 7th instant, the Eleventh and Eleventh corps, under Gens. Sumner and Williams, on the 6th were moved from Taneytown to Rockville; thence by Middleburg and Urbana, on Frederick, the Eleventh corps, moving by a lateral road between Urbana and New Market, thus maintaining the communication between the centre and right wing as well as covering the direct route from Frederick to Washington. The Sixth corps, under General Frank, in, was moved to Daronsville on the 6th instant, thence by Dawsonville and Barnesville on Buckhannon, covering the road from the mouth of the Monocacy to Rockville, and being in position to connect with and support the centre, should it have been necessary (as was supposed) to force the issue of the Monocacy. C. C. Smith's division was thrown forward to Officer's Cross Roads and Poolesville by the river road, thus covering that approach, watching the fords of the Potomac; and ultimately following and supporting the Sixth corps. The objects of these movements was to feel the enemy—to compel him to develop his intentions—at the same time that the troops were in position to cover Baltimore or Washington, to attack him should he hold the line of the Monocacy, or to follow him into Pennsylvania if necessary. On the 12th a portion of the right wing, consisting of Frederick, after a brisk skirmish at the outskirts of the city and in its streets. On the 13th the

main bodies of the right wing and centre passed through Frederick. In this city the manifestations of Union feeling were abundant and gratifying. The troops received the most enthusiastic welcome at the hands of the inhabitants. On the 13th the advance, consisting of Pleasanton's cavalry and horse artillery, after some skirmishing, cleared the main passage over the Catoctin hills, leaving no serious obstruction to the movement of the main body until the base of the South Mountain range was reached.

While at Frederick, on the 13th, I obtained reliable information of the movement and intentions of the enemy, which made it clear that it was necessary to force the passage of the South Mountain range, and gain possession of Boonsboro and Rohrer'sville before any relief could be afforded to Harper's Ferry.

On the morning of the 13th I received a verbal message from Col. Miles, commanding at Harper's Ferry, informing me that on the 11th he had abandoned the Maryland Heights to the rebels, and that the whole force was concentrated at Harper's Ferry, the Maryland, Loudon and Bolivar Heights being all in possession of the enemy. The messenger stated that there was no apparent reason for the abandonment of the Maryland Heights, and that, though Colonel Miles asked for assistance, he said he could hold out certainly two days. I directed him to make his way back, if possible, with the information that I was rapidly approaching, and would undoubtedly relieve the place. By three other couriers I sent the same message, with the order to hold out to the last.

I do not learn that any of these messengers succeeded in reaching Harper's Ferry. I should here state that on the 12th I was directed to assume command of the garrison at Harper's Ferry, but this order reached me after all communication with the garrison was cut off. Before I left Washington, and while it was yet time, I recommended to the proper authorities that the garrison of Harper's Ferry should be withdrawn, via Hagerstown, to aid in covering the Cumberland valley or that, taking up the pontoon bridge and obstructing the railroad bridge, it should fall back to the Maryland Heights, and there hold its own to the last. In this position it could have maintained itself for weeks. It was not deemed proper to adopt either of these suggestions, and when the subject was left to my discretion, I endeavored to do anything except to try to relieve the garrison.

I directed artillery to be frequently fired by our advanced guards as a signal to the garrison that relief was at hand. This was done, and I learn that our firing was distinctly heard at Harper's Ferry, and that they were thus made aware that we were approaching rapidly. It was confidently expected that this place could hold out until we had carried the mountains and were in a position to make a detachment for its relief. The left, therefore, was ordered to move through Jefferson to the South Mountain, at Crampton's Pass, in front of Buckhannon, while the centre or right moved upon the main or Turner's Pass, in front of Middletown. During these movements I had not only long marches on the column, but the absolute necessity of refitting and giving some little rest to troops worn down by previous long continued marching and severe fighting, together with the uncertainty as to the actual position, strength and intentions of the enemy, rendered it incumbent upon me to move slowly and cautiously until the headquarters reached Urbana, where I first obtained reliable information that the enemy's object was to move upon Harper's Ferry and the Cumberland valley, and not upon Baltimore, Washington or Georgetown.

In the absence of the full reports of corps commanders, a simple outline of the brilliant operations which resulted in the carrying of the two passes through the South Mountain is all that can be given with justice to the corps and commanders engaged, be furnished. The South Mountain range, near Turner's Pass, averages perhaps a thousand feet in height, and forms a strong natural military barrier. The practicable passes are not numerous, and are readily defensible. The gaps abounding in fine positions. Turner's Pass is the more prominent, being that by which the national road crosses the mountain. It was necessarily indicated as the route of advance of our main army.

The carrying of Crampton's Pass, five or six miles below, was also important to crush the means of teaching the flank to the enemy, and having the attack on the principal pass, while it at the same time presented the most direct practicable route for the relief of Harper's Ferry. Early in the morning of September 14, Gen. Pleasanton, with a cavalry force, reconnoitered the position of the enemy, when he discovered them to occupy the crests of commanding hills in the gap on either side of the national road, and upon an advantageous ground in the centre upon and near the road, with artillery bearing upon the approaches to their position, whether that by the main road or those by the country roads, which led around up to the crest upon the right and left. At about 8 o'clock, a. m., Cox's division of Reno's corps, a portion of Burnside's column, in co-operation with the reconnaissance, which by this time had become an attack, moved up the mountain by the old Sharpsburg road to the left of the main road, dividing as they advanced into two columns. These columns (Sumner's and Cox's brigade) audaciously carried the enemy's position on the crest in their front, which gave us possession of an important point for further operations. Fresh bodies of the enemy now appearing, Cox's position, though held stoutly, became critical, and between 12 and 1 o'clock, p. m., Wilcox's division of Reno's corps, sent forward by Gen. Burnside to support Cox, and between 2 and 3 p. m., Sturges' division was sent up.

On arriving at the front in the afternoon, I found two divisions (Richardson's and Sykes') in position. The rest were halted in the rear of Richardson. After a rapid examination of the position I found that it was too late to attack that day, and at once directed locations to be selected for our batteries of position, and indicated the bivouacs for the different corps, massing them near and on both sides of the Sharpsburg pike. The corps were not all in their places until the next morning, some time after sunrise.

On the 16th the enemy had slightly changed their line and were posted upon the heights in the rear of the Antietam and in front of the road from Sharpsburg to Hagerstown, and protected by woods and other irregularities of the ground. Their extreme left rested upon a wooden eminence near the cross roads to the north of J. Miller's farm, the distance at this point between the road and the Potomac, which makes here a great bend to the east, being about three-fourths of a mile. Their right rested on the hills to the right of Sharpsburg, near the Antietam and the approaches to the town from the southeast. The ground between is undulating front and the Antietam creek is generally commanded by the crests of others in their rear. On all favorable points their artillery was posted. It became evident, from the force of the enemy and the strength of their position, that desperate fighting alone could drive them from the field, and all felt that a great and terrible battle was at hand.

In proceeding to a narrative of the events of this and the succeeding day, I must here repeat what I have observed in reporting upon the other subjects of this communication, that I attempt in this preliminary report nothing more than a sketch of the main features of this great engagement, reserving for my official report, based upon the reports of the corps commanders, that full description of details which shall place upon record the achievements of individuals and particular bodies of troops. The design was to make the attack upon the enemy's left—at least to create a diversion in favor of the main attack, with the hope of something more—by assailing the enemy's right, and, as soon as one or both of the flank movements were fully successful, to attack their centre with any reserve I might then have at hand.

The morning of the 16th (during which there was considerable artillery firing) was spent in obtaining information as to the ground, rectifying the position of the troops, and perfecting the arrangements for the attack. On the afternoon of the 16th Hooker's corps, consisting of Ricketts' and Doubleday's divisions, and the Pennsylvania Reserves, under Meade, was sent across the Antietam creek by a ford and bridge to the right of Keadysville, with orders to attack and, if possible, turn the enemy's left. Mansfield, with his corps, was sent in the evening to support Hooker. Arrived in position, Meade's division of the Pennsylvania Reserves, which was at the head of Hooker's corps, became engaged in a sharp contest with the enemy, which lasted until after dark, when it had succeeded in driving in a portion of the opposing line, and held the ground.

At daylight the contest was renewed between Hooker and the enemy in his front. Hooker's attack was successful for a time, but masses of the enemy, thrown upon his corps, checked it. Mansfield brought up his corps to Hooker's support, when the two corps drove the enemy back—the gallant and distinguished veteran Mansfield losing his life in the effort. General Hooker was, unhappily, about this time, wounded, and compelled to leave the field, where his services had been conspicuous and important. About an hour after this time Sumner's corps, consisting of Sedgwick's, Richardson's and French's divisions, arrived on the field—Richardson some time after the other two, as he was unable to start as soon as them. Sedgwick, on the right, penetrated the woods in front of Hooker's and Mansfield's troops.

French and Richardson were placed to the left of Sedgwick, thus attacking the enemy towards their left centre. Crawford's and Sedgwick's lines, however, yielded to a destructive fire of masses of the enemy in the woods, and suffering greatly, (Generals Sedgwick and Crawford being among the wounded,) the troops fell back in disorder. They nevertheless rallied in the woods. The enemy's advance was, however, entirely checked by the destructive fire of our artillery. Franklin, who had been directed the day before to join the main army with two divisions, arrived on the field from Brownsville about an hour after, and Smith's division replaced Sedgwick's and Crawford's line. Advancing steadily, it swept over the ground just lost, but was permanently retaken. The divisions of French and Richardson maintained with considerable loss the exposed positions which they had so gallantly gained, among the wounded being General Richardson.

The condition of things on the right towards the middle of the afternoon, notwithstanding the success wrested from the enemy by the stubborn bravery of the troops, was at this time unpromising. Sumner's, Hooker's and Mansfield's corps had lost heavily, several general officers having been carried from the field. I was at one time compelled to draw two brigades from Porter's corps, (the reserve) to strengthen the right. This left for the reserve the small division of regulars who had been engaged in supporting during the day the batteries in the centre and a single brigade of Morell's division. Before I left the right to return to the centre, I became satisfied that the line would be held without these two brigades, and countermanded the order, which was in course of execution. The effect of Burnside's movement on the enemy's right was to prevent the further massing of their troops on the left, and we held what we had gained.

Burnside's corps, consisting of Wilcox's, Sturges' and Rodman's divisions, and Cox's Kanawha division, was entrusted with the difficult task of carrying the bridge across the Antietam, near Rohrback's farm, and assaulting the enemy's right, the order having been communicated to him at 10 o'clock, a. m. The valley of the Antietam, and at near the bridge, is narrow, with high banks. On the right of the stream the bank is wooded and commands the approaches both to the bridge and the ford. The steep slopes of the bank were lined with rifle pits, and breastworks of rails and stones. These, together with the woods, were filled with the enemy's infantry, while their batteries commanded and enfiladed the bridge and ford and their approaches. The advance of the troops brought on an obstinate and sanguinary contest, and from the great natural advantages of the position it was near one o'clock before the heights on the right bank were carried. At about 3 o'clock p. m. the corps again advanced with success, the right driving the enemy before it, and pushing on nearly to Sharpsburg, with the hope of a hard encounter, also compelled the enemy to retire before it. The enemy here, however, were speedily reinforced, and with overwhelming masses. New batteries of their artillery, also, were brought up and opened. It became evident that our force was not sufficient to enable the advance to reach the town, and the order was given to retire to the cover of the hill, which was taken from the enemy earlier in the afternoon. This movement was effected without confusion, and the position maintained until the enemy retreated. Gen. Burnside had sent to me for reinforcements late in the afternoon; but the condition of things on the right was not such as to enable me to afford them.

During the whole day our artillery was everywhere bravely and ably handled. Indeed, I cannot speak too highly of the efficiency of our batteries, and the great service they rendered. On more than one occasion, when our infantry was broken, they covered its re-formation and drove back the enemy.

The cavalry had little field for operations during the engagement, but was employed in supporting the horse artillery batteries in the centre, and in driving up stragglers, while awaiting opportunity for other service.

The signal corps, under Major Meyer, rendered during the operations at Antietam, as at South Mountain, an efficient and valuable service. Indeed, by its services here, as on other fields elsewhere, this corps has gallantly earned its title to be independent and permanent organization.

The duties devolving upon my staff during the action were most important, and the performance of them able and untiring. At a later day I propose to bring to the notice of the department their individual services.

With the day closed this memorable battle, in which, perhaps, nearly two hundred thousand men were for fourteen hours engaged in combat. We had attacked the enemy in position, driven them from their line on one flank, and secured

a footing within it on the other. Under the depression of previous reverses, we had achieved a victory over an adversary invested with the prestige of former successes and inflated with a recent triumph. Our forces slept that night conquerors on a field won by their valor, and covered with the dead and wounded of the enemy.

The night, however, presented serious questions; morning brought with it grave responsibilities. To renew the attack again on the 18th, or defer it, with the chance of the enemy's retirement after a day of suspense, were the questions before me. A careful and anxious survey of the condition of my command, and my knowledge of the enemy's force and position, failed to impress me with any reasonable certainty of success if I renewed the attack without reinforcing columns. A view of the actual state of some of the corps suffered to deter me from presenting them into immediate action, and I felt that my duty to the army and the country forbade the risks involved in a hasty movement, which might result in the loss of what had been gained the previous day. Impelled by this consideration, I awaited the arrival of my reinforcements, taking advantage of the occasion to collect together the dispersed, give rest to the fatigued, and remove the wounded. Of the reinforcements, Couch's division, although marching with commendable rapidity, was not in position until a late hour in the morning; and Humphrey's division of new troops, fatigued with forced marches, were arriving throughout the day, but were not available until near its close. My reinforcements from Pennsylvania, which were expected during the day, did not arrive at all.

During the 18th orders were given for a renewal of the attack at daylight on the 19th. On the night of the 18th the enemy, after having been passed troops in the latter part of the day from the Virginia shore to their position behind Sharpsburg, as seen by our officers, suddenly formed the design of abandoning their line. This movement they executed before daylight. Being but a short distance from the river, the evacuation presented but little difficulty. It was, however, rapidly followed up. The detachment withdrew with slight loss.

As a reconnaissance across the river on the evening of the 19th, which resulted in ascertaining the near presence of the enemy in some force, and in our capturing six guns. A second reconnaissance, the next morning, which, with the first, was made by a small detachment from Porter's corps, resulted in observing a heavy force of the enemy there. I submit herewith a list of the killed, wounded and missing in the engagements of the 15th, and of the 16th and 17th. The enemy's loss is believed, from the best sources of information, to be nearly thirty thousand. Their dead were mostly left on the field, and a large number of arms and accoutrements were captured. While it gives me pleasure to speak of the gallantry and devotion of the officers and men generally displayed through this conflict, I feel it necessary to mention that some of the officers and men skulked from their places until the battle was over. Death on the spot must hereafter be the fate of all such cowards, and the hands of the military commanders must be strengthened with all the power of the Government to inflict it summarily. The early and disgraceful surrender of Harper's Ferry deprived my operations of results which would have formed a brilliant equal to the substantial and gratifying success already realized. Had the garrison held out 24 hours longer, I should, in all probability, have captured that part of the enemy's force engaged in the attack on Maryland Heights; while the whole garrison—some 12,000 strong—could have been drawn to reinforce me on the day of the decisive battle. Certainly, on the morning of the 18th, I would thus have been in a position to have destroyed the rebel army.

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Under the same circumstances, had the besieging force on the Virginia side at Harper's Ferry not been withdrawn, I would have had 35,000 or 40,000 men sent to encounter the Antietam, and must have destroyed or captured all opposed to me. As it was, I had to engage an army fresh from a recent and, to them, great victory, and to reap the disadvantage of their being freshly and plentifully supplied with ammunition and supplies.

The objects and results of this brief campaign may be summed up as follows: In the beginning of the month of September, the safety of the National Capitol was seriously endangered by the presence of a victorious enemy, who soon after crossed into Maryland, and there, directly between Washington and Baltimore, they were met by the gallant Army of the Union, inferior in numbers, wearied by long marches, deficient in various supplies, worn out by numerous battles, the last of which had not been successful, first covered by its movements the important cities of Washington and Baltimore, then boldly attacked the victorious enemy in their chosen strong position, and drove them back, with all their superiority of numbers, into the State of Virginia, thus saving the loyal States from invasion, and fully dispersing the rebel dream of carrying the war into our country, and subsisting upon our resources.

Thirteen guns and 39 colors, more than 15,000 stand of small arms, and more than 6,000 prisoners, were the trophies which attest the success of our arms. Rendering thanks to Divine Providence for his blessing upon our exertions, I close this brief report. I beg only to add the hope that the army's efforts for the cause in which we are engaged will be deemed worthy to receive the commendation of the government and the country.

Gen. D. D. McCLELLAN, Maj. Gen. United States Army, Brigadier General L. Thomas, Adjutant General United States Army

COMPARISONS.—It is useless to deny that the masses of the people have a deep seated and settled confidence in "Sarsaparilla" as an alternative remedy. Notwithstanding this confidence has of late years been shaken by many preparations claiming to possess its virtues, but really with none at all, still the people believe in its intrinsic value as a remedy, because they have known of its cures. The rage for large bottles at low prices, has called into market many compounds of Sarsaparilla which contain scarcely any of it, or even any medicinal virtues whatever. Yet everybody knows that Sarsaparilla is the great subtle antidote for Scrofula, Eruptions and cutaneous diseases, and for the purification of the blood, when they can get the real article, or an actual extract of it. Such we are now able to inform them they can obtain. Dr. J. C. Ayer & Co., the celebrated chemists of the East, whose reputation assures us they do not sell whatever they undertake, are selling a Compound Extract of Sarsaparilla, which, although the bottles do not contain quite a quart, do contain more of actual curative power than whole gallons of the stuff which have been in use. It is ascertained that one bottle of Ayer's Sarsaparilla contains more than double the amount of medicinal virtue, which is afforded by any other. This fact is not only apparent to the taste, but its efficacy and cures afford incontestable proof that it is true. Such a remedy has been long sought for, and is every where needed by all classes of our community. ["Age," Cynthia, Ky.]