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Pittsburgh Gazette.

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THURSDAY MORNING, JUNE 5.

THE GREAT BATTLE.

FULL DETAILS FROM AN EYE-WITNESS.

THE ATTACK ON CASEY'S POSITION.

Gallant Bayonet Charge.

THE REBELS DRIVEN BACK LIKE SHEEP.

Desperate Nature of the Fighting.

GREAT VICTORY ON SUNDAY.

Our Advance Some Distance Beyond the Battle Ground.

FIELD OF BATTLE BEFORE RICHMOND, Sunday A. M., June 1, 1862.

A battle before Richmond has at last put to the test the rebel boast as to what they would do with Gen. McClellan's army when they should get it beyond the protection of the gunboats. Though the advantage of a sudden movement against the weaker point in our lines gave the enemy a temporary success, the final result has not been such as to afford encouragement to their disheartened and demoralized troops, or occasion any fears as to our ultimate possession of the rebel capital.

The attack commenced shortly before one o'clock on Saturday, on the left wing of the army, on the further or south side of the Chickahominy, where the advance position was held by the division of Gen. Casey, much the weakest in the army, *composed almost entirely of raw regiments, and reduced by disease to an effective force of 6,000 men.*

THE POSITION HELD BY GEN. CASEY,

Was on the Williamsburg Stage Road, within six or seven miles of Richmond, and on a line so extended at the front that the troops required to maintain picket guards of sufficient strength, made no slight draft on his weakened forces. The right of the line was held by his first Brigade, under Gen. H. M. Naglee, as brave and vigilant an officer as is to be found in the army of the Potomac. Gen. Naglee's pickets extended across the railroad (running parallel with the Williamsburg road), about a mile to the right) to near the sixth mile-post from Richmond, and so on further to the right and a little to the rear until within a short distance of a point on the Chickahominy, where Gen. Sumner had thrown a bridge across the stream, and was hourly expected to press to complete the line of pickets to the river.

The centre of Gen. Casey's position, held by the Second Brigade, Gen. Wassell's, (formerly Gen. Keims',) extended from Gen. Naglee's line to the left a short distance across the Williamsburg Road, where it joined the Third Brigade, Gen. Palmer's, stretching some distance further to the left, and joining the lines of Gen. Couch, who guarded the left flank, the main portion of his force being a short distance in the rear of Casey, on the Williamsburg Road.

THE NATURE OF THE GROUND.

The position occupied by the main body of these two divisions was a clearing of about one mile square, surrounded on the left and the front by a belt of forest, in which General Casey's pickets were stationed. On the right, a wooded swamp divided the clearing from a similar opening in the forest, along the railroad, which was occupied by Gen. Naglee with his brigade. Just beyond the woods to the front were similar clearings with woods on their further side, where the rebels lay concealed, their pickets occupying the edge of the forest, and separated from our pickets by the width of the fields, forming a sort of neutral ground between the two armies, over which each kept close watch lest his neighbor should take possession.

THE ENEMY RECONNOITERING.

Step by step Gen. Casey pressed on to this point, overcoming such opposition as met him, until it became evident that the rebels had reached the limit of their retreat, and further advance could not be ventured without the risk of a general engagement, for which the plans were not yet ripe. Our proximity to the rebels was evidently annoying to them, and on Thursday, and again on Friday, they made an unsuccessful attempt, with a force of a few hundred, to drive in the pickets and discover what mischief was plotting behind the belt of woods sheltering Gen. Casey from their view. Their attack was resolutely met by the picket guards, defeating the purpose of the enemy.

Meanwhile Gen. Casey was actively at work securing his position, a large force of men being busy, under the skillful direction of Lieut. E. W. West, of his staff, digging rifle pits and felling trees for abattis. A similar line of defensive works had been commenced and partially completed at Gen. Casey's former position, at the Seven Pines, three miles further to the rear, and back of these was a line of earthworks, constructed by Gen Couch, and more carefully finished.

Failing in the two attempts to gather information by forcing back Gen. Casey's pickets, the rebels apparently resolved upon an *advance in force against the left wing of the army,* doubtless determined to drive it beyond the Chickahominy, should the opportunity offer, and put themselves in a position to turn Gen. McClellan's left flank.

THE STORM ON FRIDAY NIGHT.

During the afternoon of Friday, a terrific thunder-storm arose, continuing through most of the night with uninterrupted severity, deluging the earth with rain, converting the spongy soil into a nearly impassable bog, and raising the waters of the Chickahominy so as to carry away one of two bridges Gen. Sumner had prepared for his passage, and somewhat disturb the foundations of the other.

The broad sheets of lightning that night and the camp fires of unusual size, gleaming in the pitchy darkness, seemed to illuminate our position, and may possibly have assisted the rebels in getting an idea of the bearing of things. Just before the storm had reached its fury there was some skirmishing between the artillery on both sides. This commenced again in the morning, several shots flying over our camp, indicating that the rebels had in some way gained a more correct idea of our position.

THE ATTACK ON SATURDAY.

Shortly after noon the grand attack commenced, Gen. Casey's pickets being driven in all along the front, after a spirited resistance, the rebels advancing in force along three roads—the Williamsburg road, to our left, the railroad, in the centre, and the "Nine-mile Road," as it is called, on the right. With his feeble division greatly weakened by extension, Gen. Casey had no backbone to oppose to this sudden attack. But no thought of yielding his ground entered the mind of the old soldier, scarred with the wounds of Mexico and disciplined to danger by a hundred fights. His troops were immediately formed into position, the three brigades maintaining their relative positions on the right, left and centre, and as thorough preparations were made for resisting the attack as its suddenness would admit of. Regan's New York Battery was stationed just to the right of the Williamsburg road, Bertz' Battery of Napoleon guns further to the left across the road, and Fitch's Battery three or four hundred yards to the rear, the last sending its shells over the heads of our troops at the enemy beyond. The fourth battery was near the railroad, further to the right.

The vigor with which the enemy pressed forward to the attack indicated the confidence of superior strength. A battallion of two regiments pressed against Gen. Naglee on the right, another fell on Gen. Wassell at the centre, and a third on Gen. Palmer to the left, pouring in at once a fire hot and heavy, and advancing with great resolution in face of the steady fire of canister and grape from the guns in front, and shell from those further to the rear, mowing down their ranks in all directions. The rebels had but little artillery, and were evidently disposed to make good the deficiency by pressing to close quarters with their superior force, to bear down at once by weight of numbers the feeble skeleton regiments of three and four hundred men who composed the advanced division.

Most of Gen. Casey's troops were thrown forward to the edge of the woods in front of his position to meet the advance of the rebels, a few regiments being left behind the partially completed rifle pits, a short distance to the rear. Thus a division, nearly, now to warfare, was suddenly exposed, in an open field, to the heaviest of fire from an enemy covered to a considerable extent by the woods through which they were advancing. Terribly the tempest raged, the air almost growing thick with musket balls; officer after officer fell, or was borne from the field a wounded man; the men dropped by scores, and the usual number of weak-jointed ones were falling to the rear. But in spite of the rapid thinning of their ranks, the regiments generally held their ground until the enemy succeeded in rushing around on the left flank, and poured in an enfilading fire from that direction, against which the rifle-pits were no protection. The sixty rounds of ammunition with which they entered the fight were nearly exhausted, and no more was at hand.

ARRIVAL OF REINFORCEMENTS.

Meanwhile one of Gen. Couch's brigades, commanded by Gen. Arbercrombie, was ordered up to the support of Gen. Naglee on the right, Gen. Devens, of the same division, sustaining Gen. Wassell on the centre, and Gen. Peck, with the remaining brigade, supporting Gen. Palmer on the left. When Gen. Casey's troops were forced to give way, the rebels fell on these brigades of Couch's division, who disputed every inch of ground until sustained by Gen. Kearney, pressing up the Williamsburg road with reinforcements to meet them, supported by the division of Gen. Hooker in his rear. Pressing rapidly forward, General Kearney advanced along the Williamsburg road to within a short distance of our original position, where he bivouacked for the night in front of the enemy.

It was along this Williamsburgh road that the main attack was made, and here our troops were forced back for a half mile or more, before the arrival of Gen. Heintzelman's corps, the feeble brigades of Casey's Division, averaging less than 2,000 men, being completely broken up, many, if not most of the officers killed, wounded or missing, and the privates scattered through the woods and along the road. Bravely and well did Gen. Casey do his duty, pressing on to the extreme front and cheering on his men, regardless of the storm of fire and hail that raged about him, cutting down his officers on all sides, but strangely escaping his own person. Bravely and well did most of his officers stand by him, until, one after another, they were borne from the field dead or wounded.

THE LOSS OF ARTILLERY.

Col. Bailey, Chief of Artillery, was shot early in the afternoon, the ball striking him in the head and causing his death after a short period of insensibility. Maj. Van Vaultenberg, the second in command of the First New York Artillery, was killed, Adjutant William Ramsay wounded, while every battery but one lost its quota of men, and some of them lost nearly all their horses. Bates' Battery of Napoleon guns—12-pound brass pieces—which was to the front, thus deprived of locomotion and stuck fast in the mud, was left behind in the retirement of our troops, but not until Gen. Naglee had taken it upon himself to see that several of the pieces were spiked. In addition to this, one 3-inch Parrott gun of Battery H was disabled by a shot, and fell into the hands of the enemy. The Pennsylvania Reserve Battery, of Couch's Division, also lost one of their guns—there eight pieces of ordnance constituting our entire loss, so far as I could learn. We can better afford to spare the pieces than we can afford to have the rebels profit by their gain. They show every indication of being much in want of artillery, and the need is evidently stimulating their efforts to profit by the chances of war to possess themselves of our guns.

GEN. SUMNER'S ADVANCE.

Meantime Gen. Sumner had succeeded in bringing his troops across the Chickahominy, and was advancing on the right to maintain our position there, where less ground had been lost. After several days of labor, Gen. Sumner had thrown two bridges across the creek between Bottom's Bridge and New Bridge, where local reports held it to be impossible to find any foundation for piles, to support the superstructures. One of these bridges was some two miles above Bottom's Bridge, the other a mile further up the stream. The lower of these was carried away during the heavy storm of Friday night, and Gen. Sumner was obliged to depend upon a single shaky structure for the passage of his troops, who nearly all, however, succeeded in crossing that night, the head of the column reaching the Nine-mile road, along which the rebels were pressing our troops, at about 7 o'clock, holding the enemy in check for the night, preventing them from following up in that direction the advantage they had gained during the day.

THE FIGHT ON