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STORY OF A REGIMENT:

THE CAMPAIGNS AND PERSONNEL OF THE FIFTEENTH VIRGINIA CAVALRY, 1862 - 1865

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

John B. Fortier

1968

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Approved, August, 1968

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ABSTRACT

This study is the history of a military unit and some of its more notable members.

The narrative includes the campaigns of the Fifteenth Regiment, many of them obscure, and more generally those of the cavalry corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. It also considers the problems of organization and administration, with particular emphasis on the exercise of leadership and discipline, and the development of the regiment as an effective military command.

On a broader level, this study relates the effects of warfare on individuals who served in the regiment and to society in general.

STORY OF A REGIMENT

CHAPTER I

"I WILL LISTEN TO THE PROPHETS"

The immutable element in warfare is man. Warfare may appear as a social phenomenon, and therefore something that can or cannot be eliminated, or it may be regarded as a response to a particular set of circumstances, and therefore as preventable or not preventable. But it is axiomatic that wars are precipitated by human problems compounded by human emotions, and that warfare is conducted, in the end, by the individual members of society. The elements of courage and cowardice, honor and duplicity, skill and ineptitude, and many more, all are magnified in war and are a recurring and predictable factor in human response to war. In spite of all the literature that has dealt with the American Civil War, the study of the conflict is not without relevance, particularly as it relates to the experiences of individuals and the effects of war on their way of life.

For those who fought in it, the Civil War assumed the nature of a hydra, always changing and always more formidable, growing beyond all expectations and surpassing all fears. In theory as well as practice it was America's "first modern war," providing the effective fusion of an emerging industrial technology with the democratization

of war.[1] What came to matter most in such a war, as in every major conflict to follow, was the enemy's capacity to offer resistance. Instead of his territory or his armies, it was his will to fight that had to be conquered--with victory as much a matter of attrition as of strategy, and defeat a part of the disintegration of society itself.

The United States entered the Civil War with a military system inherited from the first settlers and only slightly modified by the experience of its wars with England and Mexico and its occasional campaigns against the Indians.[2] Yet the nation's industrial potential had so increased, even in the single decade of 1850-1860, that neither its methods of waging war nor its attitudes toward war were able to absorb the full implications of this change. For many, including the carefree volunteers of 1861, it had been virtually impossible even to assess its implications, for the American people were very naive and the transformation had been very subtle.

The extent of this change would be measured, in part, by the profound strategic and tactical evolutions it caused. Strategically, the development of steam transportation, by rail and by water, and the advent of telegraphic communications served to expand the scope of the war, make its conduct more accelerated and more flexible, and facilitate the mounting of offensive campaigns and the mustering of

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[1]Walter Millis, Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History, Mentor Books (New York: The New American Library, 1958), pp. 108-10; T. Harry Williams, Americans at War: The Development of the American Military System, Collier Books (2d ed.; New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1962) pp. 55-56.

[2]Theodore Ropp, War in the Modern World, Collier Books (2d ed.; New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1962), p. 175.

forces in defense.[3] Tactically, the adoption and refinement of rifled ordnance and the extensive use of earthworks on the battlefield curtailed the assault and made positions of defense, especially by numerically inferior forces, much stronger and more tenable.[4] The decisive battle was increasingly difficult to achieve, although enormous losses would occur before this was realized.

Politically and socially, the conduct of the Civil War was even more ominous, for it re-established all the nationalistic practices that had been invoked during the American and French Revolutions: the mobilization of mass armies, the excitement of fierce popular passions, the impossibility of a settlement by compromise, and a grinding struggle ending in the exhaustion of both sides.[5] It assumed, in common with every great conflict that has followed, that "costly, ruthless cast which is the great distinguishing mark of modern warfare."[6]

By 1860, however, the methods of mass warfare had been displaced by nearly fifty years of military conservatism that followed the battles of Waterloo and New Orleans. Although the militia laws of the American Colonies had recognized the principle of compulsory military service, the first half of the nineteenth century had brought

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[3]Ibid., pp. 181-86; see also: Cyril Falls, A Hundred Years of War 1850-1950, Collier Books (New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1962).

[4]J. F. C. Fuller, The Conduct of War 1789-1961 (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961), pp. 103-06.

[5]Hoffman Nickerson, The Armed Horde 1793-1939 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), pp. 154, 172; Edward Mead Earle (ed.), Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1948), pp. 26-27, 32-34, 49-53, 77-80, 96-99.

[6]Bruce Catton, America Goes to War, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), p 20.

a reaction by military professionals against the widespread use of volunteers. The real legacy of the American and French Revolutions, therefore, was not only the example of mass conscription, but a military system which continued to the Civil War and beyond, a system based on the dual concept of a professional standing army supported by a large but generally ill-trained volunteer reserve.

Dennis Mahan, from his position as Professor of Military and Civil Engineering at the United States Military Academy, summarized this attitude in his preface to A Treatise on Field Fortification. His volume, first published in 1836, was addressed to officers of the United States militia, "composed as it must be of men of a higher grade of moral and intellectual qualities, than is to be met with among the common soldiery of any country,"[7] in hopes that the study of field fortifications would lessen the danger to the militia whenever they were used:

> Its ranks are filled with all that is most valuable in society. The farmer, the mechanic, the merchant, the members of the learned professions, must all quit their peaceful avocations to meet the foe. The father of the family jeopards its future prosperity, the son exposes his widowed mother to the chances of an old age of penury, to bare their breasts to a mercenary band, without other home, without other ties, than the camp affords. Surely nothing but a reckless disregard for the best interests of society could urge men, under such circumstances, to forego the advantages of every possible conservative means.[8]

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[7]Dennis Mahan, A Treatise on Field Fortification, Containing Instructions on the Methods of Laying Out, Constructing, Defending, and Attacking Intrenchments, with the General Outlines also of the Arrangement, the Attack and Defence of Permanent Fortifications. (3d ed.; New York: John Wiley, 1861), pp. vi-vii.

[8]Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

The essence of his argument is simple: keep civilians out of war and let the mercenaries do the fighting, for they are the dregs of society and their death will cause it the least disruption. And here is where Mahan is most typical, for, as a theorist and military engineer, he did much to preserve the eighteenth-century concept of war as a limited contest, fought for limited goals and conducted with great formality between highly trained professional armies. In forty years at West Point, Mahan and his colleagues were able to impress this concept upon nearly every future general on either side in the Civil War.

Unfortunately, the role of the professional soldier was still not well established. Indeed, the American tradition tended to glorify the amateurs--Anthony Wayne, Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, William Henry Harrison, and even George Washington.[9]

The Mexican War did much to offer a preview of future wars and demonstrate the advantages of a well-trained officer corps; General Winfield Scott declared that because of his West Pointers the nation had been spared another five years of fighting with much consequent loss.[10] But even the Mexican War was fought before the effects of industrialism had really begun to influence military practice. For nearly every public figure--and for all too many soldiers--the study of war had stagnated; a veneer of conservatism sufficed to cover the inadequacies of a military system, which, conceived to fight a

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[9]Catton, America Goes to War, pp. 35-36.

[10]Millis, Arms and Men, p. 95.

limited war, would be adapted to meet the exigencies of a total war with none of the moderation they had been led to expect.

If Mahan's attitude seems cruel to twentieth century logic, it is because modern social philosophers have long ceased to consider the alternatives. The enlisted soldier is no longer recruited solely from the dregs of society, and certainly he is no longer a social outcast. The great distinction between soldier and citizen is gone, a relic of life before universal conscription was accepted as a prerogative of the democratic state. Yet Mahan's idea made sense in its own time. If wars must be fought--and this supposed that such wars would be limited by the rational commitment of all concerned--they can be made least damaging to the nation by a conscious effort to insulate their conduct from the social fibre and by exempting those who constitute society's most productive members. In the long run this is less cynical, and probably more humane, than the total mobilization of soldiers and civilians that has evolved instead.

In 1860, however, the United States regular army found itself too small and too scattered to handle the crises of secession, while the South possessed no regulars at all. Not only were military and political leaders forced to overcome their objections to the use of volunteers, but an urgent mobilization of the masses was begun on an unprecedented scale. Appeals were made in the North for aid to crush a "foul rebellion," in the South to uphold Southern honor, and on both sides for men to defend home and fireside against the threat of "barbarous" invaders.

The call to arms was made and answered with a careless disregard for the technological realities of the situation. The war commenced in a frantic milieu that typified this dilemma: officers who had assiduously prepared themselves for a type of war that would never be fought; civilians who regarded themselves as qualified to assume the burden of command; a citizenry eager to be led into a war which they conceived would be a means of arbitration, an affair of honor, and a national purgative; and an industrial technology that would render their efforts more destructive than any of them could realize. In 1846 this backwardness was inefficient; in 1861 it was tragic.

In the vast expenditure of lives and resources required to effect some sort of settlement, one person was doomed to suffer more and gain less--he was the individual soldier, the man in the ranks, the volunteer. He had become expendable.

The volunteer was the basic element with which the war was fought. Both armies were composed primarily of volunteers, organized in new units or enlisted from the most active militia, in the same pattern of service that had been used since the Revolution. Units were summoned by federal authority but raised by the states; they retained their state designations, and their officers were elected by the men or appointed by the state governors.[11]

Regiments formed in 1861 were drawn from existing units of militia or raised by individuals from volunteers, on the theory that whichever person could induce a body of men to enter the service could best keep

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[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

them together and command them afterwards.[12] The units enlisted for several months at first, then for terms of two or three years or the war, whichever came first. In general, the South was more militant and its militia was better organized than the North, although the Confederacy was forced to adopt conscription even before the United States and enforced it more effectively. Ultimately, both sides mobilized some 3,000,000 men, of which approximately 600,000 were to die.[13]

In addition to the logistics of mass mobilization, the Civil War is significant for the numerous ways in which it anticipated, and influenced, current military practice. Those means are decidedly less vital than the process by which a nation commits itself to war, but they do offer some insight into the nature of the Civil War and further define some of its antiquarian aspects which continue to be so fascinating.

The Confederate cavalry, as, indeed, all branches of the service, resembled that of the North in many respects; both armies were raised, organized, and led in virtually the same manner. But the South possessed a great advantage in the making of its cavalry, since a high regard for horses, marksmanship, and outdoor life combined with a traditional admiration for individual prowess and the military profession to produce, among some elements at least, a "natural" cavalryman. To be sure, not every Southerner possessed these qualities, nor

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[12]Alfred Vagts, A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military (2d ed. rev.; n.p.: Meridian Books, Inc. 1959), p. 97.

[13]Ropp, War in the Modern World, p. 176n.

did every Northerner lack them. But the Confederacy was able to convert its volunteers into cavalry with greater ease than the North, and dominated the Northern cavalry throughout the early part of the war.[14]

The use of cavalry is nearly as old as warfare itself. In all ages the value of cavalry has been measured in terms of its mobility, its capacity for delivering "shock" action against infantry formations, and its ability to pursue a disorganized enemy. By the nineteenth century, however, the concept of the "dragoon," or mounted infantryman, was slowly gaining acceptance as the cavalry role expanded to include reconnaissance, counter-reconnaissance, outpost duty, raids, and delaying actions.[15]

Unique circumstances during the Civil War produced "the model of the efficient cavalryman,"[16] a horseman who could fight from the saddle or on foot with equal skill, and hold his own against veteran infantry as well. Lack of training prevented the inculcation in most recruits of the traditional cavalry philosophy, based on the inseperability of man and horse in combat. The terrain where much of the war was fought often precluded the deployment of massed cavalry; swamps, ravines, rock-strewn fields bordered by fences and woodlots, and mountain chains traversed only through narrow passes--all these limited the field where cavalry could fight in the old style. The

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[14]For a discussion of the various aspects of cavalry service see: Theo. F. Rodenbough (ed.), The Cavalry, Vol. IV of The Photographic History of the Civil War, ed. by Francis Trevelyan Miller (10 vols., 2d ed.; New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1957).

[15]Mills, Arms and Men, pp. 85, 97; G. T. Denison, A History of Cavalry (London: MacMillan and Co., 1913), p. 356.

[16]J. F. C. Fuller, quoted in James D. Lunt, Charge to Glory! (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960) p. 27.

rapid and flexible deployment of large units, the development of rifled ordnance and repeating firearms, and the simple scarcity of horses demanded a further modification in cavalry tactics.[17]

A continuing professional debate over the relative effectiveness of mounted and dismounted cavalry was resolved pragmatically by combat leaders during the Civil War. As the war progressed, and the missions assigned to the cavalry placed increasing emphasis on mobility and versatility, the cavalry of both sides tended to fight dismounted and to do so willingly and readily whenever the situation seemed to require it. This development of a style of fighting by troops who were equally useful in the role of mounted infantry, directly influenced the tactics and military thought of the post-war army for several decades.[18]

For the cavalry of both sides, the usual problems of recruitment and training were compounded by the necessity to outfit and train horses as well as soldiers. The men had to learn not only marksmanship with handguns and shoulder arms but also, whether they liked it or not, the elements of fighting with the sabre. They had to master mounted as well as dismounted drill, and each troop horse had to be made accustomed to the sound of firing, the flash of sabres, and the maneuvers he must perform in unison with his companions.

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[17]For a lucid survey of the interaction of ordnance and tactics see: Jack Coggins, Arms and Equipment of the Civil War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962).

[18]Jay Luvaas, "Cavalry Lessons of the Civil War," Civil War Times Illustrated, VI (January, 1968), pp. 20-32.

Mounted units were doubly susceptible to losses through illness as well as combat. The number of men present for duty was continually reduced by the universally unhealthy conditions in which the war was fought, while such equine ailments as sore backs, lameness, "heaves," and simple exhaustion provided a continuous liability in worn-out horses and dismounted troopers who had to be left behind with every campaign.[19]

By its nature, cavalry service sometimes hindered the development of disciplined, effective troops. Opportunities for straggling occurred frequently, and the abuse of furloughs for horse detail contributed to a breakdown of morale among Confederate troops. Ranging far beyond the army in his operations, and acting under less direct supervision, the cavalryman might shirk his duties, enlarge upon his opportunities to plunder, or desert almost at will. Especially in partisan units, these temptations created serious problems.

The cavalry of both sides operated under particular disadvantages as well. In the Confederacy each man brought his own horse into the service and was paid for its "use and risk." The practice made troopers reluctant to risk their horses on a hard march or in battle, and it was a steady drain on the strength of every unit, since dismounted soldiers had to be furloughed to find another horse or be transferred out of the cavalry. Thomas Munford, himself a brigadier

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[19]H. L. Scott, Military Dictionary: Comprising Technical Definitions; Information on Raising and Keeping Troops; Actual Service, Including Makeshifts and Improved Material; and Law, Government, Regulation, and Administration Relating to Land Forces. (2d ed.; New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1864), pp. 640-42.

general of cavalry, explained the defects of the system:

> It kept on an average at least one-third of a regiment on the road to and from home to remount. One-third of a regiment would generally be sick and wounded. In a fight (dismounted) it took one-fourth of the men to hold the horses of the dismounted men, and when we were far from our camps or wagons, about one-eighth of the men would be detailed to secure food for the horses and rations for the men. You will thus perceive what duty those present had to perform, and what was expected of a cavalry regiment.[20]

The average number of men present for duty in a Confederate cavalry regiment declined from about 650 to 500 in 1862, and 350 in 1863. Most regiments numbered about 100 men or less by 1865.[21]

Northern cavalry regiments, whose problems of replacements and remounts always were less severe, were fragmented by constant assignments of men to special details or as couriers and personal escorts. Not until 1863 was the Union cavalry drawn together and employed in mass. For many months, however, its capacity for raids and reconnaissance remained unfulfilled.

In response to these conditions a new form of warfare was developed, as cavalry raids were directed increasingly against the enemy's supply lines, railroads, and communications, rather than against his armies. Accompanied by batteries of fast-moving horse artillery, in which every cannoneer was mounted, a small cavalry force could pose a tremendous threat to enemy operations. One of the conspicuous ironies of the

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[20]Thomas T. Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers XII (1884), 347.

[21]Fairfax Downey, Clash of Cavalry: The Battle of Brandy Station, June 9, 1863 (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1959), p. 163.

war occurred at Trevilians' Station in July, 1864, where cavalry entrenched repulsed the attacks of cavalry dismounted in a battle fought to protect a railroad line.

In terms of its mobility, versatility, firepower, and tactical dispersal, the cavalry of the Civil War resemble modern military forces far more than their infantry and artillery counterparts, and the techniques behind the successful management of such units are still relevant to the problems of contemporary combat leaders. In yet another way--the tendency to engage in long campaigns, with losses sustained through a daily process of attrition rather than in a single, climactic battle--the cavalry experience was a precursor of modern warfare. During the latter part of the war, especially, "set piece" battles gave way to "that constant contact with the enemy which was to be one of the most striking features of early twentieth-century warfare."[22]

In assessing the combat effectiveness of cavalry units, the nature of cavalry losses should be considered. Infantry regiments often sustained casualties of fifty per cent in a single battle, and thus were inclined to scoff at the courage of the mounted arm. Great cavalry battles were rather infrequent, with casualties proportionately lower in every engagement--partly because of the relative ineffectiveness of cavalry weapons except at very close ranges, and partly because the casualty ratios failed to include the loss in horses. Nonetheless, cavalry losses usually were counted by twos and threes.

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[22]Ropp, War in the Modern World, p. 133.

The real expenditure of cavalry strength came through the endless scouting and skirmishing that caused a steady depletion of men and animals. This attrition was scarcely noticeable from one day to the next, but it seldom ceased. And by the end of a campaign the aggregate losses among mounted units were much more equivalent to losses throughout the army. Similarly, the large numbers of cavalrymen taken prisoner during the war is less an indication of ineptness than of the nature of cavalry engagements. The isolation of picket duty, the rapid movements on a march, and the turmoil of battle all exposed individual soldiers to surprise and capture--especially when dismounted in the face of a mounted adversary. If more cavalrymen became prisoners it was because they habitually took more chances. The cavalry was, as one member observed, the most "sudden and dangerous" branch of the service.[23]

Ultimately, the cost was immense, and after more than a century the consequences of the Civil War still have not been assessed completely. Instead, the enormous disruption and dissipation of American society has been obscured by generations of idealistic sentiment until, as one writer concludes, "it is perfectly possible that we are spending a little too much time nowadays in talking about the Civil War."

> It is becoming to us, what it never was to the people who had to take part in it, something romantic, a bright and colorful splash in the center of the slightly drab story of this country's nineteenth-century development. It is a museum piece, replete with old-fashioned flags, weapons,

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[23]John Esten Cooke (Philip Van Doren Stern, ed.), Wearing of the Gray: Being Personal Portraits, Scenes and Adventures of the War. (2d ed.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 22.

> uniforms, and people, tinkling with sentimental little songs, set off by heroic attitudes, a strange and somehow attractive never-never land in which our unaccountable ancestors chose to live for four picturesque years.[24]

Despite a prodigious amount of research, then, the war remains a valid area for investigation of that "baffling combination of triumph and defeat"[25] which is still very much a part of American life. And if the study of armed conflict continues to preoccupy many historians, it is because that timeless element of human affairs is more evident in warfare than in virtually any other activity. One man who, as a soldier, came to understand human nature with rare insight, discovered that:

> nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me. Whatever I had to do men had always done.[26]

A combat unit is more than an armed assemblage of soldiers, for it involves an infinite range of individual experiences, from the prosaic to the profound. Its history should be more than a record of campaigns and casualties, for it is an exercise in collective biography, and in the deeds and attitudes of individuals. The Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry was never a distinguished regiment; instead, it was as nearly typical as any. Yet, enmeshed in a web of technology, tactics, and inexperience, its story is not without interest, or a certain sad significance.

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[24]Catton, America Goes to War, p. 11.

[25]Ibid., p. 13.

[26]Ernest Hemingway (ed.), Men at War, Berkley Medallion Books (3d ed.; New York: The Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1960), p. 6.

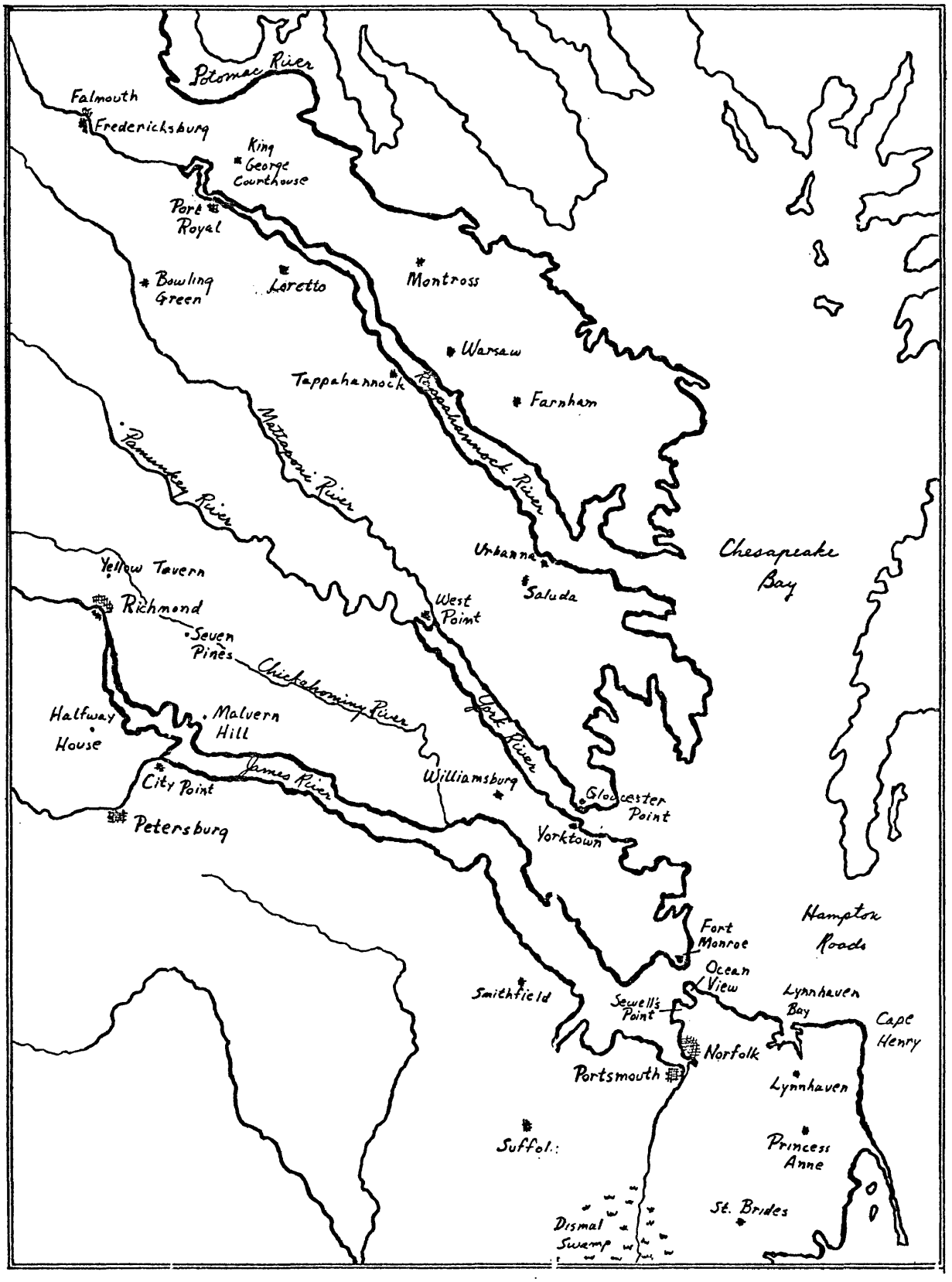
CHAPTER II

"WE ARE A BAND OF BROTHERS, . . ."

They came from the Tidewater: from the flat, dusty fields south of Norfolk, and from the rolling pinelands around Fredericksburg; from a score of crossroads villages in the Northern Neck, and from a hundred farms along the waters of the James, the Rappahannock, and the York. In the spring of 1862, in those final days before their war began in earnest, the farmboys and students and mechanics still cherished dreams of glory. Bearing such picturesque titles as "Guards," "Grays," and "Rangers" they could still regard themselves as a band of the captain's men, ready to follow him through every encounter. The older men who led them were eager, perhaps wiser, but equally inept and inexperienced. A leavening of West Pointers and veterans from the Mexican War gave their efforts some direction; otherwise, they were untried and unskilled--a citizenry in arms, ready for a fight but bound to make mistakes. Such was the material, the "personnel," upon whom the burdens of war would fall.

The orders that created the Fifteenth Virginia authorized a merger of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Battalions and the assignment of two independent companies to the new regiment. The history of

TIDEWATER VIRGINIA



these battalions is critical to an understanding of the Fifteenth Virginia, whose origins can be traced through what is essentially a military genealogy.

The immediate predecessor of the Fourteenth Battalion was the Fifth Regiment, Virginia Cavalry, a twelve-month unit organized early in 1861 from the pre-war militia and volunteer enlistees around Norfolk.[27] Companies A, B, and I of the Fifth Virginia included men of all ranks who would soon be elected company officers in the Fourteenth Battalion, commanded by the former captain of Company I, Edgar Burroughs. To a large degree, the morale and spirit of cohesion which sustained the battalion throughout the war can be attributed to the close relationships which developed among the future commanders during their service in the Fifth. And when the original one-year enlistments began to expire in 1862, this contingent provided the basis upon which a permanent battalion was recruited and organized.

Company A of the Fourteenth Battalion was originally formed by Captain John E. Doyle, enlisted in the Confederate service on April 21, 1861, and was designated as Company B of the Fifth Virginia Cavalry. In the spring of 1862 the company reorganized, and there is a strong hint of campground politics in a report that all the

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[27]Three regiments were known by that numerical designation. The original Fifth Virginia Cavalry (Provisional Army), also known temporarily as the Fourth Virginia Cavalry, went out of existence with the general reorganization of 1862. It was superseded by the Fifth Virginia Cavalry, which continued to be known as such until November, 1864, when it became the Fifth Virginia Cavalry, Consolidated. Lee Wallace, A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations, 1861-1865 (Richmond: Virginia Civil War Centennial Commission, 1964), p. 53.

original officers were "thrown out" and had left the unit.[28] John F. Cooper, formerly a lieutenant in Burroughs' company of the Fifth Virginia, was elected captain, and the organization became known as the "St. Bride's Cavalry," after the parish in which it had been raised. It was reported to be one of the largest and best equipped cavalry companies in the army.[29]

Company B, the "Chesapeake Light Cavalry," began its career as Company I of the Fifth Virginia. Formed at Lynnhaven Beach in July, 1861, mainly from personnel transferred from Company A of the Fifth, Company I was mustered into the service on August 1. On May 2, 1862, the unit reorganized; its captain, Edgar Burroughs, assumed the rank of major in the Fourteenth Battalion and was replaced by Wilson M. Bonney, promoted from first lieutenant.[30]

Company C, the "Princess Anne Cavalry," was enlisted on April 20, 1861, under Captain John Fentress and had been designated Company A of the Fifth Virginia Cavalry. On March 27, 1862, the unit reorganized,

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[28]John W. H. Porter, A Record of Norfolk County (Portsmouth, Virginia: W. A. Fiske, 1892), pp. 206-07.

[29]Ibid.

[30]"Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Virginia," Microcopy 324, Record Group 109, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (cited hereafter as Microcopy 324), reels 58-61, 138-45. Information mentioned above is from company "abstract" cards, prepared by the War Department during the compiling of the individual service records and microfilmed by the National Archives as caption cards for the compiled service records, which are arranged in Microcopy 324 by organizations, then alphabetically by surname within each organization. Company abstract cards list changes in organization and the histories of commissioned personnel. Cards for companies of the Fourteenth Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, appear on reels 58 and 138.

and Edward W. Capps was elected commander. Originally, the company was rather small; some thirty members had transferred to Burroughs' company during 1861, but this deficiency was corrected by a special order assigning fourteen men to the new command.[31]

Company D of the Fourteenth Battalion was organized on March 27, 1862, primarily from transfers and re-enlisted members of the Fifth Virginia.[32] Its captain, James H. Scott, was a former lieutenant in the Fifth, and all the commissioned officers in the company came to their positions with the benefit of experience in that regiment.

As spring approached, the twelve-month enlistments originally contracted by the Confederate service had begun to expire in the Fifth Virginia, as elsewhere. Captain Edgar Burroughs, one of the company commanders, had taken the initiative in reorganizing some of the men into a unit of his own. With a minimum of disruption, despite

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[31]Company abstract cards, reels 58 and 138, Microcopy 324. See also the compiled service record of Edward Capps as sergeant, Co. A, Fifth Regiment (P.A.), and captain, Co. C, Fifteenth Regiment, reels 50 and 139, Microcopy 324. The compiled service records are filed in individual jacket-envelopes and typically contain: (1) carded abstracts of entries relating to each soldier as found in muster rolls, company returns and payrolls, hospital registers, Union prison registers and rolls, paroles, inspection reports, etc., and (2) originals of any documents or correspondence relating solely to the particular soldier. All citations of compiled service records are for service as members of the Fifteenth Regiment, Virginia Cavalry, unless otherwise indicated.

[32]Company returns, payrolls, clothing lists, and extra duty rolls, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Battalions and Fifteenth Regiment, Virginia Cavalry, Box 537, Record Group 109, National Archives; Wallace, A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations, p. 71.

some abrupt changes of command in the elections that took place, Burroughs visited the company camps and persuaded the men to re-enlist. Capps' company was mustered on March 27 at Ocean View, near Norfolk, to serve for three years. Scott's company was enrolled on the same day at its camp near Moseley. Cooper's command was mustered on May 1 at Sewell's Point, and Captain Bonney's men were signed the following day.[33] The new organization was received into the Confederate service as the Fourteenth Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, also known to its members as the "Chesapeake Light Cavalry," after the title of Burroughs' original company.[34]

As the companies were mustered in, the horses were appraised by a board of review, which established their value. The soldiers also received fifty dollars bounty for re-enlisting. Company A, during this time, reported a total enrollment of 4 officers, 8 non-commissioned officers, and 105 enlisted men. Company B had a total complement of 98 men. Company C included 4 officers, 5 sergeants, 4 corporals, 1 musician, and 102 privates. Company D mustered 4 officers and 76 enlisted men.[35]

The returns for companies C and D also include the comments of the mustering officer--in this case a Major Forsyth from the Third Alabama Infantry--and provide an insight into conditions among the

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[33]Ibid.; Jed Hotchkiss, Virginia, Vol. III of Confederate Military History, ed. by Clement A. Evans (12 vols.; Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899), pp. 840-41, 1155-56.

[34]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 978, 1078.

[35]Muster rolls, Fourteenth Battalion, March and April, 1862, Box 537, Record Group 109.

battalion. Both units were appraised as "moderate" in discipline, with "inadequate" arms and accoutrements and insufficient clothing; consequently, their instruction and military appearance were rated as "poor."[36]

During this period a similar procedure was taking place on the peninsula south of Fredericksburg. Company A of the Fifteenth Battalion had been formed in December, 1861; it enlisted for one year and was mustered into the First Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, also known as "Lee's Legion" and afterwards a part of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry.[37] On March 18, 1862, the company, calling itself the "Western Cavalry",[38] reorganized at Montross, Westmoreland County. It was mustered into the newly-formed Fifteenth Battalion, commanded by Major John Critcher, for three years or the war. Throughout this period the company commander was Captain Lucius E. Sandford.[39]

Company B was largely composed of members of the Virginia militia, many of whom had been enrolled in the Forty-first Regiment, from Richmond County. The company was mustered on March 28, 1862, at Farnham Church, under the command of Captain Cyrus Harding, Jr.[40]

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Company abstract cards, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324; Wallace, A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations, pp. 62, 65, 72.

[38] Compiled service record of Samuel L. S. Healey as lieutenant, Co. A, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

[39] Company returns, Fifteenth Battalion, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[40] Ibid.; Wallace, A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations, pp. 73, 290; compiled service record of Carey J. Hall as captain and quartermaster, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

Company C was organized on February 10, 1862, as Captain Mark Arnold's company of Virginia Artillery. The unit apparently enlisted for service as a "local" company and re-enlisted as cavalry for, on April 14, it was mustered into the Fifteenth Battalion to serve for three years or the war.[41]

Company D was assembled about September, 1861, in the vicinity of Farnham Church.[42] As in Company B most, if not all, of its members were from the Forty-first Regiment of Militia. The unit was mustered for one year from November 1, 1861, for "Special Service and Local Defense" in the district of the lower Rappahannock. It was known at the time as Captain George W. Cooke's company of Virginia Infantry, the "Warsaw Guards," and it was assigned to Colonel George E. Pickett's Fifty-fifth Regiment of Virginia Volunteers.[43] Shortly thereafter the unit seems to have become connected with the Fifteenth Battalion, and it was formally mustered at Tappahannock on April 13, 1862.[44]

The Fifteenth Battalion was thus recruited and organized in the same manner as Burroughs' had been. All of the companies were mustered for a term of three years or the war, and included a similar ratio of brothers and cousins per unit. The companies were approximately

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[41]Company returns, Fifteenth Battalion, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[42]Compiled service records of Richard H. Sisson and Alfred F. Yerby as privates, Co. D, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

[43]Wallace, A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations, p. 73.

[44]Company returns as Co. D, Fifteenth Battalion, were submitted by this unit as early as December 31, 1861; Company returns Fifteenth Battalion, Box 537, Record Group 109.

the same size as those in the Fourteenth Battalion; still to begin active duty, Company A reported 113 men present for duty and Company D, with a total enrollment of 72 men in February, gained several men by transfer later in the year.[45]

Except for the common origin of Companies B and D in the Forty-first Militia, however, the units apparently had never seen any service together. As a result they were even less unified when finally assembled. In terms of experience the companies were about equal with those of Burroughs' command, but this is to say merely that they were no more unprepared.

The reorganization of 1862 was described as a "miserable" system by one soldier who saw many capable officers replaced by those who were more lenient or more popular with the men.[46] Another wrote that:

> These elections were general throughout the army, and were regarded as a great political blunder, amounting almost to a crime, . . . The consequences, doubtless, would have been disastrous in the extreme but for the firmness, energy, and good sense of the military commanders.[47]

However grave the consequences, the system did encourage large numbers of men to re-enlist, usually in organized units, who would otherwise probably have left the army. The Confederacy could afford to do nothing else.

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[45]Company returns, Fifteenth Battalion, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[46]Cooke, Wearing of the Gray, p. 103.

[47]R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry in the War Between the States (Richmond: B. F. Johnson Publishing Company, 1899), p. 15.

Such was the background of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Battalions as of May, 1862. In summary, their organization was

Fourteenth Battalion: Burroughs

Company A: Cooper, formerly Doyle
Company B: Bonney, formerly Burroughs
Company C: Capps, formerly Fentress
Company D: Scott

Fifteenth Battalion: Critcher

Company A: Sandford
Company B: Harding
Company C: Arnold
Company D: Cooke

On paper the arrangement was very tidy, and so it must have seemed to the War Department. But these units had been assembled in the field, in preparation for the coming campaigns, and they were gathered from diverse origins, far from the training and supply centers of Richmond. In some instances they were composed of little more than soldiers set on horseback. To be sure, many units were afflicted with the same handicaps. But other circumstances--quality of leadership, assignments to organized commands, and simple good fortune--encouraged the development of these units into reliable combat commands. This was never entirely possible for the Fifteenth Virginia, and to a great extent it was not possible as a result of weaknesses inherited from the battalions already formed.

Among the various individuals who had been brought together in these units there are several whose background, or whose subsequent career, recommends them for particular comment:

John Critcher, aged 41, from Westmoreland County, was perhaps the most prominent. His career included experience as lawyer, senator, and delegate to the Virginia Secession Convention. Critcher

was reared at "Waterview," the two-hundred-year-old family home on the Potomac. He was graduated from the University of Virginia and traveled in Europe for three years. Upon his return he took up farming, became a member of the Virginia bar and a commonwealth attorney, and represented his district in the state senate.[48]

In 1861 Critcher was sent to the Virginia Convention and, sharing the sentiments of his neighbor, Robert E. Lee, went there as a Union delegate. Later, Critcher was appointed to introduce Lee to the convention. As the two men waited in the Capitol rotunda Lee remarked, "If we succeed, will this be the last of secession? May not the Cotton States find reason to secede from us? Will the present line of separation be the permanent one?" Critcher replied that external pressure might bind them together, but always remembered the moment as a warning and a portent.[49]

Critcher had resolved, like Lee, to support his state. He quickly enlisted as a corporal in the Ninth Virginia Cavalry,[50] but little

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[48]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 815-16; David Wolfe Eaton, Historical Atlas of Westmoreland County, Virginia; Patents, Showing How Lands Were Patented from the Crown & Proprietors of the Northern Neck of Virginia, Including Some History of the Patentees, Indians Church & State, Parishes, Ministers, Prominent Men, Surveys, Portraits, Maps, Airplane Views & Other Data (Richmond: The Dietz Press, 1942).

[49]John Critcher, "Secession Convention," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, V (1898), 220-21. The incident was also recorded by Colonel John S. Mosby, who said he heard it from Critcher personally; Charles Wells Russell (ed.), The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby (2d ed.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 379.

[50]G. W. Beale, A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1918), pp. 13, 17; R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, pp. 11-12, 156.

happened during the winter and the manpower crisis of 1862 gave him the opportunity to raise his own command. For several weeks Critcher was busy mustering soldiers from the area around his home. As a politician, his methods seem to have been as persuasive as they were successful, and it requires little effort to imagine him giving the gladhand and backslapping approach to every plowboy within fifty miles. By May he had emerged as a major commanding the Fifteenth Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, the "Northern Neck Rangers."[51]

Major Edgar Burroughs, former captain of Company I, Fifth Virginia Cavalry, was somewhat less prominent but probably better known to the members of his own command. Since 1847 he had been a farmer and Methodist minister in Princess Anne County. Burroughs, at the age of 38, was one of the wealthiest citizens from one of the oldest families in the area.[52] The major, like many of his men, had joined the army in April, 1861, originally as a lieutenant in Fentress' company of the Fifth Virginia.[53]

It was no coincidence that Burroughs' battalion now included representatives of such families as the Cappses, Bonneys, Keelings, and Whitehursts, or that so many of them had re-enlisted from the

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[51]Compiled service records of John Critcher as major, Fifteenth Battalion, and lieutenant colonel, Fifteenth Regiment, Virginia Cavalry, reels 140 and 145, Microcopy 324.

[52]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 775; Lower Norfolk County Antiquary, I (1897), 12; II (1899), 2, 42; III (1901), 130; V (1906), 128, 140-45.

[53]Compiled service record of Edgar Burroughs as lieutenant, Co. A, and captain, Co. I, Fifth Regiment (P.A.), and as major, Fourteenth Battalion, reels 58 and 138, Microcopy 324.

old Fifth Regiment.[54] Burroughs had performed marriages for many of his men, had christened their children and buried their elders. Those of his command who were not related by blood or marriage generally were at least familiar with each other, and that feeling of unity would be a source of strength in the future. Like Critcher, however, Burroughs rose to his position by personal initiative, without benefit of formal military training; in both cases their careers were to constitute a study in the demands of leadership.

In addition to these men, several others are representative of the personnel of the two battalions.

Mark Arnold, former colonel of the Twenty-fifth Regiment, Virginia Militia, and the captain of Company C, Fifteenth Battalion,[55] was a man of local prestige, middle-aged, the owner of a large plantation, and Justice of the Peace for the northern portion of King George County.[56] He too was a logical choice for an officer, commissioned by the Confederacy to provide the same leadership in war that he had exercised in civilian life.

Philip M. Arnold, aged 24, and Thomas T. Arnold, aged 26, were sons of John Arnold of King George Courthouse, former students at the College of William and Mary,[57] and second- and third lieutenants,

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[54]Three members of the Burroughs family and five of the Capps family had enlisted in Fentress' company alone; compiled service records, Fifth Regiment (P.A.), reel 58, Microcopy 324.

[55]Company abstract cards, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[56]Compiled service record of Mark Arnold as captain, Co. C, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

[57]"Register of Students of William and Mary College, 1827-1881," William & Mary Quarterly, Series 2, V (April, 1925), pp. 114-17.

respectively, in Arnold's Company C.[58]

John F. Cooper, former private in Fentress' company and lieutenant in Burroughs' company, was elected captain of Company A, Fourteenth Battalion.[59] A farmer, aged 27, from Elizabeth River parish near Norfolk, he was a man of modest wealth,[60] strong-willed and tenacious, equally aware of his duty and his honor.

James F. Simpson, aged 35, born in Peebles, Scotland, became the commander of Company D, Fourteenth Battalion. Simpson had moved to Pittsburgh with his family in 1854, then gone to Norfolk the following year. Had they remained in Scotland the war might have meant very little. Had they settled in Pennsylvania Simpson might have fought for the Union. But now he was a rebel.[61]

Captain Edward W. Capps, aged 33, of Company C, Fourteenth Battalion, was a bachelor, residing before enlistment at Blossom Hill in Princess Anne County. His association with the regiment was brief but significant.[62]

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[58]Compiled service records of Lieutenants Philip M. Arnold and Thomas T. Arnold, Co. E., reels 138 and 145, Microcopy 324.

[59]Compiled service records of John Cooper, as lieutenant, Co. I, Fifth Regiment (P.A.), and as captain, Co. A, Fourteenth Battalion, and Co. F, Fifteenth Regiment, reels 58, 138 and 139, Microcopy 324.

[60]Lower Norfolk County Antiquary, II (1899), 110.

[61]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1170; compiled service record of James Simpson as lieutenant, Co. I, Fifth Regiment (P.A.), reel 61, Microcopy 324.

[62]Compiled service records of Edward Capps as captain, Co. C, Fourteenth Battalion and Fifteenth Regiment, reels 138 and 139, Microcopy 324.

James Milnor Keeling, aged 17, was a student at Galt's Academy, a descendant of one of the first families of Norfolk, and grandson of Adam Keeling, "lieutenant in the light horse" during the Revolution. Young Keeling left school on March 8, 1862, as the sound of gunfire from the Monitor and Virginia rumbled over Hampton Roads, and soon enlisted in the Chesapeake Cavalry.[63] He yearned for action, and he got it.

Following the reorganization, the routine of duty seems to have changed little in either of the battalions. The companies had been on picket duty around Norfolk and along the Rappahannock, and for the moment they remained at their stations. The area assigned to Burroughs' battalion was part of a line over fifteen miles in length, from Norfolk to the Atlantic coast. Early in May, Companies A and B were at Sewell's Point and Moseley's Church. Company C was stationed, through March and April, near Ocean View, and Company D reported during the same period from Cape Henry Beach.[64]

This region was included in the Department of Norfolk, Major General Benjamin Huger commanding, and it was a scene of much activity as everyone waited for the Yankee invasion. Besides sharing in the picket duty, the cavalry were used as couriers within the department. Company A was assigned temporarily to the Forty-first Virginia Infantry of William A. Mahone's brigade,[65] and it is possible that

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[63]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 977-78.

[64]Company returns, Fourteenth Battalion, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[65]Compiled service record of James G. Martin as private, Co. A, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

such service was performed by the other companies as well. In spare moments the men groomed their mounts, lounged in camp, or drilled. In a war where gentlemen turned themselves into generals, much of this training was makeshift. But talent was readily acknowledged, even in the lowest ranks. In the old Fifth Virginia someone had recognized a latent martial ability in Private James Simpson, and soon the company was toiling through its maneuvers with Simpson as drillmaster.[66] As a company commander he would soon begin drilling his own unit.

Under Huger's care were the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth, and the vital Gosport Navy Yard, in Confederate hands since the war began, and center for much of the Southern shipbuilding. Besides its strategic location at the mouth of Hampton Roads and the James River, the area was the key to that entire region known as the "Southside," extending westward along the James and southward as far as the Dismal Swamp and North Carolina. Across the water lay Fortress Monroe, virtually unassailable, the base for a Federal garrison at the tip of the Richmond-Williamsburg Peninsula. Since March there had been increasing evidence that the next great Northern offensive would be launched from this point. On April 2, General George B. McClellan arrived to lead the advance up the Peninsula. After a month-long seige, Yorktown was evacuated and Johnston's army retired on Richmond, skirmishing at Williamsburg and Eltham's Landing in the first week of May.[67]

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[66]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1170.

[67]For a cogent summary of campaigns, and the political and military strategy behind them, see Vincent J. Esposito (ed.), The West Point Atlas of the Civil War (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962).

By May 8, it was obvious that the position at Norfolk was no longer tenable, and a general evacuation began that day. At the navy yard there was a swarm of activity. The ironclad Virginia was run out of her berth and eventually scuttled, the heavy guns were spiked--William H. Ackiss of Capps' company was one who joined in this work[68]--and the shipyard was set on fire. The couriers also finished their errands; young Horatio C. Hoggard, just turned sixteen and a former student at the Norfolk academy, carried the orders for evacuation to General Mahone.[69]

One of the last soldiers to leave Norfolk was John L. Nash, of Captain Bonney's company. Nash had been in charge of the picket line from Lynnhaven to Cape Henry and was a courier for General Mahone at the time of the evacuation. With his duties finished, and the flames from the navy yard at his back, Nash rode out of town and made his way west. He found the battalion at Suffolk and joined it in time for the march to Petersburg,[70] during which the command seems to have participated in a minor skirmish at City Point.[71]

As the commands from Huger's department arrived in Petersburg they were assembled for duty there, or in the defense of Richmond.[72] Burroughs' battalion was assigned to Junius Daniel's brigade of North Carolina infantry. Company D reported from camp near Petersburg as

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[68]Ibid., p. 693.

[69]Ibid., p. 934.

[70]Ibid., p. 1068.

[71]Ibid., p. 862.

[72]Ibid., pp. 1172-73.

early as May 17,[73] and Company A was posted at Halfway House near Drewry's Bluff.[74]

The battalion may have been called to duty during the battle of Seven Pines, May 31-June 1, but this is not clear. In any case, Private Hoggard again distinguished himself when he and a comrade, William J. Herrick, were on hand to escort eighty-five Federal prisoners into Richmond--an exhilarating task "which they performed without difficulty."[75]

On June 26, Lee opened the Seven Days' Campaign. In a series of battles he maneuvered McClellan out of position and sent him in retreat away from the capital. At 12:00 noon on Sunday, June 29, Daniel's brigade made its entrance into the campaign, crossing the James on the gently undulating span of a pontoon bridge. They joined the remainder of Theophilus H. Holmes' division, with orders to proceed down the River Road and harass the flank of McClellan's army. Marching with the brigade were three companies of Burroughs' battalion, numbering 130 men.[76] By Monday afternoon the division had reached the vicinity of Malvern Hill, where it stumbled onto a line of Yankee infantry and came under a fire from several Federal batteries and some gunboats anchored in the James nearby.

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[73]Compiled service record of Pvt. William R. Leigh, Co. D, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[74]Company abstract cards, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[75]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 934-35, 1172-73.

[76]The missing unit may have been Company C. One writer refers to the battalion as "gallantly uniformed volunteers" but does not cite a source; Clifford Dowdey, The Seven Days: The Emergence of Lee (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), p. 305.

The ground was wooded and uneven. From Holmes' position it sloped upward rather steeply toward the Federal line. The Union guns, about thirty of them, were well placed. When Holmes advanced six pieces of his own they drew a heavy fire, and shells soon began to fall among the rest of the division. Above it all, a cannonade from the gunboats brought huge shells crashing onto the scene. These exploded with a shattering roar, doing little damage but devastating the landscape and raising great fears among the unsteady new command.[77]

Daniel managed to shelter his troops in the shallow depression of the River Road, but the artillery and cavalry were caught in the open. Burroughs received a dispatch to put his men in line on the right of the road, then a second order directing him to move into a field on the left and take up a position in front of the brigade. It was too much and his men lost their nerve; in terms of their contemporaries they "skedaddled," closely followed by the artillery reserve. In their haste the troopers rode into a plank fence and injured some of the infantry who had taken shelter behind it.[78] As the panic spread three of the North Carolina regiments began to waver, but Daniel succeeded in rallying them. He called the affair a "stampede."[79]

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[77]For the reports of Daniel, Wise, Holmes, and others on this engagement see: U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols.; Washington, D. C.: U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XI, part 2, pp. 906-18.

[78]Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command (3 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942-46), I, p. 584.

[79]Report of Col. Junius Daniel on the engagement at Malvern Cliff, Official Records, I, XI, part 2, pp. 913-14.

One of the officers in the division saw the incident, and reported it in droll terms:

> The enemy commenced heavy shelling of the road and of the open fields on its right and left. In a few moments the cavalry . . . wheeled into the field on the left, rode irregularly around that field, and in a short time came rapidly past the infantry in the road, . . .[80]

General Holmes said only that his troops behaved well, "with the exception of Major E. Burroughs' battalion of cavalry and Graham's battery, with a part of Branch's, whose conduct was shameful in the extreme."[81] In all, it had not been a good day.

The division remained in the vicinity until Tuesday. Then, as the rest of the army followed McClellan towards Harrison's Landing, they retired to Drewry's Bluff, marching all night through a drenching rain. The battalion encamped again around Petersburg; Company A returned to its old post at Halfway House,[82] and Companies B and D were garrisoned in Petersburg.[83] The return of casualties in Daniel's brigade was eventually prepared, showing two killed and twenty-two

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[80]Report of Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise on operations, June 30-July 1, 1862, ibid., p. 917.

[81]Report of Maj. Gen. Theophilus Holmes on operations, June 30-July 2, 1862, ibid., p. 907.

[82]Compiled service records of Pvt. David Fentress and Capt. John Cooper, Co. A, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[83]Compiled service records of Pvt. Bennett Land, Co. B, and Pvt. Henry G. Land and Capt. James Scott, Co. D, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

wounded, none of them in Burroughs' battalion.[84] According to one source, however, Captain Simpson was seriously wounded at Malvern Hill;[85] other casualties may have gone unreported.

An investigation of the affair was ordered by Holmes,[86] but no record survives. Except for the disorder it caused, however, the rout of the battalion had had little effect on the course of the battle. Holmes himself dismissed the thought of an attack as "perfect madness"[87] and was satisfied that he could have done little more. Considering the circumstances of a command in its first battle, under heavy fire, and in a defenseless position, the guilt may have fallen no more heavily on Burroughs and his men than on the officers who had so needlessly exposed them.

In the weeks that followed, the companies were generally appraised for further service. Company A, in particular, had enlisted a number of over-aged firebrands who found, after leaving Norfolk, that they were no longer in condition for the rigors of campaigning; they were examined by the surgeon and discharged for

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[84] Official Records, I, XI, part 2, pp. 908, 984.

[85] Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1170.

[86] Official Records, I, XI, part 2, p. 911. While the investigation was mentioned in regard to the artillery, it seems inconceivable that the Fourteenth Battalion was not included.

[87] Report of Maj. Gen. Theophilus Holmes on operations, June 30-July 2, 1862, ibid., p. 908.

disability.[88] By July 22 Burroughs' battalion and Graham's battery both had been reassigned to Robert Ransom's brigade of Daniel Harvey Hill's command.[89]

Soon the battalion was transferred again, this time to James J. Pettigrew's brigade, and was eventually ordered back to the Southside for picket duty. September came, the armies skirmished north into Maryland, and the troops in North Carolina were organized for a holding offensive against the Federal forces in their front. Burroughs was to withdraw his pickets, rendezvous the battalion at Isle of Wight Courthouse on September 21, and march to the river opposite Suffolk for an advance that day. But the preparations were discovered and the Yankees were reported to be in the area in strength; the entire scheme was too far from Petersburg to be supported and seemed too risky at the moment, with most of the army gone. So the expedition was cancelled, with everything about as it had been,[90] and the men settled back into a campaign of harassment and annoyance.

Life was made difficult by the Federal gunboats that continually prowled the rivers. So much of the area was accessible by water that these vessels, gliding through the remote countryside, were a constant danger and a general nuisance to soldiers and civilians alike. James Keeling was stationed along the Blackwater

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[88]Compiled service records of the Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324, passim; Porter, A Record of Norfolk County, pp. 206-09.

[89]Compiled service record of David Fentress as private, Co. A, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324; Official Records, I, XI, part 3, pp. 651-52.

[90]Official Records, I, XVIII, pp. 744-49.

River with several companions one day when they saw three ships approaching. Armed only with shotguns and their "youthful ardor," the troopers opened fire-and were sent scrambling for cover by the shelling in return. Keeling and a friend were buried alive and nearly suffocated before the others pulled them out. But they later found that their Quixotic venture had stung the Navy severely, inflicting a loss of five men killed and several wounded.[91]

With September drawing to a close, requests began to arrive for the recall of Burroughs' battalion. The Secretary of War was asking for the men, and planned to unite them with another battalion in Fredericksburg. The generals in North Carolina were reluctant to part with the command, for cavalry was badly needed in the area and these troopers seem to have made themselves quite useful. But the orders were repeated with more insistence,[92] and the Fourteenth Battalion at last took up its march toward the Army of Northern Virginia.

The record of Critcher's battalion during this period is much less complete. On May 23 Company A was at Camp Harrison, still serving, apparently, as part of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry.[93] Company B was

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[91]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 977-78.

[92]Official Records, I, XVIII, pp. 749-52, 845-46.

[93]Compiled service record of Pvt. Gerrard Sanford, Co. A, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324. Camp Harrison seems to have been near Tappahannock. A Quartermaster's reimbursement to Lt. Samuel Healy of Co. A was dated on May 5 at Camp Young in Henrico County, but it is uncertain whether the entire company or only Lt. Healy were there at the time. (Compiled service record of Samuel L. Healy as lieutenant, Co. A, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.).

stationed during April, and possibly longer, at Bowling Green.[94] Companies C and D had been mustered at Fredericksburg and Tappahannock in mid-April, and probably remained near their camps. By May 1 Company D had also moved to Bowling Green.[95] Although the companies seem to have been concentrating south of Fredericksburg, no cohesive pattern emerges from their movements. It is impossible to state whether the companies were drawn together or whether this fragmentation of assignments continued through the summer, but it seems likely that while the men remained near the Rappahannock they divided their time between training and picket duty, in the same manner as Burroughs' battalion.

By July 1 Companies A and D were reporting from Richmond,[96] and Company B was in the area a week later.[97] On July 5 Critcher's battalion was ordered to report for duty directly to General Robert E. Lee.[98] The next day Critcher was ordered to report to General Jeb Stuart on the Salem Road, near Charles City Courthouse, as soon as possible. On July 10 Stuart assigned the battalion to duty with the First Virginia Cavalry, and Critcher reported to Colonel Fitzhugh Lee that evening.[99]

On July 20 and 21 some of Critcher's men accompanied a squadron of the First Virginia in a reconnaissance around Verdon, and scouted

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[94]Company returns, Fifteenth Battalion, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[95]*Ibid*.

[96]*Ibid*.

[97]Compiled service record of John P. Pillsbury as lieutenant, Co. B, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

[98]*Official Records*, I, LI, part 2, p. 587.

[99]*Ibid*., pp. 587-89.

toward Bowling Green. Several days later a company of the Fifteenth Battalion picketed in front of John B. Hood's brigade on the Brooke Turnpike, near the Brooke River and the Chickahominy Bridge.[100]

It is impossible to determine whether the rest of the battalion was still assigned to the First Virginia by this time; it is quite possible that they were not. Through most of the summer the command was assigned to provost duty in Richmond.[101] There was much need in the capital for guards, couriers, and police, and this was, in a sense, a legitimate cavalry assignment. But the duty was soft; it made the troopers careless and robbed their companies of the morale so requisite to the development of effective combat command. When Critcher's men returned to active service their performance would leave much to be desired.

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[100] Ibid., I, XII, part 2, pp. 99-101; ibid., I, XI, part 3, p. 666.

[101] Ibid., I, XIX, part 2, pp. 163-64.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF A REGIMENT

Fifty miles to the north the Second Battle of Manassas was ending. Major General Gustavus Woodson Smith, commanding the Department of Richmond, was anxious for the security of the city. With reports of the battle still unconfirmed he decided to order a reconnaissance.

The instructions were very precise; dated August 31, they directed Captain Arnold, of Critcher's battalion, to take six men and scout the approaches around Fredericksburg. Arnold was to leave his men along the route as relays to glean information from the countryside and transmit messages back to Smith. Arnold himself was to ride as close to the Federal lines as safety might permit, and learn from the people "whatever may be known of the enemy's position, force and designs."[102]

It was a task made more difficult by heavy rains that fell on the 31st. But as he nerved himself to approach the town, the captain discovered that the roads were clear and the enemy gone. One company was already in the vicinity of Bethlehem Church, on the

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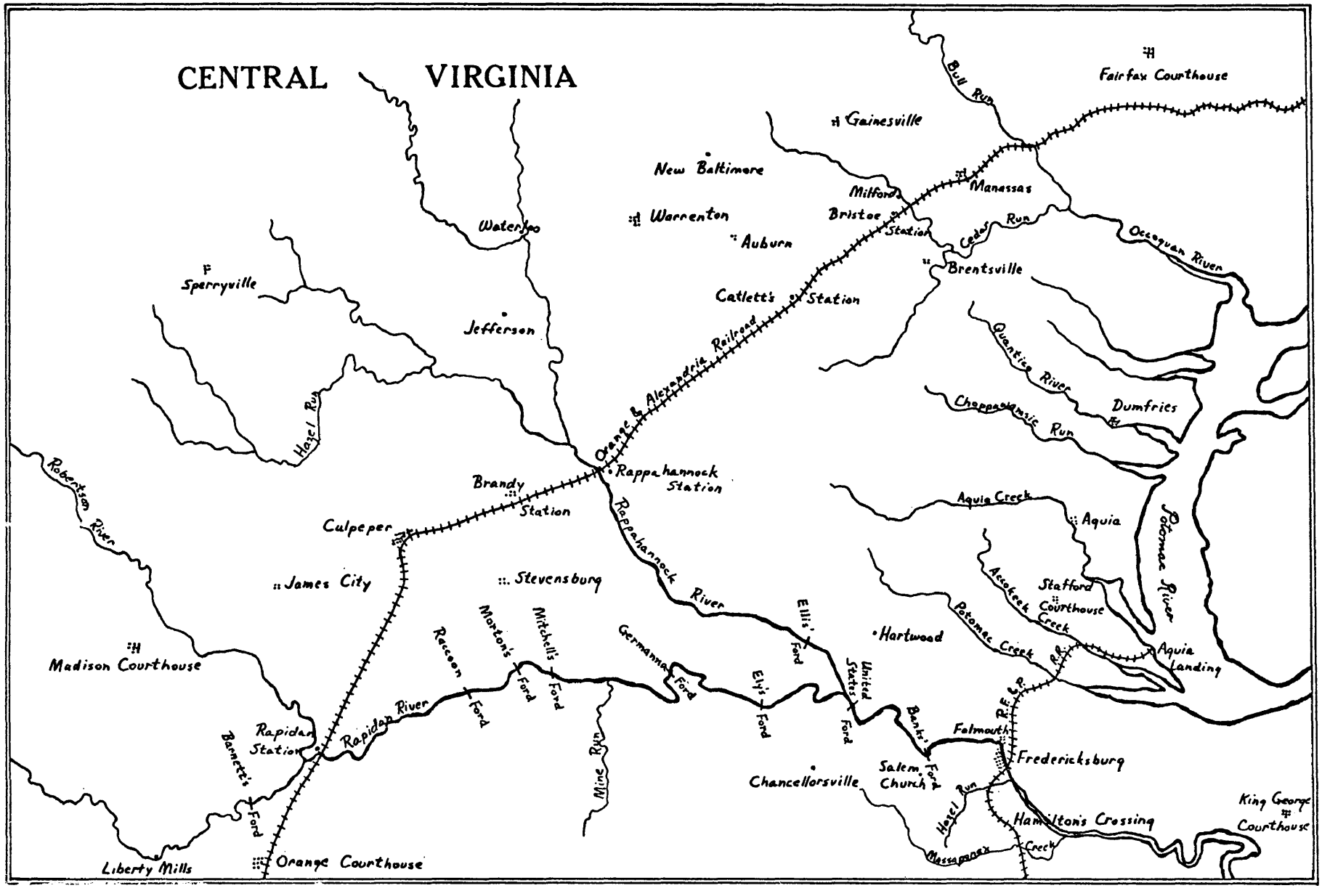
[102]Maj. Samuel Melton to Arnold, Aug. 31, 1862, in the compiled service record of Mark Arnold as captain, Co. C, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324. See also Official Records, I, XII, part 3, p. 948.


CENTRAL VIRGINIA
Fairfax Courthouse
Bull Run
Gainesville
New Baltimore
Manassas
Milford
Bristoe Station
Warrenton
Auburn
Waterloo
Cedar Run
Occoquan River
Brentsville
Sperryville
Catlett's Station
Jefferson
Orange & Alexandria Railroad
Quantico River
Dumfries
Chopawamsic Run
Hazel Run
Rappahannock Station
Brandy Station
Rappahannock River
Aquia Creek
Aquia
Potomac River
Culpeper
Robertson River
James City
Stevensburg
Accotink Creek
Stafford Courthouse
Potomac Creek
Hartwood
Aquia Landing
Madison Courthouse
Morton's Ford
Mitchell's Ford
Ellis' Ford
Germanna Ford
Raccoon Ford
Ely's Ford
United States Ford
Banks' Ford
Falmouth
Fredericksburg
Rapidan River
Rapidan Station
Barnett's Ford
Mine Run
Chancellorsville
Salem Church
Hazel Run
Hamilton's Crossing
King George Courthouse
Massaponax Creek
Liberty Mills
Orange Courthouse

southern flank of Longstreet's corps, and had lost one man wounded in a skirmish at Eagle Gold Mines.[103] Within a day or two the other companies of Critcher's battalion had established their headquarters at Fredericksburg,[104] beginning a vigil that would last for the greater part of a year.

The men found themselves in an enviable situation. As the first troops into town they were greeted with shouts of rejoicing and welcomed by ladies waving handkerchiefs along the route. After the men had encamped, near Hazel Run, the ladies treated them to a breakfast of hot rolls, beefsteak, and coffee.[105] It was a quiet assignment. Fredericksburg was virtually home for the battalion, and after a few days it seemed that the war would be carried into the North, perhaps as far away as Pennsylvania.

The immediate commander in the area had been Colonel John R. Chambliss, of the Thirteenth Virginia Cavalry, on duty with Stuart's division. When Chambliss was recalled to Culpeper on September 11, his assignment passed to Critcher with orders that enlarged the responsibilities of the Fifteenth Battalion. The men were to picket the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers and scout toward Culpeper in order to maintain contact with Chambliss. They were to care for the property in Fredericksburg, and Critcher was to communicate

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[103]Roster of Co. D, April 30-July 1, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[104]Company returns, Fifteenth Battalion, ibid.

[105]S. J. Quinn, The History of the City of Fredericksburg Virginia (Richmond: The Hermitage Press, Inc., 1908), pp. 82-83; John T. Goolrick, Historic Fredericksburg: The Story of an Old Town (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1922), p. 38.

"promptly and freely"[106] with Chambliss and Smith, with his dispatches to be forwarded to General Lee-- a liaison that clearly suggested the continuing importance of the town and its garrison.

On the same day, though the news probably was not received until later, occurred an act of greater significance. In section 13 of Special Orders 213, the War Department directed that:

> The four companies of cavalry under Lieut. Col. John Critcher, the four companies under Maj. Edgar Burroughs, and the single companies under Captains [H. S.] Norfleet and A. W. Gantt will be consolidated into and form the Fifteenth Regiment Virginia Cavalry, under the following officers: Col. William B. Ball, Lieut. Col. John Critcher, and Major Burroughs. . . .[107]

That was a sentence to be read and pondered. As a matter of administrative routine, another regiment of cavalry was being assembled for the Confederate service. But the orders meant other things as well: another period of reorganization, the matching of unfamiliar companies into new squadrons, the establishment of junior and senior captaincies, staff positions to be filled, and much else. To effect the creation of a regiment, that sentence would touch upon the careers of proud men and the lives of humble men, and it would shape the future of them all. It would also demand that a certain group of officers give substance and leadership to an organization that had thus far been created only on paper.

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[106]Col. John R. Chambliss to Critcher, Sept. 11, 1862, Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 618.

[107]Special Orders, No. 213, Sept. 1[illegible], 1862, ibid.

Of the separate companies mentioned in the order, Norfleet's was later assigned to the First Battalion, Georgia Partisan Rangers, and never served with the Fifteenth Virginia.[108]

Captain Gantt's command had been raised around Charlottesville and was originally mustered as Company H in Fitzgerald's Regiment of Light Artillery.[109] The organization of the regiment was never completed, however, and Gantt's company was transferred to the cavalry on July 1.[110] For several weeks the unit remained at Camp Lee in Richmond while its members worked to procure cavalry mounts.[111] On August 9 the men were mustered for three years or the war;[112] by September they were considered ready for service and soon were assigned to the Fifteenth Virginia.

William Ball, aged 46, who had been appointed colonel of the regiment, was a resident of Midlothian, Virginia, near Richmond, and a scion of the prestigious Ball family. Since before the war he had commanded a unit known as the "Chesterfield Light Dragoons," originally formed during the 1790's and later Company B of the

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[108]Company abstract cards, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[109]Compiled service record of Capt. Albert Gantt, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[110]Company abstract cards, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[111]Compiled service record of Sgt. Robert A. Thurmond, Co. B, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[112]Roster of Co. B, Aug. 11, 1862, Box 537, Record Group 109.

Fourth Virginia Cavalry.[113] The troop was one of the first state units to reach Richmond after the war began, and paraded some sixty men in Capitol Square on April 21, 1861.[114] At the battle of Leesburg[115] Ball led a troop under Colonel W. H. Jenifer and was commended for his coolness under fire, as well as for the fine example he had given the men. "Too much praise cannot be given to Colonel [Eppa] Hunton and Captain Ball for the manner in which they managed their respective commands," Jenifer wrote.[116] By November Ball was serving as quartermaster for Stuart's cavalry brigade, and was again commended for his "boldness" and "valuable assistance" in a skirmish near Falls Church.[117] By February 1 he had risen to the post of lieutenant colonel in the Third Virginia Cavalry.[118] When the Fifteenth Regiment was formed, Ball was an auspicious choice for colonel over two proud and possibly difficult battalion commanders. Equally important, he possessed the requisites of a good cavalryman: he was enterprising, personally heroic, and bold to the point of audacity. Yet his very presence in the field soon

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[113]Compiled service record of Col. William Ball, reel 138, Microcopy 324; see also: compiled service record as captain, Co. B, Fourth Virginia Cavalry, reel 38, Microcopy 324.

[114]Francis Earle Lutz, Chesterfield: An Old Virginia County (Richmond: William Byrd Press, Inc., 1954), pp. 145, 217, 222-23, 230-31.

[115]Otherwise known, by coincidence, as Ball's Bluff.

[116]Report of Col. W. H. Jenifer, commanding cavalry, Oct. 28, 1861, Official Records, I, V, p. 371.

[117]Report of Maj. William T. Martin, Nov. 16, 1861, ibid., p. 440. Joseph Dorst Patch, The Battle of Ball's Bluff (Leesburg, Virginia: Potomac Press, 1958), pp. 66, 72, 77-81.

[118]Compiled service record of Col. William Ball, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

aggravated the illness that would remove him from command.

It had been the President's prerogative to appoint certain officers in the new regiment. One such position was that of adjutant, bestowed upon an intrepid volunteer from Louisiana, Lieutenant Allan C. Dickinson. Dickinson had been in the service since the earliest days of the war. He first enlisted under Roberdeau Wheat in the "Old Dominion Guards," a collection of the best and worst of New Orleans society. When Wheat's company was enlarged into a battalion Dickinson was appointed adjutant.[119] The tiny command, already gaining notice as the "Louisiana Tigers," was one of the first to be engaged at Manassas, where it fought for time against the onset of Ambrose E. Burnside's division. The battalion was decimated and Dickinson soon became a casualty, though not before Wheat had witnessed his courage; "Lieutenant Dickinson," he wrote, "was wounded while gallantly carrying my orders through a heavy fire of musketry."[120] The wound evidently left Dickinson incapable of service in a dismounted command. With the close of winter it was necessary to resign his commission in the Tigers,[121] but the lieutenant soon was serving on the staff of General John B. Magruder and was commended for his "good service" during the Seven

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[119]Compiled service record of Lt. Allan C. Dickinson as staff officer, C.S.A., Record Group 109; Andrew B. Booth (comp.), Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers and Louisiana Confederate Commands (New Orleans, 1920), II, 627.

[120]Quoted in Charles L. Dufour, Gentle Tiger: The Gallant Life of Roberdeau Wheat (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), pp. 147-148.

[121]Compiled service record of Lt. Allan Dickinson as staff officer, C. S. A.

Days' campaign.[122] When Magruder left the army Dickinson was again unattached, and he submitted a request for a commission in the cavalry or artillery.[123] In time a position was offered, and Dickinson's acceptance put him in Colonel Ball's regiment. Thereafter he would fight with the Virginians.

Circumstances soon brought another young man to the regiment. He was Elijah S. Johnson, twenty-two years old, a farmboy from Albemarle County. Since April, 1861, he had been a member of the "Black Eagle Rifles," known more formally as Company E, Eighteenth Virginia Infantry.[124] After passing through the Peninsula campaign Elijah was wounded on September 14, apparently at the Battle of South Mountain. A few weeks later he too was transferred to the cavalry, to Company B of the Fifteenth Virginia, in which several of his brothers already were serving.[125]

Private Johnson is worthy of notice for two reasons. In several ways he typifies the rank and file of his regiment, and it is not unreasonable to regard him as their archetype. He also bestirred himself to keep a diary, thus creating the most extensive single

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[122]Report of Maj. Gen. John B. Magruder, Aug. 12, 1862, Official Records, I, XI, part 2, p. 673.

[123]Compiled service record of Lt. Allan Dickinson as staff officer, C. S. A.

[124]Compiled service record of Elijah S. Johnson as private, Co. E, Eighteenth Virginia Infantry, Record Group 109.

[125]Ibid.; compiled service record as private, Co. B, Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

document on the Fifteenth Virginia to survive the war. This was no more fortunate for posterity than for himself, however, for on a violent Sunday morning a few months hence, in a field not far from his home, that diary would help to save Elijah Johnson's life.

Captain William G. Brawner, aged 30, was a resident of Prince William County. He had been a delegate to the Virginia Secession Convention,[126] and may have served as a civilian guide for General Pierre Beauregard during the Manassas campaign.[127] Later, he organized a company of partisans from Prince William County known as the "Chincapin Rangers." The unit was mustered independently on September 29, 1862, near Orange Courthouse,[128] then assigned to the Fifteenth Virginia in place of Norfleet's company.

Circumstances soon would bring to the regiment its most distinguished officer. Charles Read Collins, aged 24, was a native of New Brighton, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh. He had entered the United States Military Academy in 1854 and excelled in his classwork, improving steadily until his graduation as third in a class of twenty-two, whose best-known member was Joseph Wheeler. In his final year Collins stood third in Ordnance and Gunnery, third in Cavalry Tactics, second in Infantry Tactics, and first in Artillery Tactics.[129]

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[126] Writers' Program, Virginia, Prince William: The Story of its People and its Places (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1941), pp. 47-48.

[127] Official Records, I, II, p. 446. Among others, Beauregard thanked a Mr. Brawner for his assistance.

[128] Muster roll, Co. H, Sept. 29, 1862, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[129] Academic record of Cadet Charles Read Collins, United States Military Academy archives, West Point, New York.

At West Point Collins was "much beloved and admired."[130] He rose in rank from corporal and sergeant major to adjutant of the battalion of cadets,[131] and was commissioned upon graduation as brevet second lieutenant in the Corps of Topographical Engineers--a small and select organization concerned with the taking of surveys and the preparation of the army's maps and plans.[132] He was assigned to duty in Washington, D. C., until early in 1861, when he was ordered to Texas with despatches for the garrisons at Indianola and San Antonio.[133] He then served on mustering duty in Elmira, New York, until June.[134]

For several weeks after war was declared, Collins struggled with his conscience. He had sworn allegiance to the United States, and had promised to defend the laws of the nation "against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever."[135] As a West Pointer he was taught to live by the demands of Duty, Honor, and Country--a code broad enough to be

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[130]Ellsworth Eliot, Jr., West Point in the Confederacy (New York: G. A. Baker & Co., Inc., 1941), p. 317.

[131]Post Order Book No. 4, pp. 210, 215, 415-16, 443, 477; Post Order Book No. 5, pp. 50, 74, 151, 171, 250, 276-77, U. S. Military Academy archives.

[132]One specimen of Collins' work as draftsman survives: "Geological Profiles near the routes followed and explored by Capt. J. H. Simpson T.E. USA through Kansas, Nebraska and Utah 1858-59 by H. Engelmann Oct. 1860," Headquarters Map File, Miscellaneous, 120-17, Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Record Group 77, National Archives.

[133]Official Records, I, I, pp. 550-52, 588; ibid., I, LIII, p. 488; ibid., II, I, pp. 23-25.

[134]George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. From its Establishment, in 1802, to 1890 with the Early History of the United States Military Academy (3d ed., rev.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891), II, 716.

[135]Oath of allegiance of Cadet Charles R. Collins, Feb. 15, 1855, U. S. Military Academy archives.

used by many to justify their support of secession. Still, why should he forsake a certain career for the hazards of rebellion?

Finally, and "only after the greatest hesitation,"[136] Collins resigned. His wife was a Virginian,[137] and this, with whatever opinions he may have formed about Southern rights, was enough to decide his career. In June he submitted his resignation,[138] and a month later was in Richmond making formal application for a commission in the Confederate Army.[139]

On July 23 Collins was commissioned a first lieutenant of artillery. He gained experience from a variety of line and staff appointments that followed, and for several months he served as captain of engineers in charge of the fortifications at Wilmington, North Carolina.[140] Upon the request of Colonel Ball, late in 1862, Collins joined the Fifteenth Virginia as a field officer.[141]

In appearance, Charles Collins was remarkably handsome. His attire was impeccable. "He was always dressed as if he were going

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[136]Eliot, West Point in the Confederacy, p. 317.

[137]Luther W. Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox: A Boy's View (2d ed. rev.: Baltimore: Fleet-McGinley Co., 1911), p. 152.

[138]Collins' resignation is in Letters Received, 1861-1870, Records of the Adjutant General's Office (Record Group 94), reel 11, Microcopy 619, National Archives. The resignation was offered on June 2, 1861, and accepted on June 10.

[139]Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[140]Official Records, I, V, pp. 1032-33; ibid., I, XI, part 1, pp. 989-94; ibid., I, XI, part 2, pp 839, 841-43; ibid., I, XVIII, p. 756; ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 654.

[141]Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

to a reception," one soldier recalled. "His complexion was as fair as a woman's. His hair was light. He habitually wore a clean white collar and a bright new uniform. . . ," something, the man added, that was extraordinary among soldiers on campaign.[142] His Northern background notwithstanding, Collins soon earned the respect of the regiment, and within weeks after his arrival this stripling from the Regular Army had become its commanding officer.

In the meantime, the orders of consolidation were greeted with something less than enthusiasm by the officers of the Fourteenth Battalion. On September 23 Major Burroughs tendered his resignation; in this and a subsequent letter he gave "family affliction" and "ill health" as the reasons for his action.[143] On the same day Captain Bonney also submitted his resignation,[144] closely followed by those of Captain Scott,[145] and of Scott's second lieutenant, Cary Williamson.[146] In each instance the papers were accompanied by a surgeon's certificate of disability. In the case of Captain Bonney, in particular, the

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[142]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 153.

[143]Resignations dated Sept. 23 and Oct. 17, 1862, in compiled service record of Maj. Edgar Burroughs, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[144]Compiled service record of Capt. Wilson Bonney, Co. I, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[145]Compiled service records of James Scott as captain, Co. C, Fourteenth Battalion, and Co. K, Fifteenth Regiment, Virginia Cavalry, reels 138 and 144, Microcopy 324.

[146]Compiled service records of Cary Williamson as lieutenant, Co. C, Fourteenth Battalion, and Co. K, Fifteenth Regiment, reels 138 and 144, Microcopy 324.

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claim seems to have been quite valid; the captain explained in detail how he had entered the service against the advice of his friends and had continued until there was no chance of fulfilling his duties. "My desire to serve my Country is as strong as ever," he wrote, "but my shattered Constitution forces me reluctantly to request that you will give my case your early attention & favorable consideration."[147]

Yet the element of time casts a dubious light on some, if not all, of these actions. The approach of winter seems to have been less of a consideration than the pending consolidation. While physical infirmities did indeed afflict many soldiers, the resignations that accompanied the consolidation of the battalion leave a lingering suspicion that promotions or an independent command were more important to these men than the interests of the service. In any case, the departure of these men cleared the way for promotion of Lieutenants James Simpson and Virginius Pitts to the rank of captain. Both were capable men, and would lead their companies well.

The battalion finally returned to Petersburg, then moved to Richmond in mid-October. With Captain Cooper in immediate command, and Colonel Ball apparently near at hand, the companies remained in camp for several days. In part it was necessary to refit them; one officer submitted, for example, that his men were without blankets and that their tents were "perfectly rotten."[148] In addition,

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[147]Resignation, dated Sept. 23, 1862, in compiled service record of Capt. Wilson Bonney, Co. I, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[148]Compiled service record of Capt Virginius Pitts, Co. K, reel 143, Microcopy 324. A similar shortage existed in the Fifteenth Battalion; Harding's company, with seventy men, possessed only three tents. Compiled service record of Cyrus Harding as captain, Co. B, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

Colonel Ball had been directed to report to General Henry A. Wise at Chaffin's Bluff,[149] and it seems that the companies in Richmond were needed for scouting and picket duty down the Peninsula. On November 4 a large expedition was sent toward Williamsburg, and a contingent from the Fifteenth lost a lieutenant captured and another man killed in an encounter with the Fifth Pennsylvania Cavalry.[150] Not until November 8 did any of the companies succeed in joining their companions at Fredericksburg, and all the units may not have arrived for several more days.

In the meantime, the armies had fought to a standstill at Sharpsburg and the Confederates had retired to the vicinity of Winchester. Beyond the area controlled by Lee's army a military vacuum existed, and in the absence of any knowledge of the enemy's intentions it was vitally necessary to know what was happening. On September 30 General Smith asked Critcher to send a company to scout between his present right and the head of the York River, thus connecting with the troops on the Pamunkey and completing a cordon of pickets across northern Virginia from the Shenandoah Valley to the Tidewater. "Let me hear from you," Smith added.[151]

On October 23 General Lee praised Colonel Chambliss, commanding the forces on the Rappahannock, for his attention to the area north of the river. "I am pleased to find that your scouts are so close to the

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[149] Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 637.

[150] Ibid., part 1, pp. 926-27.

[151] Maj. Gen. G. W. Smith to Critcher, Sept. 30, 1862, ibid., part 2, p. 631.

enemy," Lee wrote, "and if your troops are bold and alert in the discharge of their duty, which I have no doubt they will be, the enemy can make no move of importance without its being discovered."[152] It seemed that the surveillance was working, and effective.[153]

Still, the mere posting of vedettes along the Rappahannock was usually neither dangerous nor demanding. Though the Fifteenth Regiment had been assigned to duty so far away from the capital it, as well as the troops under Chambliss, remained attached to the Department of Richmond.[154] It thus escaped the disciplinary atmosphere of Richmond or the army; except for John Critcher, there was virtually no officer responsible for the conduct of the companies in the field.

So the men relaxed, and some of them became careless. If a man dozed on picket duty or slipped away for a visit home, the chances were that Colonel Critcher would understand. After all, the boys were his constituents, and after the war many of them would be casting their first votes. As a disciplinarian, John Critcher seems to have been something less than severe.

The weather was cold on November 8, and snow covered the ground. Captain Simpson's company arrived at camp that evening and some of the

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[152]Gen. R. E. Lee to Chambliss, Oct. 23, 1862, ibid., I, XIX, part 2, p. 678.

[153]Official Records, I, XIX, part 2, pp. 633-34, 640-42, 689, 694-95, 704-05.

[154]Col. Mark M. Boatner draws a distinction between the "Department of Henrico" (or Richmond), then under the command of Gen. J. H. Winder, and the "Defences of Richmond," under Gen. Smith. The area under Smith was much larger, and included as many troops as a small army. (Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1962.).

men found shelter with families about town. Others camped in a lot behind the Citizens' Hall.

Early the next morning a squadron of Federal cavalry rode into Falmouth. They were detached from the First Indiana and Sixth Ohio--160 men in all--and they were led by the vain and impetuous Captain Ulric Dahlgren. Twenty-four hours earlier Dahlgren had left the Union army at Gainesville with orders to scout the position at Fredericksburg. A bank of snow clouds hung over the town, and the Rappahannock was swollen from the recent snowfall. Carefully, and by a long-forgotten ford, the Indiana company picked their way across the river. Aided by a deserter, they captured the pickets outside of Fredericksburg and proceeded to surprise the garrison in town.[155]

Dahlgren led his men down Main Street at a walk, while citizens gaped in surprise. A party rode ahead and scattered some of Simpson's men who were gathering in front of the Citizens' Hall. There was a short pursuit and the Yankees came clattering back, pursued by another, larger group of rebels. Near the depot and the old hospital, where Critcher had his headquarters, there was sudden confusion. Dahlgren's men had found them and were charging with a great flourish of sabres. Critcher's men scrambled for their horses and barely managed to mount them. They fought the Yankees briefly, clubbing several from the saddle

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[155]This account is a summary of several rather contradictory sources. Dahlgren's report and records of a Confederate court of inquiry are in Official Records, I, XIX, part 2, pp. 162-64. A lengthier version is in John A. Dahlgren, Memoir of Ulric Dahlgren (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1872), pp. 92-116. An extract, and replies by Critcher and a Mr. J. H. Kelly of Fredericksburg, are in Southern Historical Society Papers, III (1877), 87-90.

and blasting at others with shotguns. Critcher tried to rally his men at this point but failed completely; the regiment scattered, leaving some thirty prisoners, several dozen horses, a flag, and two wagon loads of gray cloth. In the personal accounting that followed, Dahlgren found that he had lost a hat and bent a spur in the scuffle--little things mattered a great deal.[156]

In town the Yankees reportedly were busy robbing the stores, shouting to the townspeople that the Democrats had swept the elections in the North and that England and France had recognized the Confederacy.[157] When they attempted to clear the side streets they found rebels swarming all around them. Some of Critcher's men who formed a line of battle in a field adjoining the town were charged and routed. Simpson's troopers managed to recapture Critcher's men from their escort, however, while others found the ford where Dahlgren had crossed and held it long enough to discourage the Sixth Ohio from joining the fight. Still another contingent of the Fifteenth had retreated down the Richmond Road across Hazel Run, and was now returning.

On the heights above Fredericksburg, in what was presumably a rather dark mood, John Critcher was preparing to salvage the day. By all appearances there were not many Yankees in town, and it was

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[156] A rather dramatic illustration, drawn by F. O. C. Darley soon after the event, was published by J. McClure of New York, under the title "Cavalry Charge, Fredericksburg, November 9th, 1862." (Dahlgren, Memoir of Ulric Dahlgren, p. 115.)

[157] J. B. Jones, A Confederate War Clerk's Diary at the Confederate States Capital. (2 vols.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1866), II, 186-87.

annoying that they had been so successful. The sound of firing told him that Simpson's men, and even some of the bolder citizens, were busy sniping at the enemy.

At about the same time, Dahlgren was growing more cautious. He thought he saw a squadron of cavalry approaching from the south, drew in his men for a pause, and soon decided to force a passage back to the ford. Along the route some more troopers, probably Simpson's were waiting in a factory by the side of the road. Dahlgren shouted to them that his men would burn the place if anyone fired, and the threat was successful. The men held their fire while the Yankees hurried past.[158] Presently, Critcher got his men started after the Yankees. The commands splashed across the river into Falmouth, and the pursuit spread into the countryside for several miles.

The losses on both sides were slight. A Yankee had been killed at a street corner, and some of the townspeople came out to gawk. Upon his return, Critcher let it be known that the men had behaved very gallantly.[159] In gratitude, some ladies presented a flag and the Scottish colors to Simpson's company.[160]

In terms of men and supplies, Dahlgren's raid had accomplished very little. Indeed, on his way back Dahlgren had followed the railroad line toward Aquia Creek and had burned two bridges that the

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[158]Dahlgren, Memoir of Ulric Dahlgren, p. 98.

[159]Southern Historical Society Papers, III (1877), 90.

[160]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1170.

Yankees hoped to use.[161] Still, his crossing revealed that the town was occupied by a very small force, and this knowledge helped determine the course of the campaign that was soon to begin.

The incident was highly embarassing to Critcher. He explained that his command was scattered from West Point, on the York River, to various fords on the Rappahannock as far as thirty miles above Fredericksburg, and that the men were armed only "with such guns as each man could provide."[162]

> Our position in town and our weakness were well known to the surrounding country, and of course to the deserter. When the attack was made by Dahlgren on our camp, he found but a few sick and disabled men, with the usual employees of the quartermaster and commissary, and perhaps a few others. . . . So that, knowing our position and our weakness as he must have done, and as he could have learned from any one along the road or at Falmouth, the exploit of this youthful hero, though very creditable to him, seems not so distinguished by its boldness or success.[163]

Others were not so easily satisfied. Rumors began to spread that the raid had been "unresisted."[164] At length, a court of inquiry was ordered, to be composed of Colonel Williams C. Wickham of the Fourth Virginia, Major Thomas Waller of the Ninth Virginia, and Captain G. B. Cuthbert of the Second South Carolina. In solemn terms the members

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[161] Official Records, I, XIX, part 2, pp. 163, 567-68.

[162] John Critcher in Southern Historical Society Papers, III, (1877), 89.

[163] Ibid.

[164] General Orders, No. 9, Dept. of Northern Virginia, Jan. 24, 1863, Official Records, I, XIX, part 2, p. 164.

delivered their decision:

> that there was great negligence on the part of the pickets in allowing a surprise; that there was an absolute want of discipline, if not want of courage, evinced upon the part of the men of the then Fifteenth Battalion; that the officers seemed to have done their duty in trying to get the men to stand, but utterly failed.
>
> Captain Simpson's command acted very well in attacking the rear guard of the Yankees, and driving them back . . . Some excuse for the conduct of Colonel Critcher's command can be found in the fact that it had nearly, during the whole period of its organization, been engaged in provost duty in Richmond, the most demoralizing of all cavalry duty; that its equipment was very indifferent, and that, when relieved of provost duty, the amount of labor put upon it was such as effectually to prevent the commander from putting it in a state of discipline. The behavior of these troops upon this occasion grew, doubtless, out of a panic, which, under such circumstances, might, and in all probability would, affect any raw and undisciplined troops.[165]

As if to confirm this picture, two deserters from the regiment were taken into the Federal lines during this period. There had been no rations for three weeks, they claimed, and for the past three days they had lived on persimmons and berries. The horses were in "wretched" condition and some of the troopers were grumbling about their pay, which was six months in arrears.[166] With due regard for the tales a deserter might tell, their comments portray the effects of inadequate supplies, faulty administration, and ineffective discipline.

The findings of the board were accepted by General Lee, however, and no further action was ordered.[167] As usual, he was anxious to

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[165] Ibid.

[166] Brig. Gen. Alfred Pleasonton to Maj. Gen. John G. Parke, Dec. 5, 1862, Official Records, I, XXI, p. 831.

[167] Official Records, I, XIX, part 2, p. 164.

have the incident forgotten as quickly as possible, trusting that the lesson had already been learned.

The day after the raid, though the timing seems largely a matter of coincidence, the regiment was finally taken out of the Department of Richmond and assigned to William H. F. Lee's brigade. Stuart's entire command had been reorganized, and the Fifteenth was brigaded with the Fifth, Ninth, and Tenth Virginia, and the Second North Carolina Cavalry.[168]

In what was probably a more direct result of Dahlgren's exploit, Colonel Ball came to Fredericksburg to assume personal command. With his obligations to Smith concluded, the colonel seems to have come up from Richmond and taken charge of matters by November 14,[169] establishing headquarters in the commodious Farmers' Bank, in Fredericksburg.[170] Within a week after Dahlgren's raid--indeed on the first day that Ball is known to have been in command--the four companies of Critcher's battalion were issued supplies at Fredericksburg.[171] The units finally were being drawn together and organized, and the relative abundance of material given them suggests the paucity in which the men had found themselves at the time of Dahlgren's attack.

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[168] Ibid., pp. 712-13.

[169] Ibid., I, XVIII, p. 777.

[170] Benson J. Lossing, Pictorial History of the Civil War in the United States of America (3 vols.;vol. 1, Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1866; vols. 2 and 3, Hartford: T. Belknap, 1868), II, 486.

[171] Compiled service records of Captains Mark Arnold, Co. E, George Cooke, Co. G, Cyrus Harding, Co. D, and Lucius Sandford, Co. A, reels 138, 139, and 145, Microcopy 324.

If the situation was being remedied, it was not without a few ludicrous moments. Captain Arnold's efforts to see his men armed had to proceed through proper forms; a requisition for some ammunition was concluded by a lofty piece of bureaucratic fussiness, and countered by an answer of impeccable simplicity:

> I certify that the above requisition is Correct and that the Articles specified are absolutely requisite for the public service, rendered so by the following circumstances.
>
> "My Company has no ammunition."[172]

At some point during this period the various captains' commissions were compared and the new designation of their companies was determined. In a long-standing regiment of regulars, an officer's term of service might have a real bearing on his experience as a unit commander. Thus it was only logical that the senior captain commanded the senior company--Company A--while the next senior captains commanded the next senior companies, and so on. In a regiment of volunteers this hierarchy was much less valid, since the difference in service might be only a day or two. One regiment settled the problem by assigning its companies according to their proficiency in drill on a certain date.[173] In the Fifteenth the result was a complete scrambling of the former battalion organizations. The seniority was established as:

Company A: Captain Lemuel Sandford

Company B: Captain Albert Gantt

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[172]Special requisition, Nov. 14, 1862, in compiled service record of Capt. Mark Arnold, Co. E, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[173]James H. Kidd, Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman (Ionia, Michigan: Sentinel Printing Co., 1908), p. 47.

Company C: Captain Edward Capps

Company D: Captain Cyrus Harding, Jr.

Company E: Captain Mark Arnold, Jr.

Company F: Captain John Cooper

Company G: Captain George Cooke

Company H: Captain William Brawner

Company I: Captain James Simpson

Company K: Captain Virginius Pitts
(promoted to replace Captain Wilson Bonney)

According to regulations the place of each company in line of battle was determined by the rank of its captain. Through a complex arrangement the two senior companies were placed on either flank, the next senior companies were placed in the center and to the right and left of center, and the junior companies were distributed between.[174] Theoretically at least, this gave the posts of greatest danger, and greatest honor, to the companies most qualified to have them, while the center and intervening positions were assigned by degree of experience. The pairing of companies by squadrons in cavalry regiments matched each junior captain with a squadron commander four or five positions above him, and thus provided the optimum arrangement of experienced and inexperienced companies. In line, this formation was:

COMPANIES B & G	COMPANIES K & E	COMPANIES H & C	COMPANIES I & D	COMPANIES F & A
5th Squadron	4th Squadron	3rd Squadron	2nd Squadron	1st Squadron

[174]Philip St. George Cooke, Cavalry Tactics: or, Regulations for the Instruction, Formations, and Movements of the Cavalry of the Army and Volunteers of the United States (New York: J. W. Fortune, 1864), pp. 1-5.

While the squadron was primarily a tactical innovation, it inevitably became involved in the problems of administration. This meant that John Cooper, of Company F, would report to Captain Sandford of Company A--commander of the first squadron--and that Captain Brawner, of Company H, would report to Edward Capps of Company C--commander of the third squadron.[175] In theory, at least, squadron assignments changed every time a company commander was promoted, disabled, or replaced. In the Fifteenth Virginia this evidently did not occur because of technicalities involving promotions and absences from duty, so the squadron assignments remained unchanged throughout most of the war.

Not one of the squadrons was formed from companies that had ever served together. As the captains met and began their associations, they must have been very curious about the calibre of their counterparts and the companies they brought with them. This feeling undoubtedly was shared by the men in the ranks, but was of much greater importance with regard to the officers. To an unusually large degree, the worth of their regiment would depend upon the rapport and spirit of cohesiveness that these company commanders and lieutenants would establish.

Almost immediately the new regiment was involved in the defense of Fredericksburg. The Federal army was commanded by General Ambrose Burnside now, and there were indications that Burnside was about to seek a battle. When the enemy columns began to move again the Fifteenth Virginia found itself directly in their path, and the

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[175] Compiled service record of Lt. James C. Kincheloe, Co. H, reel 142, Microcopy 324; Roster of Co. A, May 1-June 30, 1863. Box 537, Record Group 109.

participation of the regiment in the events prior to the Battle of Fredericksburg is one of the most significant episodes in its career.

Colonel Ball had resolved against permitting another surprise. By the evening of November 14 it seemed that the enemy was moving against the regiment "in some force,"[176] and Ball hastened to telegraph a warning. Lee doubted this; "there must be some mistake made by your informant," he replied, "or the pickets at Ellis' Ford are negligent of their duty." Lee had received no other reports of Federal activity, "and for a body of the enemy to cross at Ellis' Ford and proceed on the route toward Fredericksburg, they must previously have entered in the forks of the Rappahannock and Rapidan, and escaped all our pickets. If you find that your courier has given you wrong information, he must be corrected and punished."[177]

By evening, however, it was clear that the enemy were proceeding down the left bank of the Rappahannock, and had already crossed the Orange and Alexandria Railroad.[178] Lee dispatched the Sixty-first Virginia Infantry and the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues to Fredericksburg, warning that they should take position along the North Anna should the city already be occupied. Ball was told to communicate with these troops if the advance of the enemy should threaten their safety, as Lee conceded: "It is reported that the enemy is moving from Warrenton to-day, and it is probable that he is marching upon Fredericksburg."[179]

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[176]Maj Gen. G. W. Smith to Maj. Gen. S. G. French, Nov. 14, 1862, Official Records, I, XVIII, p. 777.

[177]Lee to Ball, Nov. 15, 1862, ibid., I, XXI, p. 1014.

[178]Official Records, I, XXI, p. 550.

[179]Lee to Ball, Nov. 15, 1862, ibid., p. 1014.

Lee repeated a request of the previous day, that the railroad between Fredericksburg and Aquia Creek be broken up. He was unwilling to forfeit that advantage to the enemy if they did occupy Fredericksburg, since Aquia Creek would be their base of supplies. The instructions that Ball received were interesting for other reasons, however, since they reveal how well the Confederate army had developed the technique of railroad demolition, long before the advent of "Sherman's neckties:"

> The bridges and culverts must be thoroughly destroyed, the crossties removed and piled, with the rails placed across them, and, when the timber is sufficiently dry, fired; the weight of the bars will thus cause them to bend, and prevent their being relaid. If you can make arrangements to bring the iron back and send it to Richmond, it will be better and I desire you to do so, but, if you cannot, treat in the manner described above.[180]

Work on the railroad continued for about two days, and seems to have been done with great vigor. By November 17 the wharves at Aquia had been burned and the bridges were destroyed.[181] The telegraph lines were also disrupted; the wire to Falmouth was completely taken down--even the glass insulators were removed--all the wire around Falmouth was dismantled, and the lines were destroyed for six miles toward Kelly's Ford and at least ten miles toward Washington. When the Federals arrived General Herman A. Haupt, in charge of the U. S. military railroads, foresaw such a long delay in restoring communications that he wondered whether Burnside might be able to open the Rappahannock for shipping.[182] Several days later the Accokeek bridge had been

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[180] Ibid.

[181] Official Records, I, XXI, p. 764.

[182] Ibid., pp. 777, 789-90.

rebuilt, but the bridge at Potomac Run had been "more seriously damaged than was at first represented,"[183]--thanks to Dahlgren--and could not be opened for at least another day. Even then the facilities for landing at Aquia Creek would be limited, and in the meantime all the logistics for Burnside's ponderous army had to be handled by wagon.[184] It was a significant delay, for it allowed the completion of the Confederate defenses. When the attack came, Lee's men were entirely ready.

While the demolition was taking place Colonel Ball had maintained a vigil over Aquia Creek, and on November 15 he reported the appearance of some Federal gunboats and transports. "This looked as if Fredericksburg was again to be occupied,"[185] Lee wrote, and two infantry divisions, some artillery, and the remainder of W. H. F. Lee's brigade were ordered toward the city. Still, Lee anticipated other strategy as well, particularly a move by water to Burnside's former scene of operations in North Carolina;[186] he was not entirely convinced that Fredericksburg was the objective.

In the meantime, General Smith had also sent a battalion to Ball's relief--the "Mississippi riflemen" about whom so much has been written.[187] These troops, with Captain J. W. Lewis' battery, gave

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[183]Haupt to Burnside, Nov. 21, 1862, ibid., p. 781.

[184]Ibid., pp. 781, 798.

[185]Report of Gen. R. E. Lee on the Fredericksburg campaign, Official Records, I, XXI, p. 550.

[186]Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 1015-16.

[187]Ibid., pp. 551, 1017-19.

the colonel some five hundred men. Ball placed the infantry around a mill and millrace opposite Falmouth, posted Lewis' four guns on a plateau at Little Falls, half a mile above Fredericksburg, and distributed his own men through the upper part of town.[188]

On the morning of November 17 Ball's pickets came in, retiring before the Yankee cavalry. Later that afternoon the advance guard of Major General Edwin V. Sumner's division appeared in Falmouth, and scouts began to search along the river for a place to cross. As the Federals came in range, approximately half a mile away, Lewis' battery opened fire.[189] The four Confederate guns, evidently smoothbores, were "very inferior"[190] and were quickly overwhelmed. William Swinton, a correspondent who was with the Yankees that day, thought the incident was inconsequential:

> In point of fact, the only engagement was a brief artillery duel between the Confederate battery . . . and Petitt's battery of ten-pounder Parrotts. The writer stood beside this battery at the time, and can testify that Pettit in fifteen minutes, by his excellent shots, caused the Confederate gunners to leave their guns; and the pieces were only dragged off by the men crawling up and attaching prolonges to them.[191]

Despite this outcome, and any random skirmishing that may have occurred, the affair was a turning point in the campaign. As far as

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[188] Quinn, The History of the City of Fredericksburg Virginia, pp. 83-84.

[189] Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 102-03.

[190] Jennings Cropper Wise, The Long Arm of Lee: The History of the Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia (2d. ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 362.

[191] William Swinton, Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), p. 234n.

the Southerners could determine, Sumner's men would be coming across as soon as an opportunity arose, and it was imperative that such a lodgement be resisted. Indeed a crossing would have been most advantageous, but the pontoon train had been delayed and without it Burnside was reluctant to risk the isolation of so large a portion of his army. This was much less obvious to Colonel Ball and his men, however, and they presented a front that is worthy of some commendation.

At dusk the rebels still held their ground, but they could see the campfires from Sumner's corps begin to flicker among the trees across the river and far to the rear along the road that led from Hartwood Church.[192] That night the men of Lewis' battery drove their caissons back and forth along the roads to create the impression that reinforcements were arriving.[193]

The next morning the Sixty-first Virginia and the Norfolk Blues finally arrived,[194] but the situation was far from secure. The Federals were toying with them, and by then they must have known it, but they gamely held their place. On November 18 Lee made the decision to shift his army to Fredericksburg,[195] although Burnside declared that as late as the 20th his troops might have advanced against little opposition, had the pontoon bridges been ready.[196]

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[192] Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 1019, 760.

[193] Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1068.

[194] Official Records, I, XXI, p. 1017.

[195] Ibid., pp. 1019-20.

[196] Ibid., pp. 103-04.

By November 21 Lee's army was taking position along the heights behind town. About 9:30 A.M. a Federal officer appeared under a flag of truce, and crossed the river. He carried a letter from General Sumner addressed to the mayor and council of Fredericksburg, and he was met by Colonel Ball at "French John's" wharf at the foot of Hawke Street.[197] The message was staggering in its simplicity:

> GENTLEMEN: Under cover of the houses of your city, shots have been fired upon the troops of my command. . . This condition of things must terminate, and, by direction of General Burnside, I accordingly demand the surrender of the city into my hands . . . at or before 5 o'clock this afternoon.
>
> Failing an affirmative reply to this demand by the hour indicated, sixteen hours will be permitted to elapse for the removal from the city of women and children, the sick and wounded and aged, &c., which period having expired, I shall proceed to shell the town. . . .[198]

Ball informed the Federal courier that the matter would have to be referred to his commanding officer, but wisely concealed the fact that that officer was Lee himself.

A reply was soon returned to Sumner informing him that the firing had been the act of the military and that other acts of provocation would not recur.[199] There was no retaliation, but a large number of townspeople abandoned their homes and fled, enduring great privation as a result of their exodus and the pillage of the town by Federal soldiers the next month. Throughout the South, committees of relief

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[197]Quinn, The History of the City of Fredericksburg Virginia, pp. 84-85.

[198]Maj. Gen. Edwin V. Sumner to the Mayor and Common Council of Fredericksburg, Nov. 21, 1862, Official Records, I, XXI, p. 783.

[199]Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 784-89.

were organized to aid the Fredericksburg refugees, and soldiers in the lines nearby contributed part of their rations and pay.[200]

The cavalry role during the next few weeks and in the Battle of Fredericksburg was minimal. Once the armies had settled into position there was little need for reconnaissance, and little chance that any flanking maneuvers would be attempted. After W. H. F. Lee's brigade had arrived in town the Fifteenth Virginia temporarily ended its detached service, and retired with the brigade to Lloyd's, in Essex County, to rest and graze the horses. On December 11 the brigade was recalled, and some of the units marched as far as forty miles to reach the field in time for Burnside's assault on December 13.[201]

There was no place where cavalry could be used during the battle, however, and pursuit was impossible because of the Federal batteries along Stafford Heights. Stuart posted his division beyond the right flank of the army, extending from Hamilton's Crossing toward Port Royal. From there, it was reported, they spent the battle "annoying the enemy and embarrassing his movements by hanging on his flank, and attacking when opportunity occurred. The nature of the ground and the relative positions of the armies prevented them from doing more."[202]

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[200]Quinn, The History of the City of Fredericksburg Virginia, pp. 86-87; Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, pp. 362-63; Jones, A Confederate War Clerk's Diary, pp. 192-95.

[201]R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, pp. 53-57; G. W. Beale, A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army, pp. 56-63.

[202]Report of Gen. R. E. Lee on the Fredericksburg campaign, Official Records, I, XXI, p. 556; H. B. McClellan (Burke Davis, ed.), I Rode With Jeb Stuart: The Life and Campaigns of Major General J. E. B. Stuart (2d ed.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), pp. 186-95.

The Fifteenth participated in this assignment and lost several men. Lieutenant John P. Kellam, of Capps' company, was killed on the 13th,[203] and a list of casualties in the battle included another six men wounded. Except for one man wounded in the Ninth Virginia, this constituted the official reported loss for the entire cavalry division.[204]

While the armies remained around Fredericksburg Stuart was not content to leave the Federals unmolested. Since late in November the cavalry had staged raids against Burnside's lines of communication.[205] On the 26th of December Stuart crossed the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford with 1,800 men picked from the brigades of Wade Hampton, Fitzhugh Lee, and W. H. F. Lee, bound on one of the largest raids of the war. The next day Stuart turned east, disposing his forces to seize control of the Telegraph Road for several miles between Aquia Creek and the Occoquan and capture whatever wagons might be in the vicinity. Hampton was sent toward Occoquan and Fitz Lee toward the Oppowamsic while W. H. F. Lee, with Stuart accompanying, proceeded along the south bank of the Quantico toward Dumfries. After some skirmishing they withdrew from the Dumfries area, finding it too heavily occupied, and joined Hampton to the north. They remained in the area for another day, creating additional confusion, made a feint toward Fairfax Courthouse, then crossed the Orange and Alexandria

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[203]Compiled service record of Lt. John P. W. Kellam, Co. C, reel 142, Microcopy 324.

[204]Official Records, I, XXI, p. 558.

[205]Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 689-91, 693-97.

Railroad at Burke's Station, where Stuart telegraphed a complaint to the Yankee quartermaster about the poor quality of the mules he had been capturing. By easy marches the command passed through Warrenton, reaching Culpeper on the 31st and Fredericksburg the next day.[206]

Colonel Critcher participated in the raid with a portion of the regiment. At one point they were ordered to clear the road from Dumfries to Brentsville. In doing this the men seized a picket of eleven men, and subsequently captured a few more. Captain Brawner and his company also captured a small picket.[207] The brigade was not engaged during the remainder of the expedition and reported a loss of one man wounded and fourteen captured--five of whom were members of the Fifteenth Virginia, apprehended in some woods near Vienna.[208]

The enemy had withdrawn from Fredericksburg after the battle, and the vigil along the Rappahannock had been resumed. The town was a shambles, however, with ruined buildings and homes revealing a pillage that had not previously been the mark of invasion. To the men of the Fifteenth, like citizens of the town themselves, it was a bitter sight.

The regiment was assigned again to picket duty, covering the lower Rappahannock and the area towards the York River. This assignment dispersed the companies and temporarily ended their service

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[206]Reports of generals J. E. B. Stuart, W. H. F. Lee, and other Confederate officers on the Dumfries Raid are in Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 735-42. See also: McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 197-202.

[207]Official Records, I, XXI, pp. 732-33, 742.

[208]Ibid., p. 714.

together as a regiment. By the end of December, Company A was camped near Port Royal;[209] during the same week Company B was near the town of Loid,[210] while regimental headquarters seems to have been in Port Royal.[211] By the close of February at least three companies--A, D, And I--were concentrated in Saluda.[212] The location of the other companies can be plotted during this time, but the nature of cavalry assignments, especially on extended outpost duty, renders any attempt at localization rather arbitrary. The men scouted the country lanes and patrolled the river banks for miles in every direction, and entire squads and platoons were often on the march to some distant post. The service was arduous but largely uneventful, and the days passed slowly. The regiment was marking time.

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[209]Compiled service record of James K. Jennings as private, Co. A, Fifteenth Battalion, reel 145, Microcopy 324.

[210]Compiled service record of Pvt. Charles Pitts, Co. B, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

[211]Compiled service record of Pvt. Thomas O. Vanlandingham, Co. G, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[212]Company returns, Box 537, Record Group 109.

CHAPTER IV

FRUSTRATION ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK

Some time late in 1862, while the regiment was still being organized, Colonel Ball had applied to have Captain Charles Collins, recently transferred from duty in Wilmington, appointed to fill the vacancy resulting from Major Burroughs' resignation. The appointment, being "so conducive to the public interest,"[213] was twice urged by Stuart and W. H. F. Lee.

In Richmond the process was snarled by legalistic considerations as to whether the vacancy was "original." The Secretary of War wondered why the senior captain of Burroughs' battalion had not been promoted; it was observed that an original vacancy existed only if Burroughs' resignation had taken effect after the organization of the regiment and before the appointment of field officers by the President. Obviously, someone of Collins' merit was badly needed in the regiment. At last, in April, an expedient was devised whereby Collins was given the "temporary" rank of major and assigned to duty with the regiment.[214] This arrangement seemed to satisfy everyone, and within a week Collins was serving in the field.

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[213]Stuart to Gen. Samuel Cooper, Feb. 10 and March 26, 1863, in compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[214]Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

In the meantime Colonel Ball had been invalided to the rear with chronic bronchitis.[215] Although his health was too feeble to withstand the exposure of a winter camp, he retained his commission and only reluctantly yielded command to Lieutenant Colonel Critcher. Ball probably had hopes of returning to duty some day, but he never did.

Early in March Critcher received orders to prepare the regiment to move in three days, with rations cooked, arms in order, and forty rounds of ammunition per man. He was told to make these preparations with "absolute secrecy and quietness."[216] The brigade was assembled at Saluda for an expedition to Gloucester Point. On the evening of the first day's march the commanders received their orders. The Ninth Virginia was assigned to capture the fort at Gloucester Point, while the Thirteenth Virginia and Second South Carolina attacked the camp of a regiment of cavalry a few hundred yards away. Critcher and the Fifteenth were to remain as a reserve. But, after a reconnaisance, Lee decided not to make the attack, and the brigade returned to camp.[217]

It was also recorded that during part of April, Lieutenant Thomas Arnold was absent on a mission that must have taxed his gallantry no less than his resourcefulness. He was, in the circumspect language of the time, on special duty escorting a "female prisoner" to Richmond.[218]

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[215]Compiled service record of Col. William Ball, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[216]Lt. Col. William T. Robins, to Critcher, March 3, 1863, Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 682.

[217]R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, pp. 59-60.

[218]Compiled service record of Lt. Thomas Arnold, Co. E, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

On the 14th of April, Company C was sent to King William County, northeast of Richmond between the Pamunkey and Mattapony Rivers, on detached service within the Department of Richmond.[219] A few days later, as a result of Stuart's recommendation, Brawner's company was separated from the brigade for duty with the partisans operating in northern Virginia under Major John S. Mosby.[220] The unit thus began a virtually independent career, and one that left it permanently separated from the regiment.

It is probably more than chance that both companies were from Capps' squadron, and it might be very revealing to know the reasons behind their dispersal. In both cases the move brought serious complications; the lure of partisan service came to dominate the career of Brawner's command, while the personal animosities that seem to have been responsible for Capps' removal were not relieved by his service elsewhere. Still these matters were only slowly coming to a head. As spring continued and the roads began to dry, there were more pressing concerns.

In mid-April, the Twenty-fourth Michigan and Fourteenth New York Infantry marched from Belle Plain, Virginia, on a routine expedition down the Northern Neck. During the night of April 22 the Federals reached Port Conway; early the next morning they crossed the Rappahannock and occupied Port Royal, opposite Port Conway.[221]

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[219] By order of Gen. W. H. F. Lee; company abstract cards, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[220] Official Records, I, XXV, part 2, p. 738.

[221] Ibid., part 1, pp. 137, 796; O. B. Curtis, History of the Twenty-Fourth Michigan of the Iron Brigade (Detroit: Winn & Hammond, 1891), pp. 121-24.

As the Yankees paddled across the river in their pontoon boats, shrouded in fog and a drenching rain which one writer thought was a "magnificent" reminder of Washington crossing the Delaware,[222] they braced for a volley from a line of infantry--which was discovered to be a picket fence. Along the shore they found numerous and well-constructed rifle pits, "but as yet no enemy had been seen, with the exception of a sentinel or two who made off out of harm's way as fast as possible without firing a shot."[223]

Emboldened by their good fortune, the Yankees began to scramble out of the boats. Port Royal was occupied by Harding's Company, and the men seem to have been snugly billeted in houses around town. Their belated emergence in various stages of undress and unpreparedness was perhaps less like the Battle of Trenton in 1776 than of Dahlgren's recent raid on Fredericksburg. When first seen by the Federals they reportedly were "making off at high speed."

> At the distance of half or three-quarters of a mile they halted and deployed in line, but presently disappeared entirely. They numbered, as we were told by a contraband, about 75 men. Had they chosen to do so, they might have dismounted, occupied the rifle pits and annoyed us exceedingly, but not a single shot was fired against us.[224]

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[222]Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, April 30, 1863 (Morning Edition), p. 2.

[223]The Detroit Free Press, April 30, 1863 (Morning Edition), p. 3.

[224]The Detroit Free Press, April 30, 1863, p. 3.

Harding's men abandoned a pair of wagons, some forage, various horses, mules, and contrabands, three prisoners, and a quantity of Confederate States' mail. The capture of the wagons was the work of one Lieutenant Colonel Mark Flanigan, formerly a sheriff, whose instinct for pursuit suddenly proved irresistible. As Harding's wagonmaster began a hasty retreat, Flanigan broke away from his command and sprinted down a side street. He reached the road to Bowling Green somewhat in advance of the driver and, levelling his awesome "Spencerian" rifle, yelled the customary "Halt!" The driver "seemed to debate the question, but only for a moment;" then as Flanigan asked him, somewhat redundantly, if he really was a rebel, he dismounted, "disgusted at seeing his horse mounted by a Federal officer, and himself and train captured and prisoners. The best of the animals were taken, and the rest turned loose and the train destroyed, . . . "[225]

The Yankees strolled about town for an hour or two. They marveled at the boxwood gardens and the prosperous appearance of the countryside,[226] and proceeded to help themselves to some "trinkets" from the store windows. The premises were largely depopulated, except for "several females" who were assured that they would not be molested. The Negroes who remained were exultant, one of them saying:

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[225]Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, April 30, 1863, p. 2; Curtis, History of the Twenty-fourth Michigan, pp. 26, 32, 41, 123.

[226]The Detroit Free Press, April 30, 1863, p. 3.

> Lord bress my savior, I's so glad you come; we's bin a lookin for you; I's dreamed of you in de night and thought of you in de day; we knowd you was comin, . . .[227]

One of the freedmen was "Tom," a servant with the Fifteenth, "who belonged to one Foster of Norfolk,[228] formerly Adjutant of the battalion." Tom talked freely about the regiment, claiming that it had "never stood fight or fire, but always shows a clean pair of heels per man."

> Tom was coming into Port Royal for something to make his master's breakfast, when he was captured with the horse he rode. He describes the rations of the Confeds. as quite short, but that they are fully settled in their determination to fight to the last against us.[229]

This report was seconded by a correspondent who wrote that "the troops in that vicinity are said to be on half rations, while the animals look as though they had <u>seen</u> but very little forage and <u>eaten</u> much less."[230] He also confirmed the "fabulous" prices of items in the Confederacy: shoes at $20 and cavalry boots as much as $40 per pair, coffee at $3 per pound "and hard to get at that," tea at $15 per pound, and eggs at $1.50 per dozen. The hardships endured by the Southerners moved one of the raiders to admit that:

> Men who still fight and persist in their purpose; who still keep up their organization, and cling to the faintest hope, rallying around their standards resolved to conquer, and yet daily receive but the scanty allowance of <u>half a pound of flour, and a quarter of a pound of pork or bacon</u>, without coffee or sugar, must indeed be united by a strong purpose, . . .[231]

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[227] <u>Detroit Advertiser and Tribune</u>, April 30, 1863, p. 2.

[228] This may have been Ordnance Sergeant T. M. Foster; there is no record of a battalion adjutant by that name. Compiled service record of Ord. Sgt. T. M. Foster, reels 140, Microcopy 324.

[229] <u>The Detroit Free Press</u>, April 30, 1863, p. 3.

[230] <u>Detroit Advertiser and Tribune</u>, April 30, 1863, p. 2.

[231] <u>The Detroit Free Press</u>, April 30, 1863, p. 3.

Harding's men, meanwhile, had returned with reinforcements. They hastened the departure of the last few raiders from Port Royal, fired at them from the south bank and created the impression that the entire company would be crossing in pursuit--but stopped somewhat short of anything that rash.

General Lee soon learned of the incident. "I am afraid the cavalry was negligent," he wrote:

> They gave no alarm; did not fire a shot; lost some public horses and two wagons. The citizens gave the alarm. . . . Captain Harding says he had barely time to saddle his horses and clear himself. I fear they were all asleep in the houses. I have heard that was the case previously. It is probably that the enemy was informed of their habit, and the plan laid to catch them.[232]

There was good reason for Lee's disappointment. Burnside had been replaced by General Joseph Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac, and another battle was imminent. Many of Stuart's troopers were home seeking remounts, leaving only a few hundred men available for duty on a line that stretched from the Blue Ridge to the Chesapeake. It was no time for the cavalry to be careless.

"I desire the matter inquired into," Lee said, then added, "I have heard it stated that Colonel Critcher was on the north side of the Rappahannock. I do not know that it is true."[233] The implication was clear: there had been laxity again, and Critcher may have been absent from his command; in any case he seems to have neglected its discipline.

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[232]Lee to Stuart, April 25, 1863, Official Records, I, XXV, part 2, pp. 749-50.

[233]Ibid., p. 750.

The Battle of Chancellorsville apparently precluded another investigation, but from the tone of Lee's remarks it seems that by this time not much more was expected from the regiment.

As maneuvering continued, the Fifteenth shifted closer to Fredericksburg. Late in April the infantry belonging to Lieutenant General Thomas J. Jackson's corps were withdrawn from the vicinity of Port Royal, and Critcher adjusted his pickets to maintain contact the the army.[234] In a dispatch of April 29 these movements were elaborated with something less than precision:

> COLONEL: You had better draw up your pickets below Port Royal as high up as the enemy's lowest picket, keeping well below their picket, and replace the infantry pickets above Port Royal, where they are withdrawn. Station your men to the best advantage at points where they can observe their line, so that the number may be diminished as much as possible with safety. Caution your men to be very much on the alert, as a great deal depends upon their watchfulness and coolness.[235]

The next day Lee wrote in haste, "You will close your cavalry pickets up to the infantry on the Rappahannock. I have sent you orders by a courier, but have heard nothing from you."[236]

During the battle the regiment was virtually the only cavalry on Lee's right. While it was only lightly engaged, if at all, a detachment under Major Collins participated in two of the most critical episodes of the campaign.

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[234]Official Records, I, LI, part 2, pp. 698-99.

[235]Lee to Critcher, April 29, 1863, ibid., pp. 698-99.

[236]Lee to Critcher, April 30, 1863, ibid., p. 699.

When Federal infantry began to cross the Rapidan on the night of April 28, Stuart sent a warning to his forces guarding the fords downstream. The couriers were intercepted, however, and Collins was surprised at Germanna Ford on the 29th and some of the men there were captured.[237] Swinton, the correspondent, reported that a party of Confederates had been engaged in rebuilding the bridge, but "by a well executed movement most of them were captured."[238] Through what Stuart called his "good management,"[239] Collins managed to stall the Federals briefly and was able to save his wagons and implements. Skirmishing continued until about 11:00 P.M., as the troopers slowly retired before the Federal advance.

The identity of this command is uncertain. One Federal officer claimed to have captured "a picket of some fifty of Stuart's cavalry soldiers. With them was an engineer officer belonging to Stuart's staff."[240] The regimental returns reveal no such loss, and several of the prisoners were from the First North Carolina Cavalry.[241] Collins may have been present only as an engineer in charge of the works, though it seems equally possible that Company D was with him--serving

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[237] Official Records, I, XXV, part 1, pp. 1045-46.

[238] Swinton, Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac, p. 272n.

[239] Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Chancellorsville Campaign, Official Records, I, XXV, part 1, p. 1046.

[240] Alfred Pleasanton, "The Successes and Failures of Chancellorsville" (Robert Underwood Johnson and Clarence Clough Buel, eds.), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (2d ed., 4 vols; New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), III, 173.

[241] Official Records, I, XXV, part 1, p. 778.

"penance" for its humiliation at Port Royal. One member of Harding's command was killed near Fredericksburg on May 6.[242]

During the two or three days after the engagement at Germanna Ford Collins evidently deployed his men as pickets along the Rappahannock near Banks' Ford[243] and frustrated several attempts by the Yankees to lay a pontoon bridge in that area. One Union officer later testified to the effectiveness of these "roving bodies of cavalry."[244]

By the afternoon of May 3 the major, "with some 40 or 50 men,"[245] had joined General Cadmus M. Wilcox's brigade on the plank road west of Fredericksburg. Advancing against them or ranged along the Rappahannock in support, were approximately 40,000 men of Major General John Sedgwick's Sixth Corps.

What began as a diversion became a moment or rare opportunity when Lee took his army out of Fredericksburg to meet Hooker's main force as it came across the Rapidan. The evening before, Jackson had launched his attack on the Federal right flank, routing it and ruining Hooker's entire offensive. But Lee's army was scattered among the pine copses of the Wilderness, and a strong movement by the Federals could cancel all the advantages that had been gained. Sedgwick had orders to push the rebels in his front, and it was obvious that if he pushed

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[242]Roster of Co. D, April 31-July 1, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109; compiled service record of Pvt. Spencer Vanlandingham, Co. D, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[243]Official Records, I, XXV, part 1, pp. 795, 851.

[244]Huntington W. Jackson, "Sedgwick at Fredericksburg and Salem Heights," Battles and Leaders, III, p. 231.

[245]Report of Brig. Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox on the Chancellorsville campaign, Official Records, I, XXV, part 1, p. 857.

hard enough they would be driven back against Lee's rear. Earlier on the third the Federals had captured Marye's Heights; Major General Jubal A. Early's forces, left to defend the town, withdrew southward where they were temporarily out of the battle. It remained for Wilcox, hastening to the scene from Banks' Ford, to place his single brigade between Sedgwick and the army at Chancellorsville.

From Marye's Heights he began a masterful retreat to the west, finally making a stand on the high ground at Salem Church. While the infantry took position Collins remained behind, deployed his troopers across the road in a pine thicket, and waited for the Union advance. Presently the enemy lines appeared; Wilcox could hear firing begin and soon he saw Collins' men retiring before them. Then the general deployed his own skirmishers and opened with artillery. The Virginians passed through the infantry and formed in their rear. Three brigades sent by Lee finally arrived as reinforcements and, after a close battle, the Federals were repulsed.[246]

Despite their proximity to the battle the majority of the regiment seem to have come no closer to action than before. On May 7, three days after the battle at Salem Church and two days after the fighting had ended, Lee apparently received a note from Critcher asking what new position, if any, should be taken. Lee ordered him to continue picketing from the right of the infantry, then at Moss Neck Mill, and to extend down the Rappahannock as before. "Keep a good lookout,"

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[246]Official Records, I, XXV, part 1, pp. 567, 577, 596-98, 857-61.

the colonel was told, "and report any movement of the enemy that may be discovered."[247] Two days later Critcher was advised of gunboats on the river two miles below Port Royal, and of the dispatch of a light battery to oppose them; he was also ordered to communicate with General Early and receive further directions from him.[248]

Late in May a Federal expedition was ordered down the Northern Neck in a continuing attempt to break up the contraband trade that was flourishing there. Colonel Henry A. Morrow, whose command had surprised Harding's company the month before, happened to lead the "Iron Brigade" through the vicinity of Leedstown and Oak Grove. Morrow planned to intercept any rebels in the neighborhood and thus, on the morning of May 23, he discovered some men "in rebel uniform"[249] crossing a field and obviously trying to escape across the Rappahannock. Morrow sent an orderly after them and presently the man returned, bringing with him as prisoner one Lieutenant Colonel John Critcher.

Critcher claimed to have been on a visit home to attend a funeral when he became aware of the expedition and laid plans to intercept it by destroying the Mattox Creek Bridge, nearby. A newspaper correspondent was on hand to record the colonel's misfortune:

> Setting fire to the bridge to cut off the retreat, he sent one of his servants with dispatches for three hundred men to execute his bold design, when our old Twenty-fourth suddenly appeared upon the scene, just as he was about to cross the river with his body-guard and one or two attendants. The three or four mounted men with him effected their escape,

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[247]Col. Walter Taylor to Critcher, May 7, 1863, ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 705.

[248]Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 706.

[249]Report of Col. Henry A. Morrow on operations, May 20-26, 1863, ibid., I, XXV, part 1, p. 1114.

> but the gallant Colonel hid himself in the grass. His negro, however, was soon discovered by one of Colonel Morrow's mounted orderlies, who asked who was with him. "Tom dunno," replied the darkey, "only 'nodder nigger." "No, it wasn't a nigger; tell me where he is," replied the Orderly, and he drew his revolver. The click of the lock made the negro's eyes turn white, when the hidden Colonel, though bred in the "barbarism of slavery," disdained the thought of saving himself by even the light sacrifice of a negro, came out from his place of concealment and gave himself up, submitting with a good grace, remarking, "You are just in time--a few minutes more and I should have been in a position to make this country too hot for you."[250]

As Critcher was escorted away from the remains of the bridge he protested that he had merely come to visit his family, but he did not succeed in convincing anyone.[251] Major General John F. Reynolds, commanding the First Corps, wanted the colonel held in custody as long as possible:

> Colonel Critcher had undoubtedly been detailed to remain on the north side of the Rappahannock to organize bush-wacking parties and to furnish information of our movements to the enemy. One despatch from him to General Lee was intercepted which led to his capture. There is not sufficient evidence to hold him as a spy but it is requested that every impediment possible be thrown in the way to prevent his exchange for some time to come.[252]

Reynolds was mistaken. Far from being on special duty, Critcher was put under charges for having been absent without leave--an accusation which seems to have remained permanently against his record.[253] In the meantime, it was reported that:

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[250] The Detroit Free Press, June 2, 1863, (Morning Edition) p. 1.

[251] Curtis, History of the Twenty-Fourth Michigan, pp. 140-41.

[252] Capt. L. F. Lyttle to Col. William Hoffman, May 25, 1863, Official Records, II, V, p. 706.

[253] Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

> A little incident occurred on the march back to camp of the troops who captured Col. Critcher, which proves that even rebels still venerate the old flag. The rebel Colonel looked at the emblem of his country's sovereignty until the tears ran down his cheeks, and said, "that flag was very dear to me."[254]

The writer observed that the flag would be equally dear to "hundreds of millions" of freemen, to which total another 1000 contrabands had been added as a result of the expedition. Some 500 horses and mules had also become Federal property, several officers besides Critcher had been captured, and some 300 sick and wounded Confederates had been captured and paroled.[255]

"The boys lived upon the 'fat of the land,' milk, honey and oil," one Northerner observed, "and, notwithstanding their weary marches, did not fail to appreciate and wonder at the beauty and richness, the fertility of the soil, and the general desirableness of this peninsula."[256] Another concluded that "the secesh on the Peninsula have taken a lesson in the science of rebellion, and paid for Yankee tuition a larger price than ever before."[257]

Whatever Critcher's purpose, his duties apparently were such that no notice was made of his capture for several days. On the 26th Lee was still sending letters to Critcher, unaware of his fate. Like a patient uncle, Lee again cautioned Critcher of the need for vigilance.[258]

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[254] Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, June 2, 1863 (Morning Edition), p. 1.

[255] Ibid.

[256] The Detroit Free Press, June 2, 1863, p. 2.

[257] Detroit Advertiser and Tribune, June 2, 1863, p. 1.

[258] Official Records, I, XXV, part 2, p. 826.

The command of the regiment devolved upon Major Collins. For this, if no other reason, the capture of John Critcher may be regarded as one of the most propitious events in the history of the unit. At the moment, however, it seemed that the colonel might be returned soon, so the circumstances in which he had left the regiment did not change appreciably.

By June the army was preparing for the invasion of Pennsylvania. Though the regiment remained on the perimeter of operations it was involved in some preliminary movements of the campaign. On June 2 Collins was warned to prepare for a movement of the enemy from the vicinity of Gloucester and West Point to the northwest, along the Piankatank River.[259] In unison with the infantry under General George Pickett the regiment advanced toward Urbanna and Tappahannock. By 10:00 P.M. Captain Cooke had reconnoitered outside of Saluda and found several hundred of the enemy there, with seven steamers at Urbanna.[260] The maneuver was revealed as simply another "marauding expedition,"[261] however, and the threat gradually dissolved.

Since the organization of the regiment, it had been used almost exclusively in this type of surveillance, from Fredericksburg and along the Rappahannock to West Point, on the Pamunkey. The degree to which the regiment was in direct communication with Lee's headquarters is rather remarkable--especially in the days preceeding the Battles

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[259] Ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 719.

[260] Ibid., I, XXV, part 2, pp. 849-53.

[261] R. E. Lee to Maj. Gen. George E. Pickett, June 3, 1863, ibid., p. 852.

of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville and at the beginning of the Gettysburg Campaign. Lee's vigilance and attention to detail emphasize the significance of the regiment in a unique assignment.

Now this period was ending. The army was stirring again, concentrating near the Valley in preparation for the invasion of Pennsylvania. On June 5 Lee moved to Culpeper "for the present."[262] General Ambrose Powell Hill was left at Fredericksburg with instructions to distract the enemy and conceal the army's movement. West of town the Fourth Virginia Cavalry was on duty; on the right Collins and the Fifteenth were posted with orders to communicate with Hill.

The Cavalry division gathered at Brandy Station and staged a dress review. On June 9 Stuart's brigades turned back a Federal reconnaissance in the largest cavalry battle yet fought in the war. Stuart's chagrin at being surprised largely contributed to his errant raid behind the Union army later that month, as well as to his tardy appearance at Gettysburg. More important, the Federal cavalry were under a unified command, better armed and better led, and their performance at Brandy Station was the beginning of their slow but steady ascendancy as combat troops.

All of this made exciting news but was a source of growing irritation to the men of the Fifteenth, who were forced to remain behind. When the armies started north the regiment found itself with the onerous task of guarding a military backwater.

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[262] Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, pp. 859-60.

Early in June, as the regiment concentrated in the vicinity of Loretto, the officers of the companies from Burroughs' Battalion vented their frustration in a petition to Brigadier General Henry A. Wise:

> We would respectfully represent that the undersigned all the officers present of the Companies below stated, are much dissatisfied in their present Regiment--because there are Companies and material in them that are not calculated to reflect credit on the service but great discredit on their associates in arms. On account of that element in the Regt., we have not (as a Regt.) the confidence of the authorities and are done great injustice in being kept in the back ground and on picket along the Rappahannock river. We did not enter the service to "play soldier" but to act it, and when our Courage is questioned by the Country simply from associations we feel the humiliation which is common to Virginia Soldiers who are willing to "do or die" for their country.
>
> Of course as soldiers we obey orders and serve where directed, but we command as good fighting men as ever "Mounted a steed" and desire a bold dashing leader who will give us chances in the field. We learn you need Cavalry and earnestly ask your aid to get us out of this Regt. to your own Command.
>
> The Regt. is not full, has only nine companies and taking away our five Companies will not affect it so much, as it will affect the service to keep those good Companies pinioned down by the dead weight they carry, even on this position in the rear of danger.
>
> For the sake of Virginia and her sons who desire to serve her, we entreat you to aid us in getting to you and out of connection with the other Companies of the Regt. . . .[263]

The letter was signed by the officers of Companies B, F, I and K. It was passed to Captain Capps, still on detached duty near Richmond, who forwarded the letter with the promise to Wise that if he needed the companies at all he would be pleased with their service, adding

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[263]Officers of the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry to Brig. Gen. Henry A. Wise, June 2, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

somewhat mysteriously that he did not think the "Proper Causes"--perhaps the desire of some of his men to return to Norfolk as partisans--had been set forth as they should be.[263]

If Charles Collins was at all aware of this move he wisely remained aloof, as did the regimental staff. Nonetheless, the officers were quick to express their regard for Collins. "We have implicit confidence in our Major . . . who is a graduate of West Point and worthy in every respect to command any men," they wrote, adding that they wished to make no "disrespectful distinction" between Collins and the other "field officers"--of whom only one could logically be the point of such a comparison--but since their companies would still comprise a battalion they hoped to have Collins transferred as well.[264]

The significance of this appeal can hardly be overstated, for it reveals the intensity of an antagonism that had developed between the personnel of Critcher's battalion and the men of the other companies assigned to serve with them. The organization of the regiment by squadrons meant that, except for the squadron composed of Capps' and Brawner's companies, each of the dissident units was paired with a company from Critcher's battalion. In terms of discipline and morale, the corrosive effect of this situation is readily apparent. The humiliation of a minor role "in the rear of danger" made the problem even more intolerable.

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[263]Capps to Wise, June 29, 1863, in compiled service record of Capt. Edward Capps, Co. C, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[264]Officers of the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry to Wise, June 2, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

The example of volunteer soldiers petitioning for more discipline and stricter organization is rather at variance with the traditional view of volunteers. Yet these men knew that Collins would give their units the leadership they needed, and their conduct in circumventing the chain of command, while not justifiable, can be readily understood.

At the moment, however, the situation was not good. After six months in the field, the Fifteenth Virginia was languishing from neglect. In every possible aspect the career of the regiment had reached its lowest ebb.

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL OF THE SOLDIER

The officers of the old Fourteenth Battalion had petitioned in vain. Their companies were not removed from the regiment and John Critcher remained at least nominally in command. They would have to live with the situation, and if matters improved part of the effort would have to be a more generous spirit of cooperation on their part. Fortunately, the one person who could best inspire among them a sense of regimental pride was now in charge of matters.

Even as the petition was circulated the Fifteenth was being considered for active duty. At army headquarters, where the condition of the regiment must have been well known, Critcher's absence offered a convenient opportunity to repair morale and put the command on a somewhat more reliable basis. With Lee's personal sanction, Stuart would leave the regiment with Collins for the time being; under his supervision and tutelage it could receive the attention it deserved, and might finally be fielded as an effective unit. "I hope you will do everything in your power to keep your men and horses in good condition," Lee had written to Collins, "and be ready to join me whenever I think

you can be withdrawn from your present position."[265]

As the army moved out of Virginia, Lee gave the major some parting instructions. The upper Rappahannock was clear of the enemy as far as Beverly's Ford, Lee advised, and it seemed that the lower Rappahannock and the Northern Neck should also be clear. If so, Collins could recall the regiment to Fredericksburg, where supplies would be easier to obtain and where he could confine its activities to scouts toward Stafford and the area north of the Aquia. Accordingly, at least four companies had been recalled to Fredericksburg by the close of the month, with another present not later than July 5.[266]

The regiment was entrusted with the suppression of marauding activities along the Rappahannock and in the counties to the north, and Lee suggested that Collins apply to Richmond for a battery of artillery to assist in the work. Collins was ordered to report to Major General Arnold Elzey, in charge of the Department of Richmond, regarding any movements south of the Rappahannock that might affect the department, but he was apparently still to report to Lee on developments north of the river. Soon the cavalry on the left were withdrawn, leaving the Fifteenth Regiment to guard the entire area by itself.[267]

Eventually the news came back that Captain Brawner was dead. His company had joined Mosby's command near Rector's Crossroads on June 10

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[265]R. E. Lee to Collins, June 16, 1863, Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, p. 897.

[266]Company returns, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[267]Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, p. 897.

and immediately started toward the Potomac on a raid. The next morning they attacked a company of the Sixth Michigan Cavalry near Seneca Mills. There was a charge across a bridge and a hand to hand encounter in the defile of a roadway; the captain and two or three men rode ahead of Mosby's column. Brawner went down, and the man who killed him was immediately sabered from his horse. In the pursuit the captain's body was left on the field.[268] The partisan service was not all glory.

As soon as the Federals were gone from the area around Stafford, the problem of the railroad from Aquia Creek to Fredericksburg arose again. Engineer officers from Richmond had come to see what could be salvaged. For some reason, personal or professional, Major Collins seems to have taken exception to these men, and there followed a dispute that bordered on the ludicrous.

On June 22 Collins went to Aquia Creek Landing, where his men had been surveying the Federals for several days. Under fire from some gunboats, the men succeeded in burning the buildings and wharf there, and also at Split Rock Landing and Windmill Point a few miles downstream. "I think the road should be torn up and the Potomac Railroad bridge burned," Collins wrote, "but there is an engineer officer here who talks about removing it, and removing the railroad iron."[269]

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[268]James J. Williamson, Mosby's Rangers (New York: Ralph B. Kenyon, 1896) pp. 69-71; John S. Mosby, Mosby's War Reminiscences and Stuart's Cavalry Campaigns (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, Publishers, 1887), pp. 158-62.

[269]Collins to Elzey, June 23, 1863, Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, pp. 926-27.

On the 24th the major was addressed by the Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, who stated that he had directed the rails to be removed, as well as anything else that might be of value to the service. "These orders were important, and I approved orders that requested the commandant at Fredericksburg, or in its vicinity, to render such aid and facilities as could be afforded to their attainment." "To my surprise," Seddon continued, "I learn . . . that these orders met with no attention or compliance, and that not even the use of a horse, to examine the ground, to point out the valuables left, and to forbid their removal and appropriation by the inhabitants of the country, could be obtained from you."[270]

Seddon may have realized that Collins had more pressing concerns; still, the request had not been unreasonable, and for the sake of discipline he expressed his annoyance in very explicit terms:

> If you were in command, I must require explanation and justification of the wishes of the Department; and if you still remain in such command, I must require, while in the vicinity, that you exert yourself diligently to accomplish the collection and removal, under the direction of the engineers, of all the valuable stores and articles left by the enemy, as also, if practicable, the removal of the iron on the track of the road.[271]

With the problem thus defined, matters seem to have lain dormant until Collins wrote to Elzey that he had just received orders from General Lee to destroy the railroad and salvage the material. Collins reported that the Potomac bridge was still standing and suggested, to

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[270]Sec. of War James A. Seddon to Collins, June 24, 1863, ibid., p. 930.

[271]Ibid.

the undoubted horror of his counterpart from the engineers, that it be destroyed. He also explained his own difficulties:

> I have no means of removing this material whatever, but should any immediate necessity arise, I can have it torn up and the bridge burned. If those in charge of this matter are taking steps to have this material removed, I will wait their action, but I think that it should be hurried up. If my command was larger, I could spare some men for this purpose, but cannot well do so now.[272]

Elzey referred the matter to Colonel Jeremy F. Gilmer, chief of the Bureau of Engineers. Gilmer talked with Seddon, who said that a force of conscripts and mechanics had begun the work, and the secretary told Gilmer to tell Elzey to tell Collins that the regiment should protect the operation and help as much as possible. Gilmer wrote to Collins, saying basically the same thing, and asking whether any of the sandbags lying around the various batteries at Fredericksburg could not be salvaged.[273] Gilmer--evidently concerned by the major's scandalous propensity for burning and destroying--then wrote to the engineer in charge saying that he trusted that Major Collins would refrain from destroying anything until it became absolutely necessary; he also wondered whether some of the troopers at Fredericksburg could not be "induced" to save a few of those sandbags. In a tone of greater confidence Gilmer added, "I have just seen the Secretary of War, who wishes me to say he relies much on the energy of the engineers."[274]

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[272]Collins to Elzey, July 22, 1863, ibid., p. 1046.

[273]Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, pp. 1045-46.

[274]Col. J. F. Gilmer to Lt. W. D. Stuart, July 27, 1863, ibid., p. 1045.

The return of the armies from Gettysburg put a more sombre tone on these procedings. Soon the area north of the Rappahannock was filled with the enemy, and work was discontinued. The rails never were salvaged, much to the annoyance of one observer in Richmond who wrote that "Seddon's subordinates must answer for this . . . . The want of men cannot be alleged for not securing it, because the railroad companies would have procured negroes enough for its removal."[275] A year later the department's failure to secure the iron would seem even more regrettable, as supply lines in Virginia were gradually paralyzed for want of railroad tracks.[276] By July 30, in any case, the bridges had been burned and the line was out of operation.[277] It probably was the best that could be managed by Collins, the engineers, and the War Department--all of whom were working under hardships.

If the authorities were distressed by the conduct of Major Collins they must have been gratified by that of the regimental quartermaster, Captain William B. Jones. As part of his duties Jones went rummaging through the old Yankee camp, and he listed his findings with scrupulous care. Among other things, he salvaged a barrel of hardtack (eighty-three pounds' worth), some overcoats and axes, four broken muskets, a frying pan, and a dozen worthless bridles. The items were duly delivered to a government agent, and eventually some of them may even have been reissued--on consignment from the Yankees by way of Captain Jones.[278]

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[275]Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, II, 10.

[276]Ibid., pp. 83, 195.

[277]Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, p. 782.

[278]Compiled service record of Capt. William B. Jones, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

In mid-July the regiment interrupted its routine to help set a trap a Mathias Point. Lieutenant Colonel C. E. Lightfoot had been sent from Richmond on a secret expedition to intercept some transports supposed to be bound for Washington. Along the way, he applied to the Fifteenth for assistance. For several days Collins' men scouted the countryside while Lightfoot waited for the vessels. None appeared and the venture finally was abandoned. Before they left, however, the men fired on a passing steamer, drove it aground on the Maryland shore, and watched as the crew deserted it. Lightfoot later expressed his regard for Collins, "an officer of experience, with whom I had before served, and in whom I had great confidence."[279]

Collins' men returned to camp, but the major had other work for them. Some hint of their activity can be found in notations he made on the company rosters during this period. "Want of opportunity," he observed, had prevented much instruction, but "a few drills" had brought noticeable improvement.[280] They were learning--he would see to that--but there was much to do.

During August, Captain Arnold resigned for reasons that suggest the plight of many families. Explaining his situation, the Captain wrote that every male member of his family under fifty years of age--ten in all--was in the service, and that his father and two brothers had died recently. Arnold was now the executor or administrator of four estates,

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[279]Report of Lt. Col. E. C. Lightfoot, July 27, 1863, Official Records, I, XXVII, part 2, p. 873.

[280]Rosters of Co. B, Feb. 28-June 30, 1863, Co. D, April 31-July 1, 1863., Co. G, May 1-June 30, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

including his own, representing a total of 2700 acres and at least 41 Negroes without supervision, and he was also the guardian for two orphan minors--his niece and nephew. In addition, he was suffering from rheumatism, had frequently been unable to fulfill his duties, and submitted a surgeon's certificate as proof.[281] Arnold was released from the service, and Lieutenant James T. Deatley was promoted to command Company E.[282] The captain was the second of his family lost to that unit alone; Lieutenant Philip M. Arnold had died of illness shortly after the regiment was formed.[283]

As summer continued there was the inevitable picket duty, with the same routine as before. On the afternoon of August 6 a detachment from Company B went on picket duty at Banks' Ford. They found it "a very hard looking place,"[284] but the weather was warm and the watches short--an hour per man at night--and the men slept on the ground with a minimum of complaint. After four days they were relieved, and within an hour of their return to Fredericksburg at least one of their number had hurried into town to renew acquaintances with some young ladies.[285]

Private Elijah Johnson was a typical young man, and a good soldier. He indulged in serious reflections on his situation only rarely, and

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[281]Compiled service record of Capt. Mark Arnold, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[282]Compiled service record of Capt. James T. Deatley, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[283]Compiled service record of Lt. Philip M. Arnold, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[284]Elijah Johnson diary, MS in Virginia State Historical Society archives, Richmond, entries for Aug. 6, 1863, and following.

[285]*Ibid*.

seems to have worried little about the future. He savored the good things of life as he found them: a comfortable place to sleep, good pasture for his horse, a chance to break the monotony of the camp, and safe passage through another day. He especially enjoyed a home-cooked meal and an afternoon's social call, such as they might be, in the ruined town of Fredericksburg. He viewed all things with a veteran's equanimity--and a farmboy's preoccupation with the weather.

On August 12 Elijah was acting courier for General John R. Cooke's brigade of infantry, then stationed along the river across from Falmouth. He spent a pleasant day with the Carolinians, but learned that afternoon that there had been a skirmish on the road to Stafford Courthouse. Some pickets had been surprised by the Yankees; four of Captain Sandford's men were captured and another was dead.[286]

In camp there was rising speculation that the regiment might be leaving Fredericksburg. The rumors were true--the unit had been directed to move to Culpeper. In part this was a result of the inactivity in Virginia since the close of the Gettysburg campaign. In part it was due to the consolidation of the cavalry corps that Stuart had undertaken during this period. The Fifteenth Virginia could no longer be spared from the army because of the losses Stuart's regiments had taken during the past months. Above all, it must have been apparent that to delay this call any longer would dull the anticipation that had whetted the regiment's morale. On August 13 the men finally broke camp. Marching past Salem Church and the scarred woods around

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[286]Ibid., Aug. 12, 1863; Roster of Co. A, Oct. 31-Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

Chancellorsville, they crossed the Rapidan into the Piedmont farmlands of Culpeper County.

In the wake of this movement, a platoon from each company made a final scout of the vicinity. Lieutenant William C. Carrington led the party from Gantt's company as they crossed the river on the morning of the 14th. While two men scouted ahead, Private Johnson and three others rode toward Hartwood Church. Presently, they surprised a trio of Yankees and charged them, each man firing once in the excitement and missing. Two of the men escaped after a lengthy chase, but Johnson's exultant party returned from their "place of recreation" with a prisoner, one fine horse, and some much-needed equipment.[287]

The next day the situation was reversed. An old man living in Falmouth came into camp and told of some thirty Yankees nearby. When Carrington led his men to within a hundred yards of the party, it seemed that their number had been badly underestimated, and there were several dozen to be dealt with instead. "So we bout faced + give them the dodge,"[288] Johnson admitted, as the encounter was cancelled for want of further organization. Elijah and a friend spent the next few days in seclusion at various homes around the neighborhood. The refugees rather enjoyed their predicament, for they managed to hide in all the places where there were young ladies in residence, and they usually arrived just before dinner. They finally crossed the river at Port Royal, paused in Fredericksburg for breakfast, and sauntered

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[287]Elijah Johnson diary, Aug. 13, 1863, and entries following. For details of enemy activity see: Willard Glazier, Three Years in the Federal Cavalry (New York: R. H. Ferguson & Company, Publishers, 1871), pp. 307-11.

[288]Elijah Johnson diary, Aug. 21, 1863.

into camp on the afternoon of the 19th. With an outlook tempered by regret, Elijah complained that Culpeper was also "quite a hard place."[289]

The atmosphere was different. Few places in Virginia were as busy as Culpeper--the rail depot, the camping place, and the center of minor strategy and grand tactics. Not by coincidence were the largest cavalry battles of the war fought within a few miles of this area, for its broad, rolling fields were an ideal arena for the deployment of massed cavalry. By September, 1863, most of the army had been camped around Culpeper since its return from Gettysburg, causing the environs to resemble a gigantic county fair, with the inevitable dust and trampled grass, the mingled odors of animals and wood smoke and cooking, and the endless, languid bustle of camp life.[290]

For the first time the regiment was in the field under the command of a professional soldier, and incorporated at last in a brigade on active duty with the army. Much about this activity suggested the nature of a second beginning. It had been fourteen months since the panic at Malvern Hill, nearly ten months since the raid by Dahlgren, and almost a year since the regiment had been formed. All through

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[289] Ibid.

[290] Two sources describe camp life in great detail. See: Philip Van Doren Stern (ed.), Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies, Premier Civil War Classics (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1961), a reprint of John D. Billings' Hardtack and Coffee, and Carlton McCarthy's Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia. See also: Bell Irvin Wiley, The Common Soldier in the Civil War (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, n.d.), a reprint of the author's The Life of Billy Yank, and The Life of Johnny Reb.

the summer Collins had been preparing his men for this entry. Their regiment was one of the largest and least depleted at Stuart's disposal and he, as well as the rest of the cavalry corps, would follow their career with a professional scrutiny. The Fifteenth, in turn, could be assured that they would soon have the chance to prove themselves.

On September 9 the cavalry corps was reorganized into six brigades, with two divisions under Wade Hampton and Fitzhugh Lee.[291] The latter included the brigades of W. H. F. Lee, Lunsford L. Lomax, and Williams C. Wickham. The Fifteenth Virginia was assigned to Lomax's brigade, joining the Fifth and Eleventh Virginia and the First Battalion, Maryland Cavalry. In a subsequent arrangement, the Eleventh Virginia was replaced by the Sixth Virginia Cavalry.[292] The brigade horse artillery was provided by Captain Robert Preston Chew's battery--one of the finest in the army, and one which would closely support the command in both mounted and dismounted fighting.[293]

The strength of the regiment, as reported during the summer, probably had not changed substantially. At the close of June the nine companies reported a total of 589 men present for duty, with an aggregate enrollment of soldiers present and absent listed at 736.[294]

For the moment, however, there was little to be done. The Army of the Potomac also was in camp, some twelve or fifteen miles away,

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[291]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 2, pp. 707-08.

[292]Ibid.; McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 371-72.

[293]Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, pp. 773-74.

[294]Company returns, May 1-June 30, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

and an uneasy equilibrium prevailed. Lee disliked this inactivity and earnestly wished to resume the offensive, but was prevented largely by the jaded condition of the army's horses. "Nothing prevents my advancing now but the fear of killing our artillery horses," he wrote. "They are much reduced, and the hot weather and scarce forage keeps them so. The cavalry also suffer, and I fear to set them at work." Often, the animals could be given only a pound of corn or less per day. "You can judge of our prospects," Lee warned.[295]

As this condition extended into September the regiment took its turn on picket duty, guarding the fords around Brandy Station. Stuart posted his pickets across the fields along the Rappahannock. "Just in front of us the enemy did likewise," one man recalled:

> The pickets were in full view of each other, and a long-range musket might have sent a bullet across the line at any time, but we did not molest each other. At night the lines came still closer together, and we could distinctly hear them relieving their pickets. . . .[296]

Presently the men became rather well acquainted, and a brisk trade developed between Southerners with tobacco and Yankees with coffee and sugar; "it was not an uncommon thing to see them marching across the fields to meet each other and exchange greetings, . . ."[297]

Elijah Johnson, suffering from "bowell disease," recorded other activities as well--horse guard, a camp meeting in the bivouac of the Thirteenth Virginia, and, more significantly, the introduction of

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[295]Lee to Davis, Aug. 24, 1863, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 2, pp. 664-65.

[296]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 116.

[297]Ibid., p. 117.

infantry drill to the regiment.[298] This training was apparently begun in response to a suggestion by Lee that Stuart's dismounted men be "thoroughly drilled as infantry, and armed to be used as infantry, until they can be mounted."[299] Though the Fifteenth Virginia was probably as well mounted as any of Stuart's regiments, the warning seems to have been heeded by Collins in anticipation of losses to come.

At the same time, the major was able to reclaim one of the detached companies. Since April, Company C had been on service in the Department of Richmond, performing an extended picket duty in cooperation with such units as the Tenth Virginia and Thirty-second Battalion, Virginia Cavalry. On May 3 at least part of the company had been in action at Walkerton,[300] and a month later had helped to repulse a Federal expedition into King William County.[301] On June 16 the company was ordered to White House, on the Pamunkey River, to guard the bridge there as part of the general dispositions made to protect the capital during the Gettysburg campaign.[302]

On the morning of June 25 a force of the enemy landed near the White House. In what seems to have been a running skirmish, Capps' company was driven beyond Tunstall's Station and the captain himself

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[298]Elijah Johnson diary, Aug. 29, 1863, and entries following.

[299]Lee to Stuart, Aug. 15, 1863, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 2, p. 648.

[300]Compiled service record of Pvt. Celious Fentress, Co. C, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[301]Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, pp. 861-62.

[302]Ibid., pp. 897-98.

was injured by a fall from his horse. About noon the engagement was broken off, and Lieutenant Alexander W. Edwards assumed command of the unit.[303] By June 30 his men had reoccupied the area around the White House.[304]

By mid-July, the company had begun to operate throughout New Kent, Henrico, and Charles City counties.[305] On August 5 Capps reported from headquarters at Montpelier that a "monitor" and three gunboats had been sighted off Hog Island in the James River.[306] Such details, however humble, were a significant part of the surveillance assigned to the company, and it seems that these messages were transmitted not only to General Elzey in Richmond, but to the headquarters of the Fifteenth Virginia and on to General Lee himself.[307]

During at least part of August, Capps commanded the Thirty-second Battalion as well.[308] His report of a scout toward Williamsburg reveals a typical day's service:

> Engaged the enemy at New Kent Court House on Friday, Aug. 28th, 1863. Lt. F. Charles Hume, Adjt. 32d Bat. Va. Cavalry, within charge of a small detachment of

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[303] Ibid.,pp. 928, 935, 941; compiled service records of Capt. Edward Capps and Sgt. William C. Holt, Co. C, reels 139 and 141, Microcopy 324.

[304] Roster of Co. C, April 30-June 30, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[305] Compiled service records of Lts. George P. D. Brice and Alexander W. Edwards, Co. C, reels 139 and 140, Microcopy 324.

[306] Compiled service record of Capt. Edward Capps, Co. C, reel 139. Microcopy 324.

[307] Official Records, I, XXVII, part 3, p. 928.

[308] Compiled service records of Capt. Edward Capps and Pvt. John H. Whitehurst, Co. C, reels 139 and 144, Microcopy 324.

> Co. "C" 15th Va. Cavalry, scouted within six miles of Williamsburg, Va. No casualties with the company of interest.[309]

By the end of the month the company had shifted its position to the vicinity of Charles City Courthouse, and by September 5 the command was in Richmond with orders to rejoin the regiment.[310]

Capps' men seem to have conducted themselves well through this entire period; indeed, they were so busy that the captains stationed along the Rappahannock had begun to regard such an assignment as the surest way to find some action. This irony would soon be resolved, however, as Collins continued to assemble his command and prepare it for action.

Culpeper soon became the center of another campaign. A large number of troops had been sent from the Army of the Potomac to South Carolina and to quell the draft riots in New York City, and these losses had immobilized the enemy for several weeks. When the Federals learned of the dispatch of Longstreet and two divisions to the west, however, they determined to enlarge upon the opportunity and push their forces across the Rappahannock.[311]

On September 13 the Federal cavalry led the advance into Culpeper County. Stuart received notice of this movement the night before, and by 4:00 A.M. the warning had been passed to the companies on picket

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[309]"Record of Events," Roster of Co. C, June 30-Aug. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109. Punctuation in the quotation above has been altered slightly.

[310]Ibid., compiled service record of Capt. Edward Capps, Co. C, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[311]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 220-24; Esposito, The West Point Atlas of the Civil War, text opposite maps 117 and 118.

duty.[312] Immediately, the wagons and disabled horses were sent to the rear, and the watch was increased.

The Fifteenth Virginia appears to have been on duty at several fords below the Rappahannock Bridge. The strain of waiting for battle before dawn is one of the most difficult trials of a soldier, and to relieve their nervousness the men discussed the rumors that circulate along a picket line. As their first real test under fire this engagement bore the added significance of a point of honor. By the time this ominous Sabbath had dawned the regiment seems to have reached one simple consensus: The Yankees, if they came, would have to contend with a group of men who were not inclined to get out of their way.

The battle began about 7:00 A.M., when the first Yankees began to cross the river.[313] Elijah Johnson heard firing at the post below his and saw the enemy approaching rapidly. A portion of the regiment was overwhelmed in this initial onset, but Collins gathered a squadron, charged the Federals, and recaptured his men.[314] Then, with contact established, he withdrew the regiment at the double quick and reformed the line near Brandy Station. The terrain along that section of the Rappahannock was level and rather open for about a mile. Around Brandy it grows hillier and continues so to Culpeper, and beyond, to the more precipitous banks of the Rapidan. The distance from one knoll to the

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[312]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 372-73.

[313]Elijah Johnson thought the attack began about 8:00 A.M. McClellan (I Rode With Jeb Stuart, p. 373) said the attack began at daylight.

[314]Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

other is just about musket range. It was ground well suited for a fighting retreat.

After the first encounter with Collins the Yankees advanced slowly, reluctant to bring on a general engagement and reluctant, also, after several weeks of truce, to fire on the Southerners; "so considerate were they that they did not open fire on us until we had gotten beyond range of their guns," one of Lomax's men observed.[315] By all indications, they were merely trying to crowd the rebels away from Culpeper. This condition lasted until both sides had gone about a mile; then someone began to fire, and the affair became more serious.

Regiments were retiring from the other fords as well, as the broad plain filled with three divisions of Yankee cavalry. General Lomax assumed control, and the Confederate line of battle was consolidated. The Fifteenth Virginia, dismounted, held the right wing of this line, supported by the Ninth Virginia, mounted.[316] The Fifteenth charged the enemy and halted their advance momentarily, though the ground could not be held. The regiment came under a heavy fire but maintained good order and conducted an obstinate withdrawal. "Our squadron fell back slowly for two miles right in the face of the yanks," Elijah wrote, "fighting every inch of ground."[317]

Men began to fall who could not be carried away; others were compelled to abandon their dying animals to the enemy. Private John C. Staples was ordered out as a sharpshooter and left his horse with

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[315]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 117.

[316]R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, p. 99.

[317]Elijah Johnson diary, Sept. 13, 1863.

another man to hold. Before word came to retire, a shell burst beneath Staples' mount and the animal reared in panic and broke away. As the line was driven back, Staples looked for his horse in vain. In a few moments the entire position was overrun and there was no chance to search for the animal.[318]

Wounded horses had begun to run across the field in growing numbers. The spectacle was appalling, and in some ways harder to forget than the death of a soldier. One man was shocked by the sudden appearance of an animal that could have been Staples':

> A fine horse, which had been horribly gashed by a shell in the side, and whose entrails were protruding from the wound, dashed from a field towards me, on the march, giving vent to piteous shrieks of pain as it ran, and, having reached me, threw its head appealingly over my horse's neck. Seeing its hopeless case, I drew my pistol and placed it back of its eye and fired....[319]

Less than a mile from Culpeper the regiment rallied in a grove of trees on one of the hills northeast of town--possibly Mount Pony. Once again they delivered a charge, only to see the enemy pause and come on in greater strength. "We fought the Yanks desperately in those woods," Elijah wrote, and Northern accounts are unanimous in their grudging tribute to the resistance by the rebels in that section of the line held by the Fifteenth Virginia.[320] An officer in the Second New York conceded that they had resisted the crossing with

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[318]Compiled service record of Pvt. John C. Staples, Co. B, reel 144, Microcopy 324. The animal had been valued at $700.

[319]G. W. Beale, A Lieutenant of Cavalry in Lee's Army, p. 126.

[320]Elijah Johnson diary, Sept. 13, 1863: Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 111-34.

"dogged pertinacity," and had "disputed every inch of ground with great stubbornness."[321]

At one point the lines closed to two hundred yards, and Chew's cannoneers were aiming at individual soldiers in the enemy line.[322] But the Yankee artillerists, as was so often the case, had the superiority in weight of metal and numbers. "They had two or three batteries in commanding positions and were firing at everything they saw."[323] They overshot the Confederate positions, however, and the shells began falling in Culpeper, "crashing through buildings and exploding all over and through the northern and eastern part of town."[324] At least one civilian was killed and several were wounded.[325]

Elijah Johnson felt a sudden blow against his waist. He looked for blood and saw that a bullet had struck his belt plate and bent it nearly in two. As if to confirm this good fortune, a second ball slammed into Elijah's chest. Another dread examination revealed a hole through a packet of letters, a packet of envelopes, and Johnson's diary. He found the bullet, apparently from about a .52 calibre carbine, embedded just halfway through his pocket testament. A painful bruise began to swell, but Elijah stayed in rank. "I continued to fight as long as there was any fighting to be done," he recalled

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[321]Glazier, Three Years in the Federal Cavalry, p. 312.

[322]George M. Neese, Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1911), pp. 209-10.

[323]Ibid., p. 210.

[324]Ibid., p. 211.

[325]D. A. Grimsley, "Culpeper as a Battle Ground," Raleigh Travers Green (comp.), Genealogical and Historical Notes on Culpeper County, Virginia (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1964), pp. 112-13.

with pride--carefully writing around the hole in his diary.[326] The incident fascinated him for days; even the imperturbable Elijah had been impressed.

About 1:00 P.M. the line was flanked, and gave way under frontal assault. The Ninth and Fifteenth Regiments had fought until nearly isolated by the retreat of the left and center. Collins extricated the command by following a line of ravines and then the railroad embankment out of town.[327] Three fieldpieces, left exposed by the retreat, were almost immediately overrun by the enemy. Their loss was humiliating to Stuart, and orders were published that officers would be held strictly accountable for the defense of their artillery support.[328]

One gun was captured from the Fifth Virginia and one from the Ninth--their first such loss.[329] There was fighting in the streets for possession of the guns, and others were nearly captured. The cannoneers joined a stream of mounted and dismounted soldiers fleeing through town. "Nothing but good Rebel wind and first-class pluck for racing saved us from capture," one admitted, "for I heard a mighty clattering of sabers and scabbards, mingled with a din of rushing horses right close behind us."[330] The Yankees charged this throng

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[326]Elijah Johnson diary, Sept. 13, 1863.

[327]R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, p. 99.

[328]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 2, p. 729.

[329]Grimsley, "Culpeper as a Battle Ground," in Genealogical and Historical Notes on Culpeper County, Virginia, p. 113; R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, p. 99.

[330]Neese, Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery, p. 211.

and picked up many as they ran, including Elijah's brother, Jack.[331] South of town a hand-to-hand conflict developed "in which the saber was for the most part exclusively used,"[332] and the Yankees were delayed long enough for the lines to reform.

General Stuart arrived on the field to supervise a withdrawal behind the Rapidan. The Yankees followed slowly, but apparently neither side desired to resume an encounter that had already been too costly. By 6:00 P.M. the lines had reached the vicinity of Cedar Mountain, with only slight skirmishing reported.[333] The Federals extended their position along the Rapidan during the next few days, but no serious fighting occured.[334]

Outside of the units engaged, few people realized how intense the battle had been. In Richmond one man remarked disparagingly: "There has been another fight (cavalry) at Brandy Station, and our men, for want of numbers, 'fell back.' When will these things cease?"[335]

A soldier in another regiment blamed the defeat on General Lomax who, he claimed, owed his rank more to a "clannish feeling" among West Pointers than to any merit as a leader of men. Lomax was a strict disciplinarian, and some of the troops resented his "austere"

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[331]Elijah Johnson diary, Sept. 13, 1863; compiled service record of Pvt. F. J. Johnson, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[332]D. A. Grimsley, "Culpeper as a Battle Ground," in Genealogical and Historical Notes on Culpeper County, Virginia, p. 113.

[333]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 134-35.

[334]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 373-74.

[335]Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, II, 44.

conduct. "The result of the Culpeper fight was not unexpected in the brigade," the soldier remarked, "and was due in large measure to the unpopularity of its leader."[336] But there seem to have been no such complaints by members of the Fifteenth Virginia--a fact which is more remarkable because the regiment had probably done the hardest fighting that day.

The enemy reported a total of forty-one prisoners captured,[337] while at least forty were lost by the Fifteenth Virginia alone. At least six men in the regiment were wounded, one mortally, and Captain Simpson was hospitalized for a contusion of the left leg and shoulder--probably from a fall from his horse.[338] Of some thirty-five men captured, two are known to have died in prison. Casualties were most severe in companies F and K, which lost nearly a dozen men each. Companies A, B, E, and I lost three or four each. The list of personnel missing in action or known captured included three lieutenants, Sergeant Major Fred M. Ellet, First Sergeant Columbus W. Foreman of Company F, and several other non-commissioned officers. Undoubtedly, some of those captured were disabled, as in the case of Lieutenant Charles V. Dudley, treated in prison for a sabre wound.[339]

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[336]George Baylor, Bull Run to Bull Run; or, Four Years in the Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond: B. F. Johnson Publishing Co., 1900), pp. 154-55.

[337]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 2, p. 175.

[338]Compiled service record of Capt. James Simpson, Co. I, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

[339]These figures are compiled from remarks on the company returns (Box 537, Record Group 109), verified in some cases by the compiled service records (reels 133-45, Microcopy 324). Another casualty, not reported in either source, was listed in Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 774.

With an approximate loss of one man in every ten, the regiment had literally been decimated.

It was a remarkable defeat, however, and perhaps a turning point in the career of the regiment. The men had fought well, and their valor was witnessed by everyone on the field. Indeed, the regiment may have fought too well--overwhelmed finally because they refused to abandon a position. New troops sometimes did this. But more important, the individual companies had faced the enemy as a unit, and that experience did much, it seems, to reduce the acrimony that had divided them. With more experience they could avoid these battlefield blunders. And already the officers were showing skill and deftness in the tactical employment of their commands.

CHAPTER VI

BEGINNING OF A HARD WAR

After the Battle of Culpeper both armies entrenched along the Rapidan to wait for further developments. The Confederate victory at Chickamauga resulted in the despatch of the Federal Eleventh and Twelfth Corps to Tennessee, and with the departure of these troops General George G. Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac, was content to hold the ground that had already been gained. Meanwhile, as one Northerner observed, the effects of the war soon became visible in Culpeper County.

> The country now occupied by our troops has heretofore escaped the influence of hostile armies, . . . The plantations and buildings are therefore in good condition compared with the desolate and wasted appearance they bore in the country occupied by our army for the last month. But this state of things is not destined to continue long. Scarcely a fence can be seen within a mile of our camp even now, while large and elegant plantation houses, from which the occupants have fled in fear, are being torn down and the contents appropriated to the temporary use of the soldiers, who are liable to march away and leave them at any moment. . . . While such a useless and wanton destruction of property is allowed to go on unchecked, it is not surprising that the advance of our army fails to develope Union sentiment and gain friends to our cause.[340]

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[340] The Detroit Free Press, Sept. 29, 1863, (Morning Edition), p. 1.

On September 22 the Federal cavalry attempted a reconnaissance toward Gordonsville, advancing from Madison Courthouse toward Liberty Mills. Stuart met them at Jack's Shop, and for a time it seemed that the Confederates would be overwhelmed and routed. At one point Stuart's cannoneers were firing back to back, while his regiments charged in opposite directions within sight of each other.[341]

In support of this action the regiment was withdrawn from its camp near Raccoon Ford and marched west to the vicinity of Barboursville. On the 24th they found the Yankees and, in what Elijah Johnson called a "small fight," drove them "like chaft before the wind."[342] Afterwards, with Orange and Greene counties cleared, the regiment returned to camp by way of Orange Courthouse. In a moment of reflection Johnson confessed that "the Yanks came very nigh getting to Gordonsville."[343] But they had been turned away, both on the 22nd and in the skirmish on the 24th, and for that the troopers could congratulate themselves.

Again there was a period of quiet. Collins made use of the time to hold an inspection,[344] followed by a regimental drill on October 5. General Lomax stopped by to take charge of the exercise. The field was brilliant with sunshine that gave a martial glow to the lowliest of homespun and glittered from bridles and scabbards and buttons.

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[341]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 374-75; Burke Davis, Jeb Stuart, The Last Cavalier (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc. 1957), pp. 359-60.

[342]Elijah Johnson diary, Sept. 23-24, 1863.

[343]Ibid., Sept. 24, 1863.

[344]Ibid., Sept. 29, 1863.

The general knew his drill, and he seems to have been the very picture of military bearing that day. As he addressed the regiment, and as the lines of companies made response, the men seem to have been rather impressed with the moment, and the sight of their officers, and with the panoply that they themselves presented.[345]

There is a magnificence inherent in the movement of masses of men under arms, and on that autumn afternoon the soldiers of the Fifteenth Virginia were able--almost for the first time--to show the general what they could do. That discovery was apparently rather exhilarating. The feeling, in more practical terms, is known as morale; given a modicum of discipline and direction, it will amount to the difference between effective and ineffective combat units. It was a feeling that was definitely being developed among the personnel of the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry

For several days Lee had known of the detachments from Meade's army, and it seemed that the Federals might be maneuvered out of position. In mid-October the Confederates bagan a wide, westerly flanking movement known as the Bristoe campaign. The army marched for days without managing to force a decisive engagement, and the burden of maintaining contact with the enemy fell largely on the cavalry. To a large extent the horsemen of both sides failed in this mission because of their preoccupation with finding and fighting each other.[346]

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[345] Ibid., Oct. 5, 1863. "I am very much pleased with Genl. Lomax," Johnson wrote, "I think he is a good Officer & man."

[346] Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 248-63.

But the campaign did produce several spirited cavalry battles, and it is possible to reconstruct the activity of the regiment in some detail.

The fighting began on October 10. Stuart and a large portion of his command had already left the lines behind the Rapidan and were skirmishing to the northwest, toward Madison Courthouse and James City. Lee's infantry followed, endeavoring to turn the Yankee position at Culpeper. But the Federal cavalry did not remain idle, and Fitzhugh Lee's division was left along the Rapidan to screen this movement from them. On the afternoon of the 10th General John Buford's division came across at Germanna Ford and proceeded to scout toward Orange Courthouse. They were slowed by the skirmishers of the Fifth Virginia and by next morning, a Sunday, the entire brigade was under marching orders ready to meet them.[347]

They discovered the enemy near Morton's Ford. Dismounting the brigade, Lomax sent skirmishers foward to occupy some earthworks which had recently been constructed. The enemy opened fire on the line with two pieces of artillery. As the engagement began, Major Collins deployed a squadron to the front and sent two more squadrons into the rifle pits facing the river. For three hours Federal artillery checked the advance. Presently, Chambliss' brigade reinforced the line and added a section of artillery to oppose the Yankees. The firing increased.[348]

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[347] Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 442, 465.

[348] Reports of Fitzhugh Lee, Lomax, Collins, and others are in Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 462-70.

Company F had taken position on the extreme right, and when the Yankees began to waver, Cooper's men pushed obliquely forward and drove a squadron of the enemy from a hill nearby. Then the entire line advanced--Stuart called it "a gallant charge"[349]--and took possession of the ford. The regiment lost two men wounded.[350]

The command pursued the enemy toward Stevensburg. They mounted and gained the opposite bank, followed by Chambliss' brigade.[351] The Yankees turned to fight several times, and the encounters were described by one man as typical cavalry skirmishing:

> We had taken shelter behind a low-railed fence, against which the Yankees, who had just left it, had thrown the earth as a protection. We were all lying down close to the ground and firing over the top. . . .
>
> We were ordered to move forward. . .across the open field, which we did, the bullets buzzing past our ears like so many bees. We went a few hundred yards and then lay down flat on the ground in the grass, and continued firing at the puffs of smoke in our front, as that was all we could see. The enemy was lying as flat to the ground as we were. A great deal of this kind of fighting is done. . . It doesn't rise to the dignity of a battle but is called skirmishing.[352]

Presently the Yankees retired to their horses, and the line moved forward again.

As the advance continued, Lomax's brigade began to make contact on the left with Yankee units retreating from Culpeper. Collins took

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[349]Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Bristoe campaign, ibid., p. 442.

[350]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 469.

[351]Ibid., pp. 465, 474; Neese, Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery, pp. 217-23.

[352]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, pp. 124-25.

the regiment to intercept some ambulances and stragglers, stumbled onto a Federal brigade near the Orange & Alexandria railroad line, and was forced to retire.

It was the beginning of a battle. On the right, the sharpshooters had broken the stand by the Yankees and were pushing toward Brandy Station.[353] Collins found the brigade horse artillery somewhat isolated by this advance and, recalling Stuart's orders after Culpeper, posted the regiment in support of the cannoneers.

In the meantime Stuart had completed a wide sweep to the west and was approaching from the left. Between the convergence of Stuart's and Fitzhugh Lee's forces the division commanded by General Judson Kilpatrick--part of which had already been sighted by Collins--was in hasty retreat. While Lomax and Chambliss continued to force Buford's division before them, this column was approaching almost directly from behind. Stuart's maneuver had precipitated Kilpatrick's withdrawal, but Stuart's men were busy with General David M. Gregg's division, with which they had been skirmishing for the past two days, and could offer no assistance. It was an extraordinary situation.

Colonel Thomas L. Rosser, commanding the Fifth Virginia, discovered the danger to the rear of his regiment, as well as to the Sixth Virginia and First Maryland, and the colonels broke off the action in their front and reformed along the line established by Collins.[254] The artillery had been busy there, repulsing the force drawn out by the

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[353]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 465, 468.

[354]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 381-82.

reconnaissance of the Fifteenth and keeping it off balance. The gunners soon turned their fire on Kilpatrick's column as the troops looked on in amazement at an enemy in full retreat, moving directly across the front of Lomax's brigade. The colonels soon seized the initiative and charged the enemy division from the flank. "Never in my life did I reap such a rich harvest in horses and prisoners," Rosser reported,[355] and one Yankee admitted that parts of the column, especially the rear, had been "very roughly handled."[356]

The Federals rallied at Fleetwood Hill, where they were well supported by artillery, and the battle became a series of charges and countercharges delivered in the best tradition of the cavalry service.

> No one who looked upon that wonderful panorama can ever forget it. On the great field were riderless horses and dying men; clouds of dust from solid shot and bursting shell occasionally obscured the sky; broken caissons and upturned ambulances obstructed the way, while long lines of cavalry were pressing forward in the charge, with their drawn sabres, glistening in the bright sunlight.[357]

As the Fifteenth started down the ridge toward the railroad it came under an enfilade fire from the direction of Fleetwood Hill. Collins wheeled the regiment in mid-course, no simple matter in itself, and began to charge the Yankees there. Almost from nowhere the Fifth Virginia appeared out of the confusion and charged through

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[355] Ibid., p. 382.

[356] Kidd, Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman, p. 208.

[357] Glazier, Three Years in the Federal Cavalry, p. 329.

the ranks of the Fifteenth.[358] Notwithstanding the disorder that ensued, Collins' men continued along the railroad, drove the enemy from Brandy Station, and forced them back on their supports. Then the regiment retired and reformed--still under fire.

Almost immediately, Collins was calling for another try. Seldom during the war was a cavalry charge delivered according to regulations. It was a difficult and fussy business, getting several hundred men and horses arranged as they should be--with intervals between squadrons all properly observed, everyone in their correct position along the line, file closers in place, and guidons posted. Most commanders never had time, or opportunity, and their commands were often too scrambled to manage an assault of that nature. But this seems to have been such an occasion, and Collins seems to have been the type to try it--partly for show and to demoralize the enemy, and partly to prove to the men that they were capable of such a thing.

It did not last that way for long, of course. As the movement gained momentum it became an uncontrollable horse race of excited troopers and wild, scrambling horses. But at the beginning it was unforgettably picturesque; and as the regiment started out with sabres drawn it appeared to be overwhelming, and soldiers on both sides paused and took notice, and the generals remembered it as a rare feat of arms. "A series of charges and countercharges. . . was executed

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[358] Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 469.

with the utmost gallantry and effect," Stuart wrote, "five distinct charges having been made at this point by the Fifth, Sixth, and Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry. . . ."[359]

At one point the regiment hacked its way into the enemy mass until two Federal regiments threatened to envelop either flank. The attack on the left was countered by the hasty arrival of another regiment from the brigade,[360] and each unit now fought the enemy where it found them.

The action was hand to hand. One man was captured, and Captain Cooper went to his rescue. The captain's horse was shot from under him and Cooper himself was taken prisoner. Another change of positions gave him a chance to escape, and he made his way back to the regiment.[361] Captain Capps was less fortunate; he was wounded in the leg and hauled off the field by the enemy.[362] A large number of horses were lost or disabled, and throughout the field dismounted troopers were making their way to the rear, some on foot and others carried along by their comrades.

Squads of skirmishers, deployed by each regiment, fought dismounted. They were surrounded repeatedly, but fought their way out with carbine and revolver or were rescued by the mounted units.[363]

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[359]Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Bristoe campaign, ibid., p. 444.

[360]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 469.

[361]Ibid., p. 470.

[362]Ibid., p. 469; compiled service record of Capt. Edward Capps, Co. C, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[363]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, p. 382; Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 465.

Collins distinguished himself for his skill in handling the skirmishers of the Fifteenth, and several times led the rescue of the sharpshooters of the entire brigade.[364]

The fighting in this area centered around Brandy Station and the woods and railroad line in the immediate vicinity. For at least two hours the squadrons collided in one of the most determined and tumultuous battles of the war. At the close of the day's fighting, as twilight began to shade the battlefield, Colonel Rosser led a charge that cleared the area around the station and drove the enemy back to Fleetwood Heights,[365] where stuart called off the attack.

The regiment lost two men killed, fourteen wounded, and four wounded and missing, Collins reported.[366] This had been rather severe; it amounted to twenty percent of the killed and practically twenty-five percent of the wounded in the brigade for the entire campaign.[367] Yet because the regiment had maintained such good order these losses undoubtedly had been minimized. As General Lomax observed, its very order and compactness had enabled the regiment to inflict far greater losses than it had suffered.[368] And that is the essence of warfare.

That evening, still under harassment from flank and rear, the Federal cavalry recrossed the Rappahannock. Lomax moved the brigade

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[364]Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[365]Hopkins, _From Bull Run to Appomattox,_ pp. 121-22.

[366]_Official Records_, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 469.

[367]_Ibid_., p. 464.

[368]Compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

to Welford Ford, a little upstream and almost behind the position at Fleetwood, and this movement probably hastened the retreat. The Fifteenth Virginia, which may have been the last to retire from Brandy Station, rejoined the brigade at the ford.[369] From there, in the hills beyond, they could see the campfires of Lee's army, which the brigade rejoined that night.[370]

By Monday evening the command had reached the vicinity of Warrenton Springs. Company B went on picket duty, and Private Johnson captured a pair of Yankees who were "straglin about." He relieved them of their sidearms, and the next morning went scavenging along the road and found another handgun and "a great many other things too numerous to mention." He soon disposed of one of the guns for forty-five dollars.[371]

As the army concentrated around Warrenton during the 13th, Stuart kept his men posted on the roads to the east. Later in the day he led a reconnaissance toward Catlett's Station, while Lomax's brigade remained near Cedar Run to maintain communications between Stuart and the army. By evening the brigade still guarded the road from Warrenton to Auburn, but it had discovered a large force of the enemy approaching from the south. The Fifteenth dismounted, advanced through the woods occupied by the enemy skirmishers, and drove them back to

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[369]Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 469.

[370]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, pp. 125-26.

[371]Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 12, 1863.

their main body.[372] They found infantry, supported by artillery, and the men soon began to dodge a rain of canister. Then the Federals deployed in strength, and the regiment retired to its led horses. According to Lomax the men "had been exposed to a heavy fire of artillery and had contended most gallantly with the enemy's infantry."[373] The men went into camp not far away, as the sound of the enemy's drums drifted through the autumn evening.[374]

Lomax had been dislodged from Auburn, however, and the enemy column--composed of the Federal Third Corps--had isolated Stuart's force between itself and another Federal column around Catlett's Station. The Confederates spent an anxious and embarrassing night trapped within musket range of a large part of Meade's army, but managed to extricate themselves at dawn. The cavalry reassembled and moved on.[375]

All during Wednesday, October 14, the action continued to develop satisfactorily. "We have been driving them all day," Johnson noted; "we are now in 10 miles of Manassas making preparation to fight, they are fighting on the right now. . . . I have been marching day + night + haven't had time to write what has occured + haven't had a pencil fit to write with."[376] The battle Johnson heard was at Bristoe Station

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[372] Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 470.

[373] Report of Brig. Gen. L. L. Lomax on the Bristoe campaign, ibid., p. 466.

[374] Ibid., p. 468.

[375] William W. Blackford, War Years With Jeb Stuart (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), pp. 238-41; McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 386-93; Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 448-49.

[376] Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 14, 1863.

where A. P. Hill's corps had blundered into the Federal rear guard. Hill's men met a quick and bloody repulse, and Meade's army resumed its withdrawal.

By 8:00 A.M. on Thursday morning the major had the regiment in marching order. It promised to be a gloomy day, but the morale of the men seems to have remained high. Skirmishing had continued until after dark the evening before, and judging by the past few days it could be assumed that the Yankees were retreating again. Private Johnson was not entirely pleased with affairs, however, for the men had outrun their supplies. "Our rations have been out three days + I am getting pretty hongry," he wrote.[377]

The encounter that afternoon was opened by Gordon's brigade, reinforced soon after by Fitzhugh Lee's division. The cavalry advanced together. "We found the enemy near McLean's Ford," Collins reported. "My regiment was dismounted and with the rest of the brigade advanced to the ford, driving the enemy's pickets across Bull Run, capturing 2 or 3 of them and occupying the rifle pits, while the enemy occupied the opposite side with infantry and artillery."[378]

At least two men were wounded. One of them was Adjutant Dickinson, who went down with his horse killed under him. The lieutenant was shot through the right thigh and left leg, but it seemed that he might be spared an amputation. Still, the nearest rail line

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[377] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1863.

[378] Report of Maj. C. R. Collins on the Bristoe campaign, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 470.

was at Manassas, and from there he began a painful journey to the hospital in Richmond.[379] It was little comfort that he had taken this wound not more than five miles from the spot where he had been hit during the first Battle of Masassas.

The lines skirmished across the river for an hour or two, but the Yankees refused to retire from their position. Lomax withdrew the brigade and moved it back toward Masassas in support of an advance along the Brentsville Road, but dusk brought an end to the day's activities.[380]

The weather on October 16 was also gloomy, with a steady rain. The brigade took a position around Bristoe Station, and there was a scatter of picket firing. A cautious advance by some Federals was repulsed by the brigade artillery. The weather had cleared by Saturday morning, and the regiment was mounted and moved by Gainesville. It met little resistance that day or the next, when Collins' men guarded the river at Millford, above Bristoe Station.[381] The engagement on the 15th had seen the last of Meade's army cross Bull Run, where Lee declined to pursue.

The campaign was over, but Stuart looked for one more chance to strike the Federal cavalry. The opportunity was granted in full when Kilpatrick's division began a careless advance through Gainesville toward New Baltimore. As the Yankees passed through the town of

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[379] Ibid.; compiled service of Lt. Allan Dickinson, Adjt., reel 140. Microcopy 324.

[380] Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 449, 461, 463, 466, 470.

[381] Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 16-17, 1863; Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 466, 470.

Buckland they were beset by a vigorous flank attack by Fitzhugh Lee's division, while Stuart advanced with Hampton's division from Warrenton. The result, which became known as the "Buckland Races," was a total rout--"the most signal and complete that any cavalry has suffered during the war," Stuart declared.[382]

With regret, Lomax and his colonels reported that their brigade was the last to reach the field. The Fifteenth Virginia had been the very last, marching with a squadron deployed as rear guard. From Elijah Johnson's account, however, it seems the regiment fully shared in the pride of the achievement, and he described the Yankee disaster as though he had personally been its cause. As they approached the area there was reason for jubilation, with the sight of fields churned by pursuit and squads of prisoners going to the rear, and even some wagons and a fieldpiece standing deserted in the rush.[383] The entire army enjoyed a laugh at the episode, "administering as it did a quietus to the enemy's cavalry for the remainder of the fall, and severely chastising their favorite cavalry leader, Kilpatrick."[384] Nor did they overlook the embarrassing loss by General George A. Custer of his headquarters baggage and his personal and official papers.[385] Stuart thought it was remarkable when the entire division suspended

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[382]Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Bristoe campaign, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 452.

[383]Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 19, 1863.

[384]Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Bristoe campaign, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 452.

[385]Blackford, War Years With Jeb Stuart, pp. 241-42.

operations for a month, and jibed that it probably took that long to gather all the fugitives.[386]

"Unannoyed by the enemy, whose blatant braggadocio a few days previous had threatened so much,"[387] the men recrossed the Rappahannock the next day, covering the retrograde movement of the army. "Came very nigh swimming our horses," Elijah noted. On a more vital concern Private Johnson complained about the rations--none since the 16th, "and I am getting hungry,"[388] although that problem was apparently relieved soon after.

There were general congratulations. Lomax praised his regimental commanders; "ever at the post of duty and danger, they gallantly led their commands into battle and set an example of heroic and cheerful endurance worthy of the imitation of all."[389] He also cited the success of the brigade sharpshooters in tactics that would be employed increasingly in the future: "dismounted by regiments and led by the regimental commanders, they proved more than a match for those of the enemy, and an obstacle that their mounted men could not overcome."[390]

Major Collins made special mention of the gallantry of Captain Cooper and thanked Private Littleton Cockrell, one of Harding's men,

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[386]Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Bristoe campaign, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 452.

[387]Ibid.

[388]Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 20, 1863.

[389]Report of Brig. Gen. L. L. Lomax on the Bristoe campaign, Official Records, I, XXIX, part 1, p. 466.

[390]Ibid., p. 465.

for his services as courier. "Much praise is also due to many whom I could name and whose services will be remembered," the major concluded, though he did not pretend that the regiment had been the ideal of gallantry, for "there were others who sought trivial excuses for leaving their companies when their services were most needed."[391] Collins expected too much of them to be easily satisfied, and he would hold them to the mark. Still, the results were encouraging.

Stuart was lavish in his priase, and concluded that "God having granted our cavalry signal success at every point, and chastised a vainglorious people, to Him, therefore, belong the honor and the glory."[392] For his part Private Johnson was more to the point, saying only "I feel very thankful that God has spared me in such a rade."[393]

The Bristoe campaign, following the engagement at Culpeper, provided the initiation of the Fifteenth Virginia into that fabled organization known as the Cavalry Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia. In September the regiment had shown a remarkable tenacity against enormous odds, and for the past eleven days they had marched and fought as well as Stuart's best. Through this period there seems to have been a perceptible growth of morale, almost in direct proportion to the regiment's exposure to the hardships of campaign. They were indeed becoming soldiers.

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[391]Report of Maj. C. R. Collins on the Bristoe campaign, ibid., p. 470.

[392]Report of Maj. Gen. J. E. B. Stuart on the Bristoe campaign, ibid., p. 453.

[393]Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 21, 1863.

For a few days the men relaxed, camped on the John Minor Botts farm near Culpeper. Mr. Botts was a distinguished gentleman, respected by the Northern army for his Union sentiments, and by the South for his integrity. He managed a magnificent estate and habitually supplied the soldiers with such luxuries as fresh milk.[394] Elijah Johnson went rabbit hunting--"had a long walk + killed nothing."[395] At the end of the month the regiment went on picket duty near Jeffersonton, posting a line that extended at least as far as Waterloo, on the upper branches of the Rappahannock. On the evening of November 2, some of Rosser's command were seen across the river. The pickets spread the alarm that the Yankees were advancing, and this caused "great confusion" among the inhabitants.[396] Otherwise, there was little to mention.

It was a duty that rivaled Fredericksburg for comforts. People evidently outdid themselves in offering meals to the men, and there were a large number of young ladies to be met. Elijah described it all in terms of near rapture and hoped the assignment might last a week or two. Nonetheless, a relief arrived on the 3rd and the men returned to the Botts farm. The next day was taken up with a brigade review, followed on November 5 by a general cavalry review which was attended by a large crowd.[397]

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[394]Hopkins, _From Bull Run to Appomattox_, p. 116.

[395]Elijah Johnson diary, Oct. 29, 1863.

[396]_Ibid._, Nov. 3, 1863.

[397]_Ibid._, Nov. 3-5, 1863; Neese, _Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery_, pp. 233-34. Elijah supposted there were 100,000 people in attendance.

Meade's army, though "chastised," soon returned from its position near Manassas. On November 8 the Yankees gained a sudden victory at Rappahannock Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and the Confederate forces were again withdrawn behind the Rapidan. The regiment broke camp at Brandy Station and fell back "in the face of the enemy."[398] This movement continued through the following day, and the men finally camped near Peyton's Ford.[399] Once again Meade forfeited the initiative and the armies entered another period of inactivity.

It had been a year since Major Burroughs left the regiment, but his activities continued to exert a strong influence over some of its members. By September it was known that the major had been authorized by the Secretary of War to raise a battalion of partisans "for local defense and special service" in the counties of Queen Anne, Norfolk, and Currituck.[400] A request was immediately submitted by Private William T. Griggs of Company K, who asked permission to raise a company of partisans around Norfolk. The request was approved by Collins and by Griggs' company commander, but was ultimately disapproved.[401]

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[398]"Record of events," roster of Company F, Oct. 31-Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[399]Ibid.,; roster of Field and Staff, Oct. 31-Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[400]Company abstract cards, Burroughs' Battalion, Partisan Rangers, C.S.A., reel 36, Microcopy 258, "Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations Raised Directly by the Confederate Government," Record Group 109.

[401]Compiled service record of Pvt. William T. Griggs, Co. K, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

Shortly thereafter, Corporal Napoleon B. Moore was elected "in absentia" to the post of third lieutenant in one of Burroughs' companies, but again the transfer required the approval of Moore's regimental officers. Lieutenant Gornto and Major Collins were agreeable, but General Lomax was not. Lomax complained that men could not be spared from his brigade, but at that point he was one of the few to raise any protest. The request was approved by the division commander and by Jeb Stuart, and was forwarded by Lee and finally granted by Seddon himself.[402]

The matter quickly grew out of hand, however, as news of Burroughs' activity spread among the men who had been in his command. Many were excited by the prospect, and the example of Corporal Moore inspired them to efforts that finally had to be discouraged. In a letter that was unusually articulate and persuasive, Private Henry F. Woodhouse had petitioned the Secretary of War to be allowed to raise a similar company of partisans. He was supported in this request by a friend, then in Richmond, who added that Woodhouse was a gentleman of respectability, character, and energy, that he was thoroughly acquainted with the people and country around Norfolk, and that such a company could be of great use.[403]

Seddon was required by law to refer such requests to the officers in each man's regiment. By November 15 the letter had been returned

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[402]Compiled service record of Napoleon B. Moore as corporal, Co. D, Fourteenth Battalion, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[403]Compiled service record of Pvt. Henry F. Woodhouse, Co. K, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

to Collins, who said that inquiry among the officers from Norfolk revealed that Burroughs already had enlisted a large number of men. Besides, Collins added, "this is only one of many similar applications from men inthis Regiment. They cannot be approved without causing us to lose men from the Regiment who cannot be spared."[404] The opinion was shared by Lomax, and this time by General Lee as well, who added that there was no assurance that such a company could be raised. "Moreover," Lee said, "the raising of these new companies is thought to be in opposition to the Conscript Law. These applications are numerous. The good of the service forbids that they be allowed."[405] As Seddon observed, to release a man for such purposes was to trade a certain for an uncertain service.[406]

Thus did the Confederacy modify its policy in an attempt to resolve the problem of partisans, and thus did the Fifteenth Virginia continue to reflect the implications of partisan service. This problem was further aggravated by the occasional return of members of Company H, now commanded by Lieutenant James Kincheloe, As early as October the lieutenant came into camp to receive pay and supplies.[407]

The successes of his command were summarized on a company roster a few weeks later:

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[404]Collins to Secretary of War, Nov. 15, 1863, in compiled service record of Pvt. Henry Woodhouse, Co. K. reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[405]R. E. Lee to Secretary of War, Nov. 17, 1863; ibid.

[406]Ibid., endorsement by Sec. of War Seddon.

[407]Compiled service record of Lt. James Kincheloe, Co. H, reel 142, Microcopy 324.

> This company has been operating in Rear of the enemies lines since June 25th 1863, during which time I have turned over a number of prisoners, horses and mules (number not remembered). My company has also subsisted within the enemies lines from June 25th 1863 until Nov^m 1st, since that time we have occasionaly been drawing rations when the weather would not admit of my staying within the lines.[408]

The lure of partisan service had probably been responsible for the resignation of Burroughs and his officers, it had weakened the regiment through the permanent detachment of Company H, and now it continued to entice men away from the army.

After considerable discussion on the matter, nearly all the partisan units except Mosby's would be recalled to the army in April, 1864, at the suggestion of Lee:

> Experience has convinced me that it is almost impossible, under the best officers even, to have discipline in these bands of partisan rangers, or to prevent them from becoming an injury instead of a benefit to the service, and even where this is accomplished the system gives license to many deserters and marauders, who assume to belong to these authorized companies and commit depredations on friend and foe alike. Another great objection to them is the bad effect upon the discipline of the army from the constant desire of the men to leave their commands and enjoy the great license allowed in these bands.[409]

During November the regiment lost several experienced officers. Captain Simpson was sent to the rear by an examining board because of his poor health,[410] thus beginning a long series of such absences. By November 11 Captain Gantt was reported to be in the hospital at

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[408]"Record of events," roster of Co. H, July 1, 1863-Jan. 1, 1864, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[409]R. E. Lee to Gen. Samuel Cooper, April 1, 1864, Official Records, I, XXXIII, p. 1252. For a discussion of certain aspects of the partisan service see: Virgil Carrington Jones, Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956).

[410]Compiled service record of Capt. James Simpson, Co. I, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

Charlottesville with "chronic nephritis,"[411] Later that month Captain Cooke, already at home on extended leave engaged in gathering deserters, was retired from active service. Collins regretted to lose his services, but reported the circumstances to his superior officers and arranged for an honorable discharge.[412] At the same time Lieutenant Thomas J. Fentress, of Company K, was retired at his own request.[413] The regiment was further reduced by the hospitalization of Captain Sandford, late in December,[414] and by the resignation of Lieutenant Francis Y. Old, of Company I, then under charges of conduct unbecoming an officer for submitting false claims of horse losses.[415] For the moment these men could be spared, but their continued absence would be a definite liability.

Late in November the armies continued to occupy the same positions as at the beginning of the Bristoe campaign. Meade temporarily took the initiative, however, and attempted to maneuver Lee out of a position fronted by the Rapidan and flanked by Mine Run. Fitzhugh Lee's division was assigned to picket duty along the Rapidan west of Mine Run. While Stuart led Hampton's division in forays against the Federal position, Lee shifted two brigades by the right to meet the

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[411]Compiled service record of Capt. Albert Gantt, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[412]Compiled service record of Capt. George Cooke, Co. G, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[413]Compiled service record of Lt. Thomas J. Fentress, Co. K, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[414]Compiled service record of Capt. Lucius Sandford, Co. A, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

[415]Compiled service record of Lt. Francis Y. Old, Co. I, reel 142, Microcopy 324.

Yankees, relieving the infantry details at Raccoon Ford and Morton's Ford. Lomax's brigade was ordered to Morton's Ford and made a difficult forced march during the night of November 26.[416]

The next day, a Friday, passed with minor skirmishing. Some Yankees crossed the river and were driven back that afternoon. Saturday passed in much the same manner, and that evening the Yankees were maneuvered back across the river again. Sunday was quiet.[417] On Monday morning the men listened to cannon firing from the direction of Chancellorsville, and Elijah Johnson speculated that there were "hot works" down there. "I think there is a general engagement on hand," he concluded,[418] in unison with almost everyone else.

More suddenly than it had begun, the campaign was called off. Baffled by the natural defenses behind Mine Run, Meade recalled his army with only a slight attempt at battle, and both armies carried the stalemate into winter quarters. On December 3 the regiment was withdrawn from picket duty and returned to camp at Peyton's Ford. Eleven days later, it moved about five miles to a permanent position near Orange Courthouse.[419]

The reports by the company commanders began to assume the tone of professionals. Lieutenant Carrington reported from Company B:

> The company was in fight at Morton's Ford. . . lead in dismounted charge on enemy in breastworks. Behaved <u>very</u> well. Was in skirmish as Dismounted Sharpshooters near same place the day following--acted well.[420]

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[416]<u>Official Records</u>, I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 898-901, 907.

[417]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 811-16.

[418]Elijah Johnson diary, Nov. 30, 1863.

[419]Company and Field and Staff returns, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[420]"Record of events," roster of Company B, Oct. 31-Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

The commander of Company A also gave credit to Major Collins, who "gallantly charged the enemy & drove them from the entrenchments which they held in superior force."[421] In many ways the regiment that went into winter camp was an organization far different from the novices who had marched into Culpeper a few weeks before.

Elijah Johnson noted that the first snow of the season fell a few days later. Finishing an appointment as head of the regimental ordnance department, and suffering from a severe cold--which he refused to report to the surgeon--Elijah could not escape a moment of reflection. "Christmas has come again, + here I am in my lonely Tent, would that I could be with my lover, or at home with my parents. Another year has rolled round, + here I am here in the woods a soldier in defence of my Country, but I feel truly thankful that I have been permitted to see another year."[422]

A few days later Lieutenant Richard Johnson, Elijah's brother, went into the hospital in Charlottesville with neuralgia.[423] Elijah was furloughed, closing hisdiary with the notation "had a very pleasant trip home--"[424] When he returned, the diary apparently was left behind for safe keeping, and that part of the record ends.

Activities in the regiment during this period can be determined through other sources, however, The company officers closed the year

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[421] Ibid., roster of Co. A.

[422] Elijah Johnson diary, Dec. 25 (?), 1863.

[423] Ibid., Nov. 8, 1863, Jan. 7, 1864; compiled service record of Lt. Richard Johnson, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[424] Elijah Johnson diary, Jan. 14, 1864.

with bi-monthly returns for November and December. It was one of the first uniform submissions of company returns that had ever been made, with the marches and engagements of each unit also summarized in the "Record of Events"--a space left blank in previous returns. It was, to some degree, an administrative milestone, and tangible indication of increasing efficiency and regularization.

Since June discipline and instruction had also improved in several companies formerly rated only as "tolerable" or "fair." Now the appraisal was generally "good" or "very good," with some of the most noticeable progress in Harding's company.

In June the men had all been well clothed, a factor which resulted in a military appearance varying from "fair" to "very good." By December, however, their appearance was generally "indifferent" for lack of apparel and accoutrements,[425] and Captain Jones had begun to requisition large amounts of clothing, including shoes, jackets, kepis, greatcoats, and blankets.[426] The regimental staff, which had become a large and fairly sophisticated establishment with teamsters, wagoners, blacksmiths, and forage masters, now included one man assigned to duty as regimental tailor.[427] The major was a meticulous person, already becoming known in the brigade for his impeccable

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[425]Bi-monthly returns for all companies exist for the periods ending June 30, 1863, and December 31, 1863.

[426]Compiled service record of Capt. William Jones, Quartermaster, reel 141, Microcopy 324. Similar requisitions are also filed in the compiled service records of individual company officers.

[427]Extra duty roll, Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

attire,[428] and this appointment reveals his understanding of the value of pride of uniform for the regiment as well. If his men had begun to act like veterans, they had begun to look like veterans, also.

The type of uniform which seems to have become standard during this period consisted of shoes or "Jeff Davis boots," gray waist-length jackets and trousers, and kepis--or soft hats for the men who preferred to throw away the kepis.[429] In Lomax's brigade, in the autumn of 1863, each regiment had also adopted a distinctive cloth patch, such as a star or lozenge, to be placed on its headgear.[430] The jackets and trousers almost certainly were of many hues, from charcoal to light gray, variously trimmed in yellow, with the usual differences in piping, trim, button arrangement, collars, and pockets. In one instance an officer purchased a quantity of gray cloth--presumably for a jacket or coat--and a smaller amount of blue cloth, probably sky blue in color, for trousers.[431] Since both Union and Confederate regulations prescribed light blue trousers, these were probably quite common. Flannel and cotton were the predominant types of cloth, supplemented increasingly by shirts and trousers made of homespun linen, usually dyed in brown.

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[428]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, pp. 152-53.

[429]Clothing Rolls, Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[430]R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, p. 105.

[431]Compiled service record of Lt. William Carrington, Co. B, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

In every company some weapons now were found to be deficient.[432] In February Major Collins receipted for a large delivery of ordnance which, while not homogeneous, seems to have been of serviceable quality and somewhat of an improvement. The rather large proportion of infantry shoulder arms reveals the extent to which the regiment was equipped for dismounted service, but whether these arms were distributed throughout the regiment, or only to certain companies, is not known. The order included:

43 Sharps carbines	35 carbine slings
54 rifles (calibre .58)	2,000 cartridges (calibre .52)
92 cartridge boxes	5,000 cartridges (calibre .58)
96 cap boxes	1,200 revolver cartridges
40 rifle slings	3,000 percussion caps for revolvers

On the same day Collins turned in, probably as unserviceable:

1 Austrian rifle
26 sabres
2 rifled carbines (calibre .58)
26 cartridge boxes and cap boxes[433]

At the close of the year the regiment reported only 347 men present for duty, a decrease of nearly 250 since June.[434] In addition to those captured or disabled, a number of men were on furlough seeking remounts. As they passed through Richmond the men were given their back pay, sometimes for as much as six or eight months, though this was already in an inflated currency that had lost much of its value. A few men began to receive pay for the horses they had lost; Captain Cooper received $950

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[432]Company returns for the period Oct. 31-Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[433]Receipts for ordnance received and turned in, Feb. 15, 1864, in compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[434]Company returns for the periods ending June 30 and Dec. 31, 1863, Box 537, Record Group 109.

for his horse killed at Brandy Station, plus $100 for equipment,[435] and Lieutenant Thomas Pullen, commanding Company G, received $900 for a horse killed the same day, plus $45 for equipment.[436]

The men who reached their homes were in constant danger. Since 1862 the homes and families of men in the Fourteenth Battalion had been in occupied territory, while the homes of the men in the Fifteenth Battalion had been under occupation more or less constantly since the war began. Late in January, Leonard A. Slater, the regiment's chief surgeon, was captured at his home on the Peninsula near Barhamsville during a routine scout by the Federals.[437] He was taken to Williamsburg, but released a few days later on an exchange provision that applied to medical officers and non-combatants.[438] Others were less fortunate, and after long delays their company commanders could only report them as absent, "cut off by the enemy."

By January it was obvious that Colonel Ball could never return to the regiment. For several weeks he had served on duty at sea, probably in the hope that it would improve his health, but to no avail. On the 19th he tendered his resignation.[439]

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[435]Compiled service record of Capt. John Cooper, Co. F, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[436]Compiled service record of Lt. Thomas Pullen, Co. G, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

[437]Official Records, I, XXXIII, pp. 20-21.

[438]Compiled service record of Surgeon Leonard A. Slater, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[439]Compiled service record of Col. William Ball, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

With the colonel's name officially removed from the roster there was room for promotion, and Lomax recommended that Charles Collins be promoted for "valor and skill." Stuart, who for all his frolicking was a most critical commander, "heartily" concurred:

> Major Collins has commanded the regt. for 9 months of a most wastful campaign, + displayed all the desirable qualifications of a cav. commander. It is very important to the service that he be promoted at once.[440]

Collins' promotion was a matter of less urgency to the War Department, however, and the petition was returned for a specific elaboration of Collins' merit. Lomax endorsed it with a glowing account of the major's conduct at Culpeper and Brandy Station. Stuart reiterated that this was "beyond question a case of extraordinary valor and skill," and that Colonel Ball's position should be filled as soon as possible.[441]

In the War Department Collins' promotion was challenged again. Someone far removed from the problem apparently raised the question of John Critcher, who still held a commission in the regiment as lieutenant colonel. In what was construed as fairness to Critcher, it was argued that Collins could not be promoted for "valor and skill" because, by the expedient devised a year before, Collins did not belong to the regiment except "temporarily." It was recommended that Collins be assigned, or reassigned, to the regiment with the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel, to be held "without prejudice"

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[440]Maj. Gen. J. E. C. Stuart, endorsement on request for promotion, Jan. 27, 1864, in compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[441]*Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1864.

to the "rights" of John Critcher.[442] This was done, and Seddon ordered Collins' appointment as a "temporary" colonel on February 14.[443] Once again the War Department had circumvented its own legalism, but this attitude would eventually compound the problems of command.

In the meantime, the regiment still picketed along the Robertson River,[444] relieved by frequent details from the Fifth and Sixth Regiments. On January 31 some Federals forced the passage of the river, momentarily.[445] A week later the enemy returned in strength in a demonstration along the Rapidan. The men skirmished back to Barnett's Ford, were driven across the river on the evening of February 6, and retired toward Peyton's Ford. The brigade was in close contact with the enemy through the next morning. Then the Yankees were recalled. Losses were slight--one killed, two wounded, and five missing. Heavier fighting at Morton's Ford and other posts downstream was also indecisive.[446] Lomax followed the Yankees up to the Robertson River again, and replaced the barricades and abatis around the fords.[447]

Later that month the Federals attempted two serious expeditions. The first was by Kilpatrick and Dahlgren, aimed at Richmond to free the

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[442]Endorsement on extract of General Order, No. 17, Feb. 12, 1864, in compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[443]*Ibid.*, endorsement by Sec. of War Seddon, Feb. 14, 1864.

[444]*Official Records*, I, XXXIII, p. 487.

[445]*Ibid.*, p. 1133.

[446]*Ibid.*, pp. 114-43.

[447]*Ibid.*, p. 1152.

Federal prisoners there and, reportedly, to burn the city and murder the President and his cabinet. The second was a diversion toward Charlottesville by Custer's division. Neither of these accomplished very much. The Richmond raid was soon broken up and Dahlgren, who had surprised John Critcher's men at Fredericksburg, was killed in a ambush. Custer was driven away after a few skirmishes.[448]

The men who returned from furlough brought news again of Major Burroughs. In November he had been operating in the area around Norfolk[449] with one company of about seventy men.[450] Later that month he was betrayed, captured, and put in close confinement, handcuffed and ironed to the floor. Under the authority of Major General Benjamin F. Butler, commanding the Federal forces in Norfolk, Burroughs was tried for breach of parole and the destruction of United States property, and was sentenced to execution.[451] From the damp and filthy conditions in his cell the major contracted a fever, diagnosed as smallpox, and was taken to a prison hospital. Late on the night of January 25, as Burroughs was recuperating, he was shot by one of the guards.[452]

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[448] Ibid., pp. 161-224.

[449] Ibid., I, XXIX, part 2, p. 818.

[450] Company abstract cards and compiled service records of Burroughs' Battalion, Princess Anne Partisan Rangers, reel 36, Microcopy 258.

[451] Official Records, II, VI, pp. 1109-10; Jessie Ames Marshall (ed.), Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler (5 vols; Norwood, Massachusetts: The Plimpton Press, 1917), III, 256-27.

[452] The incident was reported, with artists engraving, under the title "The Death of Guerilla Burroughs," in Harper's Weekly, February 20, 1864, p. 117.

The wound was fatal. Butler insisted that Burroughs had been in a delirium, and was shot at the window trying to escape. Burroughs denied this; "I was only endeavoring to turn in my bed--it was a wanton act," he said.[453] He died the next afternoon. The major had been shot with a buck-and-ball cartridge; two bullets entered his back and passed through the lung, and a surgeon testified that it would have been nearly impossible to receive such a wound while lying down. The soldier who shot Burroughs claimed to have ordered his victim to halt three times before firing. Several men said they heard the window fall after the shot was fired, as Burroughs groaned "O Lord," and fell back into bed. The major and two other convalescents were guarded by eighteen soldiers at the time, and the room was on a second floor, several feet from the ground. One of the guards, now a member of the First U.S. Colored Regiment, had known Burroughs since boyhood and said the major had warned him of the plan to escape and asked if he would prevent it.[454]

Burroughs' death produced an outrage in Norfolk and as far away as Tennessee, where his brother protested that the entire incident had been prearranged. Matters were not simplified by the discovery that Burroughs had been captured through the duplicity of "one of his Negro men" and had been killed by a Negro guard. Butler gave assurances to

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[453] Official Records, II, VI, pp. 1109-10.

[454] "Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry held at Norfolk, Va.," Jan. 26, 1864, compiled service record of Edgar Burroughs as major, Princess Anne Partisan Rangers, reel 36, Microcopy 258.

Burroughs' family and to the Confederate agent of exchange that an inquiry had been conducted, and he promised to furnish a copy of the record. Butler admitted that the guard was "censurable," but declined to order him punished.[455] Gradually the issue lost its urgency.

During the same period there was news about Captain Capps. He had been taken to a hospital in Washington, suffering from a gunshot fracture of the left leg, near the knee. The wound did not heal properly and after many weeks he underwent amputation, still without improvement. On the morning of February 20 the captain died from the effects of pyaemia. He was buried in Arlington cemetery.[456]

In time the fact of Capps' death was officialy confirmed, and that made two captains dead, including Brawner. Captains Cooke and Arnold were gone, and Sandford and Gantt were still absent. In the future their duties would be handled by the lieutenants and by the company commanders--Harding, Cooper, Simpson and Pitts--who remained. This was a serious loss, but no more than might have been expected. A few promotions, some of them long deserved, would do much to restore the structure of command.

In other regards the condition of the regiment was quite encouraging. There were, as in every war, certain skills to be acquired. There was a

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[455] Official Records, II, VI, pp. 1109-10; ibid., II, VII, pp. 19-20. The correspondence and other records resulting from this affair tend to refute the notion of one author that "the shooting of Burroughs, whoever he was, is unrecorded by history." Fletcher Pratt, Civil War in Pictures (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955). p. 175.

[456] Compiled service record of Capt. Edward Capps, Co. C, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

technique to the problem of deploying a regiment under fire, or of delivering a charge without losing order. Experience would simplify the business of maneuvering the enemy out of position at a ford or sending sharpshooters to the front. In all these things the men were acquiring a measure of facility and were beginning to know a veteran's confidence in themselves.

The officers were also learning, mastering the responsibilities of command. Some at least,notably John Cooper, had shown a natural talent for the military art. Yet even Collins had profited from the past few months. It takes time to master the management of a regiment, and for all the brutality of combat there was room for the exercise of a great deal of finesse. It was necessary that a commander learn to transmit his orders in the turmoil of battle. He must appraise the merits of each unit to discover, for example, which company could furnish the best skirmishers and which squadron was best to lead a mounted charge. A capable commander must maintain his self-possession under fire, must acquire a judgment for tactics and terrain, and must employ his resources--his various companies and squadrons composed of individual soldiers--with skill and perception. He must have a scrupulous regard for these matters in order to coordinate his command in the presence of the enemy. This subtle interaction of officers and men, of skill and discipline, of a judicious, intrepid commander and a reliable soldiery is, after all, what determines the difference between an armed band and an effective military organization. Repeatedly and unmistakably, this interaction had been manifested in the conduct of the Fifteenth Regiment.

Above all, this development was due to the personal leadership of Charles Collins. He had given the men an outstanding example, and had developed an atmosphere of discipline and implanted a sense of morale. He had found the regiment in a state of discord and had caused the factions to forget their bitterness and work together. From Collins' superiors came repeated praise, testifying to his "extraordinary" valor and skill and to the fact that he displayed all the desirable qualifications of a cavalry commander. In Tennessee, General Joe Wheeler, Collins' classmate from West Point, had offered him a position as brigadier general and had been refused by the Secretary of War because Collins could not be spared from the army.[457]

To state the matter more succinctly, Collins could not be spared from the Fifteenth Regiment. This exemplary young man had brought the highest qualifications to the profession of arms; he had at last given the regiment the leadership it deserved and the regiment had responded more fully than anyone might have expected.

For Collins personally there was reason to be proud. Quite apart from the transformation he had wrought among the regiment, he had proven himself to be an officer of considerable promise. After the war there would be great need for his abilities--as an engineer, perhaps, or a railroad executive helping to rebuild the South. But there would be no future for anyone until the fighting ended. And with the enemy more menacing than ever, peace did not seem near.

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[457] Official Records, I, XXXI, part 3, p. 703; compiled service record of Col. Charles Collins, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

Already the attrition among the regiment had been severe, and replacements were nearly impossible to find. A few conscripts arrived from Richmond, but only a few were assigned to the Fifteenth. Instead, as the winter continued, the men in Lomax's brigade voluntarily re-enlisted,[458] and were praised by Congress:

> Resolved by the Congress of the Confederate States of America, That the thanks of the Congress are due, and are hereby cordially tendered, to the gallant troops of Lomax's cavalry brigade for their patriotic example in re-enlisting for the war, and that the lofty and determined spirit they have displayed in thus dedicating themselves afresh to the cause of independence will entitle them to the lasting gratitude of their country.[459]

Two of Fitzhugh Lee's brigades had been dispersed since January, partly to recuit and partly because their horses could no longer be fed from the countryside. Only Lomax's brigade of about 1,600 men remained on duty in the area.[460] Lee warned the authorities in Richmond that the cavalry were "very much reduced," and that recruits were joining only the regiments not on active duty. "The enemy have always had on this line a cavalry force greatly superior in numbers," he added, "and will doubtless recruit their cavalry division largely before the next campaign."[461] Later in February, as portions of Lee's regiments began to return, Lomax's brigade was given a similar furlough, extending through the month of March.[462] For several weeks the regiment was disbanded.

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[458] Official Records, I, XXXIII, pp. 1152-53, 1170.

[459] Confederate States Congress, Joint Resolution No. 29, Feb. 15, 1864, ibid., p. 1180.

[460] Official Records, I, XXXIII, pp. 559, 1118-19.

[461] Lee to Sec. of War Seddon, Jan. 23, 1864, ibid., p. 1118.

[462] Ibid., pp. 1191, 1233-34.

By the beginning of April most of Stuart's troopers had returned.[463] They brought a few recruits and some fresh horses, but their visits showed mainly how poor the country had become. It required a great deal of courage to leave home when the furloughs expired. But a remarkable number of men had summoned the will to do so, because they realized now that the war would have to be sustained by the men already in the army.

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[463] *Ibid.*, I, LI, part 1, pp. 220-21.

CHAPTER VII

"CHEER BOYS, CHEER, . . ."

Every spring the war began anew. By hard fighting and sometimes the narrowest of margins the Federal offensives had been blunted or turned away. But the Confederacy had sustained such losses in men, territory, and resources that victory now appeared only as a matter of stalemate. Confederate forces no longer controlled the Mississippi or Tennessee Rivers, and the trans-Mississippi states, with their reserves of grain and horses, were lost forever. Long stretches of the Atlantic coastline were occupied by the Federals; only Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and Mobile remained as open ports, and around them the blockade continued to tighten. Vital rail lines had been disrupted throughout the border states, and the problems of communication and supply were becoming critical.

In Virginia the army found itself committed to a defense of the capital at a time when its only chance lay in maneuver. Richmond was less a viable military objective than the great symbol of the Southern cause, and the President insisted that the Army of Northern Virginia look to its security even if that meant that Lee must forfeit the initiative.

Four offensives were being prepared by the Federals in the Virginia theatre. Ulysses S. Grant, now a lieutenant general in command of all United States forces, had come east to oversee the direction of the Army of the Potomac and direct its campaign against Richmond. Supporting Grant, General Franz Sigel would advance in the Valley, and Generals George Crook and William W. Averell would advance from West Virginia, while Butler led an offensive against Petersburg. The opening of the campaign in Virginia would coincide with a similar campaign by Sherman against Atlanta, with smaller forces throughout the South cooperating in a general, convergent advance.

Grant's objectives included more than the capture of cities and the occupation of territory, however, for he planned to destroy the armies opposing his. The entire resources of the Northern states were about to be applied to the conduct of the war. As one Union general expressed it:

> My aim was, to whip the rebels, to humble their pride, to follow them to their inmost recesses, and make them fear and dread us. "Fear is the beginning of wisdom."[464]

Significantly, morale in the army had improved noticeably since the discouragement that followed Gettysburg and the fall of Vicksburg.[465] The men who returned from furlough had shown extraordinary dedication,

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[464]William T. Sherman, quoted in: David Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 100.

[465]Bell Irvin Wiley, The Road to Appomattox (Memphis: Memphis State College Press, 1956), pp. 63-70, and graph following p. 34.

and their presence with the army was in spite of the uncertainties they now faced. Waiting along the Rapidan during the first days of spring, the men in Lee's army could find ample warning in Lincoln's pithy directive: "Those not skinning can hold a leg."[466]

The cavalry corps was reorganized. W. H. F. Lee returned from a Yankee prison and was given command of a third division, thus providing one small division to counter each one in the Federal command. Fitzhugh Lee was left with the brigades of Wickham and Lomax, and Lomax now commanded the Fifth, Sixth, and Fifteenth Regiments.[467]

In the Federal cavalry there were ominous developments. The troops were being issued repeating carbines as fast as they could be procured; the entire brigade of George Armstrong Custer had them already. During the winter the Federals had purposefully refrained from exposing themselves or their horses, and they were now in superior physical condition and ready for a fight. More important, General Alfred Pleasanton, Stuart's adversary since early in 1863, had been replaced by a man who shared the relentlessness of the commander-in-chief. As one historian described him, "Grant's new cavalry commander, Phil Sheridan, was flinty. He had novel conceptions of fire power and of the function of mounted troops, and he took excellent care of his horses. His fighting was hard and intelligent."[468]

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[466]Donald, Lincoln Reconsidered, p. 100.

[467]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 1027.

[468]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 412.

Stuart's corps remained dispersed for lack of forage. W. H. F. Lee's command was on the left of the army, around Charlottesville. Hampton's was in the center, along the Rappahannock, and Fitz Lee's command was gathered in the grazing lands near Fredericksburg. By April 30 the Fifteenth Virginia was drawing supplies from the old depot at Hamilton's Crossing,[469] while the horses recovered from the winter and the men feasted on fish caught in the Rappahannock.[470]

As nearly as possible the command was in a state of readiness[471] and some of the men even grew restless with the inactivity. When the orders finally came everyone realized their significance. The moment was described by a soldier in Lomax's brigade:

> One bright May morning. . . we saw a courier with his horse all flecked with foam come dashing into our camp. He halted and asked for Gen. Stuart's headquarters. . . .
>
> Soon the bugles were sounding all through the camps the old familiar call, "Saddle up, saddle up." We mounted, and each company forming in line and counting off by fours, wheeled into columns of two and marched off toward what was afterwards known as the Battlefield of the Wilderness.[472]

Early on May 4 the Federals had begun to cross the Rapidan. By 9:00 A.M. the first patrols had established contact, and Fitzhugh Lee reported the advance.[473] At the same time Lee's army, and more of Stuart's cavalry, started east on the roads from Orange Courthouse.[474]

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[469]Compiled service record of Capt. William Jones, Quartermaster, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[470]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 143.

[471]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 339.

[472]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 144.

[473]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 787-88, 871, 1098-99; ibid., part 2, pp. 371, 388-91; ibid., I, LI, part 2, pp. 886-88.

[474]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, p. 406.

The infantry arrived on the 5th, and immediately brought on a general engagement. Rosser's men attacked Sheridan's on the left and were driven back to the vicinity of Shady Grove Church. By that time Fitzhugh Lee had his division on the road near Massaponax Church, but their movement was discovered by mid-afternoon.[475] As they continued the signs of battle became more evident. "We did not see the enemy," one soldier stated, "but we knew he was there, for the woods were ringing with the sound of his guns, and bullets were hissing about our ears."[476] The men halted on the battlefield about dark, made a rough camp, and cooked the last of their fish from the Rappahannock.[477]

It was imperative that Sheridan's men screen as much of this area as possible and secure the crossroads--so vital in this impenetrable countryside--that would leave the Federals free to continue south. At the moment that meant possession of the Brock Road, the main passage between the Rapidan and the roads that led to Richmond. The link was most vulnerable in the area where it was intersected by the Catharpin Road. The attention of both sides was thus drawn to a crossroads area distinguished only by the humble frame structure known as Todd's Tavern.

The Battle of Todd's Tavern began on the morning of May 6 and was remarkable for the obstinate, even desperate, nature of the fighting.

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[475] Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 773, 787-88; ibid., part 2, pp. 427-29.

[476] Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 145.

[477] Ibid., pp. 144-45.

As Fitzhugh Lee's men moved out in column the battle commenced. "It was mostly in heavy timber and thick undergrowth," one soldier recalled:

> We knew somewhere in front of us was the enemy, and it was our mission to find him. Suddenly we heard two shots--pop, pop. . . . We took the hint and halted.
> The regiment was dismounted and the led horses were taken back. . . We exchanged some shots, and began falling slowly back, while they advanced.
> As we retired, their bullets were hissing through our ranks and cutting the bark from the trees and the twigs from the bushes, and now and then striking down our men.[478]

Besides Lee's command only Rosser's brigade had been available at this time; the other half of Hampton's division picketed around Milford until May 4, and W. H. F. Lee's division remained posted from Morton's Ford to the Shenandoah Valley at least until the 8th.[479] Against Fitz Lee's cavalry Sheridan had sent two divisions, with another on its way as support.

The battle spread for three or four miles along the Brock Road, and a large part of the action was directed against Custer's and Thomas C. Devin's brigades, at the intersection of the Brock and Furnace Roads. Lee's troops made "repeated and desperate"[480] attempts to carry the position by direct assault and by the flank. The fighting continued until early afternoon, when the Southerners were driven from the field in some disorder, leaving their dead and many of their wounded. They retired to the southeast, along the line of the Catharpin Road. Later that afternoon, however, Meade ordered his

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[478] Ibid., pp. 145-56

[479] Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 2, pp. 941, 949, 954, 961-63; ibid., I, LI, part 2, pp. 897-93.

[480] Report of Brig. Gen. George A. Custer on the Richmond campaign, ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 816.

cavalry withdrawn to protect the wagon trains. Lee's men followed and took possession of the crossroads and the area beyond as far as the Catherine Furnace, about a mile south of Chancellorsville.[481] In a separate action, nearby, Stuart led Rosser's and James B. Gordon's brigades against part of the Federal force. At dusk the fighting continued, and Stuart soberly surveyed the gunfire flashing from an enemy position that extended through the woods for a mile.[482]

Along the lines the cannonade had started brush fires that made maneuvering almost impossible and soon threatened to cremate the wounded. "The smoke was so thick and dense sometimes during the day," one man recalled, "that it was impossible to discern anything fifty paces away, and at midday the smoke was so thick overhead that I could just make out to see the sun, and it looked like a vast ball of red fire. . ."[483] At night the forest still burned: "The woods around us are all on fire," he wrote, "all the dead trees scattered through the woods are ablaze from bottom to top, and the fire has crept out on every branch, glowingly painting a fiery, wierd scene on the curtain of night, . . ."[484]

Behind the lines, Surgeon Slater worked on the casualties. Lieutenant Richard Johnson was carried to the rear with a gunshot

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[481] Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 774, 788, 815-16; ibid., part 2, pp. 466-70; ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 893-94.

[482] Ibid., I, LI, part I, pp. 248-49.

[483] Neese, Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery, p. 261.

[484] Ibid., p. 262.

wound in the leg, a wound from which he would soon die.[485] Private John D. Gooch, one of Johnson's men, underwent a battlefield amputation.[486] Private William Ackiss, who had spiked the heavy guns during the evacuation of Norfolk, was seriously wounded.[487] Private G. W. Carroll, from the same company, was out of action with a shell wound in his hand.[488] At least three more men were killed or died of wounds received the next day. Several others were wounded or captured.[489]

The battle was resumed on May 7, as "the comfortless night gave way, at last, to a comfortless day" that was "gloomy, lowering, and raining."[490] Again the Federals sought to secure the crossroads. Lee's forces fought Custer's brigade in the morning and, after a short but severe encounter, were forced away from the furnaces and back toward the Brock Road.[491] That afternoon they received the attack of the Reserve Brigade, which had followed Custer's. In a "sharp" engagement

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[485]Compiled service record of Lt. Richard A. Johnson, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[486]Compiled service record of Pvt. John D. Gooch, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[487]Compiled service record of Pvt. William H. Ackiss, Co. C, reel 138, Microcopy 324; Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 693.

[488]Compiled service record of Pvt. G. W. Carroll, Co. C, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[489]Casualties for this battle are as listed on the company returns (Box 537, Record Group 109) verified against the compiled service records (reels 138-45, Microcopy 324).

[490]William Meade Dame, From the Rapidan to Richmond and the Spottsylvania Campaign (Baltimore: Green-Lucas Company, 1920), p. 93.

[491]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 817.

lasting until dark, they were again forced to retreat, leaving many of their dead and wounded on the field.[492] Both sides lost heavily, but the crossroads were open to the Federal infantry. At dusk Sheridan paused to send an exultant dispatch:

> The cavalry made a very handsome fight here this afternoon. We found the whole rebel cavalry here, Hampton's and Fitzhugh Lee's divisions, and drove them on the Spotsylvania road about 3 miles. . . . They had constructed barricades and rifle-pits, which we charged and captured. I had only four brigades engaged. . . They all behaved splendidly. I captured prisoners from Lomax's Wickham's, Rosser's, Young's, Gordon's and Chambliss' brigades, and killed Colonel Collins, of the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry.[493]

The colonel had been left on the field, and his body had fallen into the hands of the enemy.[494] Stuart and Fitzhugh Lee both lamented the loss,[495] and many years later a soldier recalled this day and concluded sadly that "death loves a shining mark."[496]

Captains Harding and Pitts were both wounded severely--the latter by a shell fragment in the back and side--and were lost to the regiment for many weeks.[497] The company officers who held counsel that evening found that the ranking captain was John Cooper; in one day the command had passed from a colonel to the sixth captain.

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[492] Ibid., pp. 811-12, 846; ibid., I, LI, part 2, pp. 897-98.

[493] Sheridan to Maj. Gen. A. A. Humphreys, May 7, 1864, ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 776.

[494] Official Records, I, LI, part 1, p. 249.

[495] Ibid.

[496] Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, p. 153.

[497] Compiled service records of Captains Cyrus Harding, Co. D, and Virginius Pitts, Co. K, reels 141 and 143, Microcopy 324.

But there was no rest. Along the lines there was a continual popping of carbines, and Custer's men found that "so closely did the Confederates approach the outposts that there was increasing fear of an attack and neither officers nor men were able to obtain much rest."[498] That evening a strong Federal column began moving by the flank toward Spotsylvania Courthouse, with nothing to stop it but Lee's division. During the darkness the troopers returned to the Brock Road a little south of the crossroads and began to fortify their position. By dawn the enemy advance--General Wesley Merritt's division, supported by infantry--had appeared near Alsop's. Lee's division, now aided by Rosser's brigade, retired slowly, finding itself in "one of the severest conflicts in which it was ever engaged."[499]

The Federal cavalry relinquished the advance to the infantry of the Fifth Corps, and by everyone's expectation the column should have proceeded more quickly. An entire division was deployed with orders to "spare no effort to clear the road."[500] But the infantry were tired and straggled badly, while the entire army was stalled behind them waiting for something to move. The leading brigade advanced in line of battle, enjoined to "use only the bayonet, and carry every battery the enemy shows."[501] But getting forward

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[498]Kidd, Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman, p. 281.

[499]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, p. 407; Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 2, pp. 534, 968-69.

[500]Maj. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren to Humphreys, May 8, 1864, Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 2, p. 539.

[501]Ibid.

remained a matter of forcing a series of barricades and abatis which Lee's men had erected. And the defenders were aided by the foggy morning, which yielded only slowly to the sun. In the meantime Lee's command, with two fieldpieces firing in retreat, had delayed the advance until about 10:00 A.M., by which time the army was beginning to take position at Spotsylvania.

The last mile of the retreat was across open ground, and for a few moments the war was full of pageantry again. Longstreet's men, as they arrived, were inspired by the sight of the cavalry deployed in a broad, open field, firing from behind trees and fences and still retiring deliberately.[502] Then, within sight of the courthouse, the Confederates completed their preparations. At last the troopers could retire:

> As we slowly fell back we looked behind us and saw a gorgeous sight. It was Grant's line of battle moving forward as if on "Dress Parade," their brass buttons and steel guns with fixed bayonets glistening in the sun, their banners floating in the breeze. . . .
>
> As we entered the woods we suddenly came upon Lee's infantry lying down in line of battle waiting the enemy's advance. As we approached them, word was passed up and down the line not to cheer the infantry. This was the custom in the face of a battle when the cavalry, retiring from the front, gave way to the infantry.[503]

The horsemen formed behind the infantry as the first volleys were exchanged. As the armies converged on the town there was more fighting.

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[502]Dame, From the Rapidan to Richmond, pp. 99-100; Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 444.

[503]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, pp. 153-54.

Stuart posted his men on either flank,[504] and by 2:30 P.M. the courthouse was secure.[505] Spotsylvania was "a 'white day' for the cavalry,"[506] and provided an excellent example of what could be accomplished by cavalrymen dismounted:

> When the army came to know of what the cavalry had done, and how they had done it, there was a general outburst of admiration, . . .
>
> And, from that day, there was a marked change in the way the army thought and spoke of the cavalry; . . . it had shown itself signally possessed of the quality, that the infantry and artillery naturally admired most of all others--obstinacy in fight.[507]

In the meantime Sheridan had won permission to cut loose from the army and Meade's interference, forego the onerous duty of guarding the wagon trains, and take his cavalry on a campaign of its own. Throughout the day, while the armies fought at Spotsylvania, the Federal cavalry was concentrated in the rear.

On the morning of May 9 the entire corps started south. The column, formed in fours, extended for thirteen miles along the route. The Yankees did not hurry, and they seemed to be entirely confident.[508] Their mission was the destruction of the railroad lines around Richmond, as well as the creation of a panic in the capital itself. But as Stuart rode after them with the brigades of Wickham, Lomax, and Gordon, a force of only 4,500 and scarcely a third as many as Sheridan's,

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[504] McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 407-09.

[505] Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 2, p. 974; ibid., I, LI, part 1, p. 248.

[506] Dame, From the Rapidan to Richmond, p. 100.

[507] Ibid.

[508] Theodore F. Rodenbough, "Sheridan's Richmond Raid," Battles and Leaders, IV, p. 189.

it was obvious that this entire venture was a challenge to the Southern horsemen to come out and fight. By evening the Federals had captured the railroad depot at Beaver Dam Station, where they demolished several miles of track and destroyed enormous stores of provisions and irreplaceable medical supplies. Stuart's men skirmished with the Federal rear guard through that day and the next, took an alternate route south to bypass the Yankee barricades, and rested only on the evening of the 10th when Fitz Lee begged the general to pause and give his soldiers a few hours of sleep.[509]

By the morning of Wednesday, May 11, Stuart had outmarched the Yankee column and placed his command around Yellow Tavern, about six miles north of Richmond, at the intersection of the Telegraph and Mountain Roads, in a position to flank their approach. Lomax's brigade was posted along the Telegraph Road for several hundred yards, while Wickham's brigade extended perpendicularly to their right. Gordon's men, still harassing the Federal rear guard, were unable to join the battle.

The weight of the first attack fell on Lomax's command. Early in the day the Yankees seized the intersection around the tavern. Presently, Sheridan deployed his units across the field from the north, and dismounted skirmishers appeared before Lomax's line. The brigade was dismounted, formed in line of battle, and moved forward until it met the enemy. After a brief encounter the Rebel skirmishers

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[509]McClellan, I Rode With Jeb Stuart, pp. 410-11; Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 789-90.

were driven in and fell back to the shallow causeway of the Telegraph Road,[510] leaving Sheridan's men in possession of a ravine and a line of woods not far in front. A smoky haze drifted away from both positions as the firing continued and the ravine gradually filled with the enemy. The battle continued in this manner for some time--a prolonged affair that would have been boring had it not been so deadly serious. Lomax's troopers crouched behind the embankment, looking very much, it would seem, like a group of men who had just begun an improvised shooting match.

At about four in the afternoon the Yankees rushed Lomax's position. A heavy line of skirmishers scrambled out of the ravine and up the slope toward the Telegraph Road, firing as they came. At the same time, a mounted column from Custer's brigade gained the roadway and hurled itself upon the left flank in a mounted charge. Two of Lomax's field-pieces were in the roadway; their crews, firing to the last, were sabred where they stood. There was hand-to-hand fighting for a moment, until the line gave way. Most of the men cleared a fence that ran along the roadway, and fled across the fields. A few crawled into a culvert nearby, and escaped. Others stood their ground and were overwhelmed, or simply threw down their arms and were herded into bunches by the blue horsemen who quickly surrounded them.[511] The battle diminished momentarily to an exchange between skirmishers, who kept a respectful distance.

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[510] Hopkins, _From Bull Run to Appomattox_, pp. 157-58.

[511] _Ibid._, pp. 158-59.

Officers rallied the brigade at a second line about a quarter of a mile to the rear, south of the road and perpendicular to it, and adjoining Wickham's position. It was virtually impossible for a brigade to conduct an oblique retreat under fire without losing order, and for a time there was some milling about. The commands probably had not finished sorting themselves when the second of Sheridan's mounted charges was sent against them. This was a gallant affair, delivered by more of Custer's troops at the very center of the Confederate line.[512]

It is impossible to determine the exact location of the regiment at this point, but it was probably in line along a knoll that extends at right angles to the Telegraph Road. Since the brigade front had just been seriously contracted by casualties and stragglers, the men of the Fifteenth were probably within sight, and possibly within pistol range, of the melée that followed.

The leading ranks of the Federal columns were met by a sudden burst of firing. Others closed up, but Stuart's men held their ground. "The Yankees were charging with sabers and slashed at us over the fences," a soldier wrote, "but we soon piled them up so as to completely blockade the road with dead horses and men."[513] The officer who led the charge had taken his men "up to the very muzzles of the enemy's guns"[514] before he toppled from his horse, killed instantly. The remnants of his command were finally driven back.

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[512] Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 817-19.

[513] W. N. Harris, quoted in Davis, Jeb Stuart, p. 405.

[514] Report of Brig. Gen. George A. Custer on the Richmond campaign Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 818.

At least one more charge was delivered, this time by Custer's entire brigade, with adequate support. The Confederate line was shaken, and the momentum from this assault carried a number of Yankees far to the rear. They were finally stopped by a mounted charge of the First Virginia, and while Stuart's men held their places and battled with the enemy in front, squads of dismounted Yankees ran through their lines on the way out. One of those Yankees paused and snapped a shot at Stuart, and the general was carried from the field with his death-wound, shouting to his men to go back, that he would rather die than be whipped.[515]

Fitzhugh Lee took command and succeeded in extricating his men from complete disaster. But by evening the Yankees had pushed them another mile, across the Chickahominy, while others, probably most of Lomax's brigade, were separated and forced to retire toward Richmond.

Behind the Yankee lines the last of the prisoners were being brought in. They huddled together, as prisoners invariably do, not so much at the urging of their captors as for mutual comfort. Beset by mortification, self-conscious at being disarmed in the presence of the enemy, some of them nursing wounds, they were a wretched and bedraggled lot.[516] Elijah Johnson was there.[517] So was Horatio Hoggard, whose brother, Thurmer, had been shot through the stomach and left

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[515]Davis, Jeb Stuart, pp. 405-09.

[516]Hopkins, From Bull Run to Appomattox, pp. 159-61.

[517]Compiled service record of Pvt. Elijah Johnson, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

behind in a ditch half filled with water, where he would lie for nearly two days without aid.[518]

The regiment had sustained heavy casualties. At least thirty-three men were lost in this engagement or the skirmishes that accompanied it. Companies B, C and F suffered especially, with at least twenty-seven men killed, wounded, or captured.[519] Lieutenants Alexander Edwards and Milton Seneca, commanding Company C, both were captured.[520] Lieutenant Livingston Ingram, of Simpson's command, died of his wounds,[521] and Lieutenant Thomas Pullen, commanding Company C, was wounded by a sabre cut across his head.[522]

It was the most costly battle since Culpeper--possibly costlier in proportion to the numbers present. And it had been fought under very similar conditions, with the regiment dismounted, struggling to stop an advance, and overwhelmed by mounted troops. Even the enemy units were the same. But at Culpeper the losses had ended that day; now they were merely part of a constant attrition.

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[518]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 934-35.

[519]These figures are compiled from company returns (Box 537, Record Group 109) verified in some cases by the compiled service records (reels 138-145, Microcopy 324).

[520]Compiled service records of Lieutenants Alexander W. Edwards and Milton P. Seneca, Co.C, reels 140 and 143, Microcopy 324.

[521]Compiled service record of Lt. Livingston Ingram, Co. I, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[522]Compiled service record of Lt. Thomas E. Pullen, Co. G, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

In the capital there was alarm and great excitement. The home guard was mustered, and some reinforcements hurried up from the south. But the great blow never fell; after a feeble thrust Sheridan led his corps away, to the east. About 10:00 P. M. that night, in the midst of a violent thunderstorm, an ambulance wagon approached the lines around Richmond and was suddenly challenged by horsemen massed along the road. They were from Lomax's brigade, and the party included Mrs. Stuart and an escort, hurrying to the general. "Thank God!" a sentry muttered, "My pistol cap snapped twice when you didn't answer my challenge, and wouldn't fire."[523]

The Yankees marched all night, but when the head of the column reached Meadow Bridge, on the Chickahominy, the bridge had been torn up and the passage was blocked again by Fitz Lee's troopers. Through the morning of May 12 they delayed the Federal corssing and repulsed at least one attack while the Yankees worked frantically to open a way out. When an entire division swarmed across to secure a bridgehead the Southerners still resisted, and skirmished back to the vicinity of Gaines' Mill.[524]

The activities of Lomax's brigade during the 12th are not clear. They probably maintained contact with the flank and rear of the Federal column, and may have participated in the attack on Wilson's division that afternoon. This assault was quickly broken up and the troops, most of then militia, were driven back to the cover of the Richmond

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[523]Davis, Jeb Stuart, p. 414.

[524]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 791-92.

defenses. Nonetheless, the attack hastened Sheridan's retreat and substantially relieved the pressure on Lee's command north of the Chickahominy.[525]

For the next few days both sides skirmished along picket lines that extended from the Pamunkey to the James. The Yankees carried out some minor raids, and plundered to the extent that orders had to be issued forbidding such license,[526] but there was no general engagement. News from Richmond confirmed the fact that Stuart was dead. The loss was irreparable, and for several weeks no replacement was even named; the division commanders reported directly to Lee for orders.[527]

Lee's division had sustained extensive losses. In the eight days since the engagement in the Wilderness the loss in field and line officers had been particularly heavy--due partly to tactics that placed them in constant exposure. All the colonels in Lomax's brigade had been killed. Many of the field officers in Wickham's brigade were killed or wounded. Many companies were without a commissioned officer, and squadrons were now being led by second lieutenants.[528] The Fifteenth Regiment had fully shared these losses; only three captains were present at Yellow Tavern, and many of the enlisted men had been captured or disabled.

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[525]Rodenbough, "Sheridan's Richmond Raid," Battles and Leaders, IV, 191.

[526]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 3, p. 22.

[527]Ibid., p. 800; ibid., part 2, p. 1001; Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 436-37.

[528]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 3, pp. 98-99; ibid., I, LI, part 1, p. 250.

At this critical moment the regiment was startled by the dramatic reappearance of John Critcher. The colonel had been interned in Old Capitol Prison, in Washington, D. C., and at Johnson's Island, in Lake Erie. He made the best of his time there, becoming secretary of a prisoners' association and gaining his release after ten months "through the intercession of his personal friend," General John C. Fremont.[529] Critcher evidently occupied himself in Richmond after his exchange--he could hardly go back to Westmoreland County, in any case--and some time after the battle at Yellow Tavern, while the regiment was conveniently nearby, he rode out of town and resumed command. The first indication of his presence is a dispatch from Lomax dated May 23, exactly a year after the colonel's capture, informing him that he was in temporary command of the brigade.[530]

On May 17 Sheridan left Haxall's Landing to return north. Lee reported that his division had only 3,000 men mounted and a battery of horse artillery, and was suffering much for want of forage. But the men followed the Yankee column and Lomax's troopers reported that morning from the vicinity of Nance's Shop. Some pickets at Bottom's Bridge were attacked the next day in a diversion.[531] By May 20 Fitzhugh Lee had shifted his main force to a line between Old Church and Hanover Courthouse. A separate command, probably Lomax's brigade,

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[529]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 816.

[530]Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 956.

[531]Ibid., pp. 943-50.

was also left around Cold Harbor. Two days later some of the cavalry in this area were driven from Walnut Grove across the Chickahominy by two of Sheridan's divisions, but the engagement was not mentioned in reports.[532] After some destruction to the railroad and property around Hanover Courthouse, the Yankees crossed the Pamunkey at White House. On the 23rd Lomax left the brigade with Critcher, but apparently had resumed command at Hanover Courthouse the next day.

On the 24th Sheridan rejoined the army at Chesterfield Station, and rested his command. On May 26 Grant's army began shifting to the left again, around Lee's positions on the North Anna River, and the Federal cavalry secured a passage of the Pamunkey at Hanovertown. Gordon's brigade encountered two of Sheridan's divisions on the 27th and was driven back in the direction of Crump's Creek.[533] As Sheridan's men consolidated a line between Crump's Swamp and the Totopotomoy and continued the advance, the Army of the Potomac swarmed across the Pamunkey behind them.[534]

Lee countered this move by taking position behind the Totopotomoy, along the road to Mechanicsville. On the 28th the Yankees collided with elements of Fitzhugh Lee's division, reinforced by General Matthew C. Butler's South Carolina brigade, dismounted behind a rail breastwork near Haw's Shop. "This was a hard contested engagement,"

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[532]Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 780-81; ibid., part 3, pp. 98-99.

[533]Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 793.

[534]Ibid., part 3, pp. 258-59.

Sheridan reported, "with heavy loss, for the number of troops engaged, to both sides, . . ."[535] The battle was fought just in front of the Federal infantry, who were busy building fortifications. Late in the afternoon the Yankees carried the position, but could not follow and finally retired behind their infantry.[536] Lomax's brigade evidently was not engaged in this battle, however, for it had been ordered to picket the South Anna and shield the movements of Lee's army.[537]

The battle was characteristic of many that were being fought. The enemy, with more men than could be managed properly, had failed to bring all their forces to bear and had been halted again by the determination of smaller forces. Yet it was obvious that while the Confederates were not being driven with impunity, neither had they been able to stop losing ground since the campaign began. If the Federals were defeated one day they would be back the next, never yielding the offensive and never turning back. The fighting, the marches, and the exhaustion all seemed to blur the memory of this period, so that one day was indistinguishable from the next.

By the time the campaign was over Grant's army had sustained enormous losses, equal in number to the total of lee's army. But the North could afford these mathematics, the South could not, and both sides knew it. In the single encounter at Haw's Shop the Federal

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[535]Report of Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan on the Richmond campaign, ibid., part 1, p. 793.

[536]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 793-94, 1031.

[537]Ibid., part 3, pp. 258-59, 292-93; ibid., I, LI, part 2, pp. 957, 962-66.

cavalry lost some 350 men killed and wounded.[538] A few months earlier that would have been regarded as something extraordinary; now it was merely another day's work. The Federal war machine could absorb waste, inefficiency, and appalling casualties; it could absorb everything but the rebel will to endure--that was good for a few more months.

The Army of the Potomac was now within ten miles of Richmond, and still another great battle was imminent. Grant was able to advance the Federal base of operations to a closer and more advantageous position on the Pamunkey. Fitzhugh Lee immediately moved his division to threaten the enemy trains, posting it about three miles south of Haw's Shop along Matadequin Creek.[539] This precipitated a general engagement on the 30th, during which the Federals advanced to within two miles of Cold Harbor.[540] One more difficulty now became evident; besides a numerical inadequacy Lee complained of a shortage of ammunition.[541] Sheridan called the battle "a very handsome affair." He reported that "the enemy had a very strong position. They were driven from it, leaving a number of killed and wounded, 60 or 70 prisoners captured."[542]

The next strategic crossroads was at Cold Harbor, and Sheridan's forces were sent to secure that point. Lee's men were reinforced by

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[538]Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 3, p. 289.

[539]Ibid., p. 361.

[540]Ibid., part 1, p. 794; ibid., I, LI, part 2, pp. 967-70.

[541]Ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 970.

[542]Sheridan to Humphreys, May 30, 1864; ibid., I, XXXVI, part 3, p. 361.

a brigade of infantry, entrenching behind them around Mechanicsville, as they posted themselves behind barricades of logs and rails. On the afternoon of May 31 the Yankees advanced and Lee reported that his men were preparing to "dispute their progress."[543] Later that day they were driven from the position by two divisions of the enemy. "The fight on the part of our officers and men was very gallant," Sheridan wrote; "they were now beginning to accept nothing less than victory."[544]

Nonetheless, Sheridan considered the "heavy odds"[545] against him and began a withdrawal. Ordered to hold the town at all hazards, however, he returned with his command, realigned the breastworks, and dismounted the men with piles of ammunition distributed along the line. The next morning they repulsed at least two attacks by infantry--and possibly some of Lee's cavalry--of a desperate nature. About 10:00 A.M. Sheridan's men were relieved by the Sixth Corps and, after a day of reorganizing, began to picket along the Chickahominy in the vicinity of Bottom's Bridge.[546] By the afternoon of June 1 Lee had some of his men en route to Bottom's Bridge, along the south bank of the Chickahominy, while he supervised a picket line on the right of the army from Cold Harbor along the road to Dispatch Station. He reported that he was ready to cooperate with the infantry or

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[543]Fitzhugh Lee to R. E. Lee, May 31, 1864, ibid., p. 858.

[544]Report of Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan on the Richmond campaign, ibid., part 1, p. 794.

[545]Sheridan to Humphreys, May 31, 1864, ibid., part 3, p. 411.

[546]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 794-95; ibid., part 3, pp. 469-70.

retire across the Chickahominy to secure the lower crossings against Sheridan. He also reported, at last, that there was good pasturage available for the horses.[547]

With the arrival of more Union infantry around Cold Harbor on the 2nd, Lee's horsemen yielded responsibility for this sector to the infantry. By June 3 the division had entirely shifted to the south side of the Chickahominy as far down as Long Bridge, with pickets across to the James.[548]

Lomax's brigade seems to have been recalled from the South Anna on May 28, or soon thereafter. The regiment was engaged in the fighting on the 31st,[549] and was in "the spirited cavalry fight for position" around Cold Harbor.[550] On June 4 Critcher was told to reinforce the picket at Crouch's Ford with his regiment and two guns of the horse artillery. "You will obstruct the crossing and build breastworks to command your force. Collect tools in the neighborhood," Lomax ordered.[551]

With heavy losses and minimal results, Grant pushed his men against the lines around Cold Harbor. Then, for the next few days he pondered this stalemate. Grant's subsequent decision was the most

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[547] Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 1031-32; ibid., L, LI, part 2, pp. 977-78.

[548] Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 1032; ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 984.

[549] Compiled service record of Pvt. Albert G. Jones, Co. K, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[550] Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1156.

[551] Lomax to Critcher, June 4, 1864, Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 985.

momentous of the campaign; he would abandon the assaults against Richmond--the destruction of Lee's army was to have been his main objective anyway--he would move the entire offensive south of the James where Butler was hopelessly stalled, and he would take Richmond by taking Petersburg and the rail lines that supplied both towns. That would strangle the capital, force Lee out of position and into another battle, and at worst lead to a siege that the Confederacy could not win.[552]

To divert attention from this movement, to draw the rebel cavalry away from his line of march, and to destroy the northern supply line into Richmond--the Virginia Central that ran through Charlottesville, Gordonsville, and Hanover Junction--as well as add weight to the Valley offensive, Sheridan was ordered to lead a raid toward Charlottesville. He marched with two divisions from Newcastle Ferry on June 7.

The movement was soon discovered and Hampton, with his own and Fitzhugh Lee's divisions, was assigned to intercept the raid or break it up. Lee's column, toiling on a march that was unusually hot and dusty, passed through Ashland at noon of June 9,[553] close on Sheridan's trail, even as President Davis urged that a concentration of the cavalry to meet that of the enemy would have desirable phychological as well as physical effects.[554]

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[552]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 3, pp. 598-99.

[553]Ibid., I, LI, part 2, p. 998; Theo. F. Rodenbough, "Sheridan's Trevilian Raid," Battles and Leaders, IV, p. 233.

[554]Official Records, I, LI, part 2, p. 996.

During the afternoon of June 10 some of Wickham's men located Yankee pickets near the Shady Grove and Richmond roads. By evening one of Sheridan's divisions was known to be in position around Trevilian Station, about fifty miles northwest of Richmond, ready to strike the railroad, while another division was nearby at Woodlawn.[555] The Southerners were also in the vicinity. Hampton's division, preparing for battle the next morning, had succeeded in reaching Trevilian Station. Lee's brigades were at Louisa Courthouse, ready to join Hampton the next day.

Hampton's men went into action early on June 11, but Lee started late and the advance of his division was turned away before it could reach Hampton's line. As Hampton's men were being driven steadily toward the station, a brigade of Federals maneuvered behind them and attacked their wagons and led horses. This new threat was countered by the opportune arrival of Rosser's brigade.[556] At nearly the same moment Lee's division, with the Fifteenth Virginia at the head of the column, struck the Federals from the rear.[557] The battle continued at close range until late in the afternoon, when Sheridan's main force finally reached the station and repulsed both of Hampton's divisions.

Hampton had salvaged the wagons and horses, but he had failed to destroy Sheridan's column and had been driven to a position several miles west on the Gordonsville Road. Lee's division controlled the

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[555] Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 3, pp. 735-36.

[556] Kidd, Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman, pp. 346-60.

[557] W. G. Ryckman, "Clash of Cavalry at Trevilians," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXV (October, 1967), 449ff.

railroad east of the station, but it had also been repulsed and forced toward Louisa.

June 12, a Sunday, was another hot, clear day. While Sheridan's men destroyed the railroad around Trevilian Station, Lee's division, after a forced march all that night, joined Hampton about two miles west of the station. Throughout the early afternoon the men fortified a position along the Virginia Central Railroad.[558]

Sheridan launched the first of several dismounted attacks at 3:30 P.M. The defenders at the angle of Hampton's line--also fighting dismounted--had been seriously weakened when, about dusk, Lomax withdrew his brigade from a position on the right of the line, formed it north of the railroad, and led his command in a vigorous and unexpected onslaught which entirely disarranged the last of Sheridan's assaults. The brigade was halted by a hastily-gathered reserve of the enemy, with strong artillery support, but it had charged so far and so rapidly that a substantial portion of its casualties resulted from the fire of the lines in the rear.[559]

Sheridan withdrew that night, and spent the next week getting his command back to the safety of the army. Neither side had succeeded in their objectives and both sustained heavy casualties--about one thousand each--making this the largest cavalry battle of the war.

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[558]M. C. Butler, "The Cavalry Fight at Trevilian Station," Battles and Leaders, IV, pp. 237-39.

[559]Alonzo Foster, Reminiscences and Record of the 6th New York V. V. Cavalry (n.p.: n.n., 1892), pp. 57-63; Neese, Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery, pp. 284-91.

In the meantime, the absence of the Confederate cavalry permitted Grant to move his army across the James to Petersburg with much greater ease.

The Fifteenth Virginia lost only a handful of men. But it was suffering again from problems of command, and what took place on the battlefield was no more significant than events that continued afterward.

On the morning of June 11, in the midst of the battle and in the presence of the regiment,[560] Lomax had relieved Critcher from active duty. "I have become satisfied that he cannot command," Lomax explained.[561] The action met with Fitzhugh Lee's approval and had been delayed until the morning of the battle only because of the constant movement of the brigade. Lomax asserted that he had acted for "the interests of the service" in placing another officer temporarily in command, and that he did so "before there was any certainty that the Regt. would be engaged."[562]

Still, the issue had been handled with a minimum of tact, and the assignment of Major Robert Mason, the division quartermaster, to command the regiment helped matters not at all. Mason was a highly qualified officer but technically an "outsider" whose assumption of command was bitterly resented by Critcher:

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[560]Compiled service record of Capt. John Cooper, Co. F, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[561]Endorsement by Lomax on resignation of Lt. Col. John Critcher, June 12, 1864, compiled service record of Lt. Col. John Critcher, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[562]Endorsement by Lomax on resignation of Capt. John Cooper, June 12, 1864, compiled service record of Capt. John Cooper, Co. F, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

> Having enlisted & mustered into the service nearly half the Regt., & having commanded it for nearly twelve months, I was informed yesterday on the battlefield in the presence of my Regt. that it was placed under the command of another. Under such circumstances, my honor & self respect require that I promptly & unconditionally, but respectfully, resign my commission, which I do accordingly to take effect from this date.[563]

Lomax forwarded the resignation with a recommandation for acceptance. "I consider Lt. Col. Critcher a gallant officer, & regret to lose his services entirely from the command."[564] the general observed, but he would no longer entrust Critcher with the responsibility of leading a regiment and would prefer to see him resign if a subordinate position was unacceptable.

Captain Cooper felt equally aggrieved. As ranking captain in the Fourteenth Battalion, Cooper had been passed over twice for promotion through the assignments of Ball and Collins as field officers. He had accepted this because he respected both men and the experience they brought to the regiment. But he regarded the assignment of Major Mason as a personal insult, since Cooper actually had commanded the regiment after Collins' death and would have commanded it again upon the removal of Critcher. "My honor and self respect compell [sic] me, though reluctant, to beg that you accept my immediate and unconditional resignation," Cooper submitted.[565]

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[563]Critcher to Sec. of War Seddon, June 12, 1864, compiled service record of Lt. Col. John Critcher, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[564]*Ibid*.

[565]Cooper to Seddon, June 12, 1864, compiled service record of Capt. John Cooper, Co. F, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

Lomax disapproved; "Capt. Cooper is one of the most efficient and gallant officers in service," he wrote, adding that the captain could not be "spared from his command."[566] Lomax, like the War Department, was bound by legal technicalities. He refused to give command of the regiment to a captain not eligible for promotion, since Cooper was merely the senior officer present. Neither did he wish to have the position filled by a captain only.

Cooper persisted, claiming his promotion as a right in fact, if not by law, and emphasizing the impossible confusion in the chain of command:

> Captain Sandford, of Company A--hospitalized with an illness from which he would soon die, waived his claim to promotion.
>
> Captain Gantt, of Company B--absent since November with a serious illness and unlikely to return soon, if at all, nonetheless claimed promotion.
>
> Captain Capps, of Company C--a prisoner since the previous October, was officially reported dead.
>
> Captain Harding, of Company D--absent wounded since the Wilderness, claimed promotion.
>
> Captain Arnold, of Company E--resigned.

Writing directly to the Secretary of War, Cooper concluded: "I appeal to you sir in person because of the repeated efforts that have

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[566]Endorsements by Lomax, ibid.

been made and are still being made to have the offices filled by outside appointment."[567]

Cooper seems to have been a rough-hewn individual, clearly unafraid to speak his mind or defend his prerogatives--even to the point of insubordination. Yet however much he seemed to deserve a promotion, it could not be given to him for personal as well as administrative reasons. The chronic antagonism between battalions was again becoming evident. While Charles Collins lived this delicate issue had been avoided, and by virtue of his skill as a leader the rancor had been healed. Now the situation among the chain of command, which had long been compounded by the legalism of the War Department, was aggravated by the old problems of personality. The ineptness of Critcher had come at the worst possible moment, and was in pointed contrast to the ability of Collins. Cooper, who had once petitioned to have his unit removed from Critcher's command, seems to have been the temperamental opposite of Critcher, and may have vented his impatience on members of Critcher's former battalion as well.

Cooper's bluntness probably was the single greatest factor disqualifying him from command. In disapproving of Cooper's resignation Lomax had claimed that the captain could not be "spared" from his company, then admitted that he had no objection to Cooper's promotion as major in some other regiment. So the solution was to do nothing. Cooper was refused a promotion, and his resignation was not accepted.

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[567]Cooper to Seddon, Aug. 5, 1864, ibid.

The problem of absentee officers who tied up the avenues of promotion was not limited to the Fifteenth Virginia, or even to the cavalry corps. One officer concluded an inspection of the First Corps by observing that:

> Hundreds, if not thousands, of meritorious young officers are denied all hopes of promotion, because wounded officers long disabled, some for more than two years. . . still keep their names upon the rolls. It is an injury to the service and a special wrong inflicted upon those brave men who have so long borne the perils and responsibilities of command without the corresponding rank.[568]

The solution, he urged, was to process the disabled officers through examining boards, which could order their discharge or retirement. "The prompt remedy of this evil will remove a feeling of discontent that now prevails to a greater or less extent in every brigade of the army."[569]

John Critcher, however, was allowed to resign. After several concurring endorsements the matter reached General Lee, Critcher's former neighbor with whom he had once discussed the future of the Confederacy. They had been equals, representatives of a society where gentlemen preserved the established order and the foundation of a strong _noblesse oblige_ was the cult of personal honor and personal pride. Now the Confederacy, to which they both had offered their services as gentlemen, was forced to dismiss one of them as a necessity of its continued survival. After June 12 John Critcher left the regiment, never to return.

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[568] Lt. Col. H. E. Peyton to Inspector General Samuel Cooper, Sept. 23, 1864, _Official Records_, I, XLII, part 2, p. 1272.

[569] _Ibid_.

Following the battle at Trevilian Station, Sheridan's force began a slow retreat encumbered by wounded, prisoners, and scores of fugitive and captured slaves who had joined the column. Hampton followed by a parallel route, keeping his command between Richmond and the raiders and repeatedly seeking another battle which Sheridan "studiously declined."[570] Completing a wide circuit through Spotsylvania and Bowling Green the Yankees reached White House Landing, on the Chickahominy River, on June 21.[571]

Grant, meanwhile, had moved the army to Petersburg, and Sheridan's cavalry was ordered to escort the garrison and supplies remaining at the White House to the army's new base on the James River. On June 24 the Southerners attacked this movement as it crossed their front. Fitzhugh Lee's division, again dismounted, assailed the main column near St. Mary's Church, while two brigades made a flanking movement. Gregg's division was routed with heavy losses, leaving its casualties on the field and barely managing to save the wagon train.[572] Hampton continued the pursuit until 10:00 P.M. and Sheridan, as a result of this encounter, decided to move his men across the James by ferry rather than by pontoon bridge--a process that was not completed until June 29.[573]

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[570]Report of Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton on operations, June 8-24, 1864, Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 1096.

[571]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 796-98.

[572]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 550-51.

[573]Official Records, I, XXXVI, part 1, pp. 798-99; ibid., I, XL, part 2, pp. 686-88. The cavalry campaigns of 1864 are related in Hirst Dillon Milholler, James Ralph Johnson, and Alfred Hoyt Bill, Horsemen Blue and Gray: A Pictorial History (New York: Oxford University Press. 1960).

The delay was significant, for it freed the divisions of Lee and Hampton for service elsewhere, while Sheridan's force remained largely immobilized.

The cavalry now continued to modify its style of fighting in favor of dismounted as well as mounted tactics. A new emphasis on force as well as flexibility resulted also from the personal preference of General Hampton, and partially compensated for the devastating effects of the repeating carbines with which Sheridan's regiments were being armed.

> Up to this time the Cavalry Corps had not learned the style of their new commander, but now they discovered a vast difference between the old and the new, for while General Stuart would attempt his work with whatever force he had at hand, and often seemed to try to accomplish a given result with the smallest possible number of men, Gen. Hampton always endeavored to carry every available man to his point of operation, and the larger his force the better he liked it.
>
> The advantage of this style of generalship was soon apparent, for while under Stuart stampedes were frequent, with Hampton they were unknown, and the men of his corps soon had . . . unwavering confidence in him . . .[574]

As the Federals began extending their siege lines around Petersburg the divisions of James H. Wilson, detached for service with the army during the Trevilian Raid, and August V. Kautz, formerly on the defensive with Butler's army, were sent on another expedition against the railroad lines that were now so vital to the defense of Petersburg and the survival of the Confederacy in Virginia.

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[574]Frank M. Myers, The Commanches: A History of White's Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, Laurel Brig., Hampton Div., A.N.V., C.S.A. (2d ed.; Marietta, Georgia: Continental Book Company, 1956), p.291.

On June 22, Wilson left Petersburg with some 5,000 men. They were driven from the Weldon Railroad that same day by Confederate infantry, with the loss of 600 prisoners, and were overtaken by W. H. F. Lee's division at Nottoway Courthouse on June 23. The raiders seriously disrupted the Southside and Danville Railroads, but were shaken by Lee's continued pursuit and an unexpectedly stubborn defense of the Staunton River Bridge, near Roanoke, on June 26.[575]

Retiring toward the security of Petersburg, both Federal divisions were intercepted along the line of the Weldon Railroad. Hampton's men had left the vicinity of Drewry's farm on June 27, and were in position by noon the next day. They defended Stony Creek Depot through the afternoon and night of June 28, and by the next morning had the enemy in full retreat, "seeking safety in flight in all directions."[576]

Lee fought the Federals at Reams' Station, a few miles north, with equal success. Lomax's brigade, with Mahone's infantry, attacked dismounted, routing the enemy and capturing their wagons and artillery as well as many prisoners, small arms, and the now-customary bands of runaway slaves. Wickham's mounted reserves scattered the rear guard "in every direction," and drove them to Stony Creek, where the raiders tore up the bridge and attempted a rally. They were soon dislodged by Lomax, with his men dismounted, "when the

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[575] Official Records, I, XL, part 1, pp. 620-25, 728-33, 750-52.

[576] Report of Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton on operations, June 27-30, 1864; ibid., p. 809.

pursuit was again resumed and pressed far into the night."[577]

Confederate casualties were very light. Hampton's entire division lost only two killed and twenty wounded or missing.[578] The Fifteenth Virginia lost one man killed, Private Samuel R. Fones of Company A.[579] Writing soon after the battle, Captain Simpson certified the amount of ammunition expended by the regiment since the battles around Spotsylvania Courthouse:

14,731 cartridges, calibre .58
24,004 cartridges, calibre .52
5,000 cartridges, calibre .54
4,992 cartridges for the Colt Army revolver
1,960 cartridges for the Colt Navy revolver
1,000 musket caps
4,000 pistol caps[580]

The fragments of Wilson's command reached the army on July 2, after a loss of approximately 1,000 men,[581] while Hampton asserted that better coordination by Fitzhugh Lee would have resulted in an even greater toll.[582] Reporting for his own division, Hampton cited the service rendered by the cavalry:

> The pursuit of the enemy, which ended near Peters' Bridge, closed the active operations which commenced on the 8th of June, when the movement against Sheridan commenced. During

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[577]Battle of Ream's Station--Report of General W. C. Wickham (July 2, 1864), Southern Historical Society Papers, IX (1881), 108.

[578]Official Records, I, XL, part 1, p. 809.

[579]Compiled service record of Pvt. Samuel R. Fones, Co. A, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[580]Compiled service record of Capt. James Simpson, Co. I, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

[581]Official Records, I, XL, part 1, pp. 624, 728-30.

[582]Ibid., p. 809.

> that time, a period of twenty-two days, the command had no rest, was badly supplied with rations and forage, marched upward of 400 miles, fought the greater portion of six days and one entire night, captured upward of 2,000 prisoners, many guns, small-arms, wagons, horses, and other materials of war, and was completely successful in defeating two of the most formidable and well organized expeditions of the enemy.[583]

The loss in Hampton's division during this campaign was 719;[584] Fitzhugh Lee's casualties were unreported, but undoubtedly equivalent. Sheridan admitted to an overall loss since May 5, of 7,000. Speaking of an attrition that applied to both sides, he concluded that "in all the operations the percentage of cavalry casualties was as great as that of the infantry, and the question which had existed 'Who ever saw a dead cavalryman?' was set at rest."[585]

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[583]Report of Maj. Gen. Wade Hampton on operations, June 27-30, 1864, ibid., p. 809; Official Records, I, XL, part 2, p. 702.

[584]Official Records, I, XL, part 1, p. 810.

[585]Report of Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan of the Richmond campaign, ibid., I, XXXVI, part 1, p. 802.

CHAPTER VIII

"I HAVE TRIED TO PREVENT THIS DISASTER, . . ."

The army was on the defensive. Around Petersburg the trench lines grew longer each day, and weary soldiers fought continually over scarred fields shimmering in the heat. The cavalry of both sides were relatively quiet during July and August, however, having fought themselves and ridden their horses into a state of exhausted ineffectiveness.[586]

In the Fifteenth Virginia the strain was increasingly evident, and many soldiers who had been in good health were made ill by the hot climate and the lack of fresh water in the low country where they had been on duty.[587] Captain Simpson who, like Captain Cooke, had been invalided to the rear by an examining board in November, returned to the regiment after the battle of Cold Harbor only to replace John Cooper as commander by June 30. Cooper did not resume command until mid-August, apparently because he also was too debilitated to remain in the field.[588]

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[586] Official Records, I, XL, part 1, pp. 612-14; ibid., part 3 pp. 792-93.

[587] Myers, The Commanches, p. 313.

[588] Compiled service records of Captains John Cooper, Co. F, and James Simpson, Co. I, reels 139 and 143, Microcopy 324.

Captain Sandford was officially reported dead. Captain Gantt, however, still claimed his promotion from a hospital in Charlottesville.[589] Not more than three companies, including Cooper's, were actually commanded by captains during this period; the others were in the charge of lieutenants and sergeants who had begun to carry an increasing burden of leadership and responsibility. Lieutenant George R. Gornto, originally of Company K, became the acting commander of Companies C, F, and K. Company G was commanded by First Sergeant John F. Pullen.[590] Lieutenant Robert P. Tutwiler, whose name had been dropped from the rolls because of his chronic illness,[591] returned to trade command of Company B with Lieutenant Carrington in the same way that Cooper and Simpson were trading command of the regiment.

The problem of remounts remained critical. The men on horse detail found it increasingly difficult to find animals anywhere. In one case some of the troopers from Norfolk managed to steal several horses from a Federal outpost, only to have them appropriated by Confederate authorities as they passed through Richmond to rejoin the regiment. After some litigation they were finally allowed to keep their prizes.[592]

To the chagrin of men on furlough, their presence was used as a

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[589]Compiled service records of Captains Lucius Sandford, Co. A, and Albert Gantt, Co. B, reels 143 and 141, Microcopy 324.

[590]Compiled service record of Lt. Thomas E. Pullen, Co. G, reel 143, Microcopy 324.

[591]Compiled service record of Lt. Robert P Tutwiler, Co. B, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[592]Compiled service record of Sgt. William R. Fentress, Co. I, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

cover by certain unlawful bands in the area. Governor Zebulon B. Vance complained from North Carolina that:

> many outrages are being committed in the district beyond the Chowan River by detached parties of soldiers, said mainly to be of the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, who are roaming about, levying contributions and committing depredations upon the people. They are in all probability bands of deserters or stragglers, who are enabled to practice these outrages with impunity by holding out the character of authorized bodies of Confederate soldiers.[593]

As the siege continued to occupy both armies, new hope for relief came dramatically from the Shenandoah Valley. The campaigns of Generals Franz Sigel and David Hunter had failed, and Jubal Early had been sent to occupy the Valley and create a diversion in favor of Lee. Early performed brilliantly, carrying the war to the suburbs of Washington, D. C., and drawing large forces, including the famed Sixth Corps and most of Sheridan's cavalry, away from southeastern Virginia. By mid-August Early still held the Valley, but he needed help, and Richard H. Anderson's division of infantry and Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry were despatched as reinforcements.[594]

Lomax was promoted to major general and given command of the cavalry already in the Valley,[595] forming a new division from five separate brigades of about 4,100 effectives, of which only about 1,700 were mounted. Colonel William H. Payne replaced Lomax as brigade

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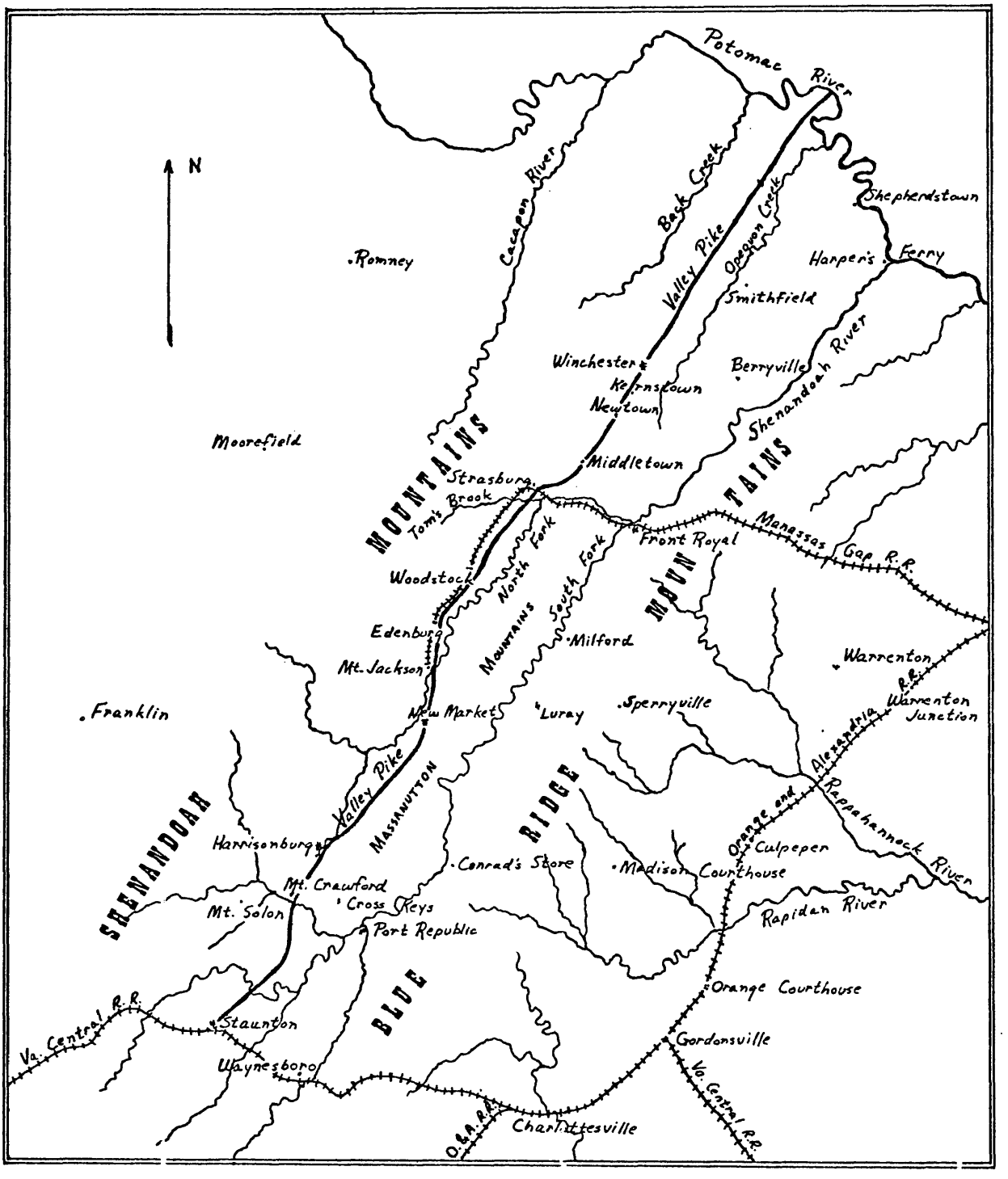
[593]Sec. of War Seddon to Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard, Sept. 23, 1864, Official Records, I, XLII, part 2, p. 1279.

[594]Jubal A. Early, War Memoirs: Autobiographical Sketch and Narrative of the War Between the States (2d ed.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), pp. 366-408.

[595]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 574-75.

THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY



commander, and together with Wickham's brigade, Lee's division mustered a total of about 1,200 mounted men.[596]

On August 11, Wade Hampton had been given command of all the cavalry in Virginia--the first overall direction of the corps since the death of Stuart.[597] On the same day, Lee directed that he move some of the cavalry toward Culpeper to counter the buildup of enemy cavalry in the Valley, and to threaten Washington if possible.[598] For two days the columns passed through Richmond, and one observer found the men as insouciant as ever:

> They ride as if they grew to the horses. As they trot past, they can be seen cutting and dividing large round watermelons, and none are permitted to fall. Occasionally a staring negro in the street is astonished by the crushing of a rind on his head.[599]

The main portion of Hampton's command soon was recalled to Richmond,[600] however, and Lee's two brigades were the only cavalry to join the force already with Early.

The Federal command in the Valley was assigned to Sheridan who, fearing the political repercussions of a defeat so soon before elections, gathered his army at Harper's Ferry to wait. Early occupied the lower Valley, around Winchester, until mid-September. Payne's

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[596]Early, War Memoirs, p. 416; Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, p. 993; ibid., I, XLII, part 2, pp. 1243, 1309.

[597]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 516-17, 551-52.

[598]Official Records, I, XLII, part 2, pp. 1170-73; ibid., I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 996-97.

[599]Jones, A Rebel War Clerk's Diary, II, 264.

[600]Official Records, I, XLII, part 2, pp. 1177, 1204-05.

brigade went on picket duty from the Opequon to the Shenandoah, and the cavalry fought several sharp but indecisive skirmishes until the departure of Anderson's infantry ended the period of stalemate.[601] On September 19 the Federals attacked Early's command and forced it through Winchester and up the Valley in retreat.

Lomax's cavalry on the left were the first to give way, flanked twice by Sheridan's horsemen. Fitzhugh Lee's division, which had been picketing on the right,[602] retired in better form and remained, as one of the few organized commands on the field, to win a temporary rear guard action south of town. They fought with a grim determination not to be stampeded. Earlier in the day, as some of Lee's men retired from Fort Hill in the face of the Federal cavalry, a shell decapitated a cannoneer. The sergeant commanding the gun calmly halted and unlimbered the piece, fired it while the body was strapped onto the limber chest, then moved off.[603] It was the conduct of veterans.

Wickham's brigade had moved to the left flank during the battle, to reinforce Lomax's mounted infantry. Payne's brigade remained on the right, on the north side of Red Bud River, aided by General George S. Patton's brigade of infantry. As the Confederate line was giving way late in the afternoon an "overwhelming" force of cavalry advanced

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[601] Ibid., I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 19-25, 41-46, 423-27, 567-73, 1001, 1005-08, 1024-27; ibid., part 2, pp. 862, 864.

[602] Ibid., I, XLIII, part 1, p. 555.

[603] T. T. Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XII (1884), p. 450.

against them.[604] Payne's cavalry bore "the shock of their attack"[605] and suffered heavy losses. According to the officer in charge of that sector, "the enemy frequently attacked the right of the line, but made no impression, and the brigades held their position until late in the evening, and when ordered to withdraw did so unbroken and in good order."[606]

Nonetheless, the battle convinced Early of the uselessness of his cavalry--especially the units under Lomax. He accused them of being "demoralized" and lamented that "the enemy's very great superiority in cavalry and the comparative inefficiency of ours turned the scale against us."[607] It was the first of many indictments that Early would make against the mounted arm, whose use he did not fully understand and whose failures he somehow construed as a cause, rather than a symptom, of his army's weakness.[608]

Fitzhugh Lee was wounded seriously in the battle, and was lost to the army for the remainder of the campaign. Williams C. Wickham secceeded Lee as division commander and Thomas T. Munford was promoted to Wickham's position, while William Payne remained as acting commander of Lomax's old brigade. By September Captain Harding had returned to duty from a long convalescence that followed his wounding in

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[604]Early, War Memoirs, p. 425.

[605]Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1885), 135.

[606]Report of Maj. Gen. Lunsford L. Lomax on operations, Sept. 19-Nov. 2, 1864. Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, p. 611.

[607]Report of Lt. Gen. Jubal Early on operations, Sept. 17-Oct. 19, 1864, ibid., p. 555.

[608]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 609.

the Wilderness; he assumed command of the Fifteenth Virginia from Captain Cooper.[609]

As Early retreated up the Valley he sent Lee's cavalry through Front Royal to secure the Luray Valley, which extended parallel to the Shenandoah. Their mission was to prevent a movement by Sheridan through the Luray Valley to intercept Early's line of retreat. The night after the Battle of Winchester, part of the division had picketed the Shenandoah at Front Royal. They were attacked the next morning by an overwhelming force, but held their position until the sun cleared the fog and exposed their weakness. By then, Wickham had moved Payne's brigade, with Breathed's Battery, into position at a narrow point in the valley near Millford. General Alfred T. Torbert, in command of Sheridan's cavalry, advanced Wilson's and part of Merritt's divisions in a cautious, ineffectual pursuit.[610]

Wickham's two brigades thus occupied a short, compact line on the south side of Millford Creek, a line that stretched from the Shenandoah to a knob on the Blue Ridge. Payne's brigade defended the bridge on the Luray road; Munford's brigade was posted on their right. Torbert tested the position on September 23 with "a furious shelling" to which the Confederate horse artillery responded "with vigor."[611] The support

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[609]Compiled service records of Lt. Robert Tutwiler, Co. B, and Pvt. Andrew C. Smith, Co. I, reel 144, Microcopy 324.

[610]Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XII (1884), pp. 451-53.

[611]Ibid., p. 455.

rendered by Early's cannoneers during the Valley campaign was superb.[612] At one point during this encounter, when asked if one of Payne's squadrons might maneuver in front of his battery, Breathed responded heartily:

> If 'Billy' can hold that bridge--and it looks like he is going to do it--I'll put a pile of cannister near my guns, and all hell will never move me from this position. I'll make a horizontal shot turn in full blast for them to come through; you need not be afraid of my guns.[613]

And they held.

A flanking movement by Custer's brigade was halted by three companies of Wickham's force, reinforced by the musicians of three regiments--all bugling at once. The ruse succeeded; Custer returned to the main force and Torbert, so ponderously outnumbering the rebels, began to withdraw down the Valley through Front Royal. Sheridan, having driven Early's army from Fisher's Hill the same day, angrily ordered Torbert to return.

As the army retreated after Fisher's Hill Early recalled Wickham, with Munford's brigade, leaving Payne's command entirely alone at Millford. Undoubtedly, in that age of classical allusions, more than one trooper who remained behind in the steep-walled valley was aware of its resemblance to the pass at Thermopylae. The action that followed was comparable.

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[612] Wise, The Long Arm of Lee, pp. 886-87, 889-90, 918.

[613] Quoted in Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XII (1884), p. 455.

The Yankees returned to Millford in force on September 24 and overran the position. Through sheer weight of numbers they killed, captured, or brushed aside Payne's small band of defenders, forcing the survivors beyond Massanutten Gap--which opened the way into the Shenandoah Valley--and rushing on toward the turnpike over which Early had, by grace of Payne's sacrifice, already passed.[614]

The enemy captured approximately 100 prisoners--an enormous loss for one brigade--and the flag of the Sixth Virginia.[615] The Fifteenth Regiment lost men in companies B, C, F, G, and K. Captain Cooper and Lieutenant Thomas Arnold were among those captured--two more victims of an attrition that had not ceased since the Wilderness.[616]

The cavalry had been continuously engaged since September 19. Its wagons were with Early, and rations and ammunition were in short supply. Yet the men remained in good spirits and ready to attempt whatever might be asked of them.[617] Even as it regrouped south of Milford the brigade disputed the advance of some of Torbert's command and continued to retire in good order toward Port Republic, where it joined Early on September 25.

During the next week the army skirmished occasionally with parties of the enemy and drove two of Torbert's divisions from the vicinity

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[614] Ibid., pp. 453-56; Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 428-29.

[615] Early, War Memoirs, p. 441.

[616] Losses are as reported on the company returns (Box 537, Record Group 109), verified against the compiled service records (reels 138-45, Microcopy 324).

[617] Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XII (1884), p. 456.

of Waynesboro, where they had been destroying a railroad bridge. Then they moved to Mount Sidney, on the Valley Pike, facing Sheridan's force across the North River at Harrisonburg, and waited for reinforcements.

On October 6 Rosser arrived with his brigade, now reduced to about 600 men mounted.[618] Rosser assumed command of Lee's division and general command of all the cavalry in the Valley. With the addition of a division of infantry and a battalion of artillery, Early's losses during the previous battles were nearly made up, and he resumed the offensive only to find the Yankees retreating again. Early hurried on to New Market, then paused as the cavalry continued to press after Sheridan's rear guard.

The Yankees were burning the Valley--houses, mills, barns, stacks of wheat and hay, fields ready for harvest, everything that had made that country such a bountiful resource to the Confederacy.[619] Before and behind them the Valley was in flames, with pillars of smoke by day and columns of fire by night. A haze of smoke drifted across the turnpike and shadowed the column. As Rosser's men followed in the wake of the destruction they became enraged, and reckless.[620]

On the evening of October 8 they had pushed the Federals across Tom's Brook, twenty-five miles ahead of Early. General T. T. Munford,

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[618]Early, War Memoirs, p. 435.

[619]Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 29-31, 37, 43, 436, 1028-29.

[620]Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1885), pp. 134-35.

commanding Wickham's brigade, thought his men were over-extended. "Our division was really not equal in number to a small brigade of the enemy," he pointed out; "Rosser's head seemed to be completely turned by our success. . . "[621]

On the morning of October 9, with peremptory orders from Sheridan to "whip the enemy or get whipped himself,"[622] Torbert put his force in motion against the Confederates. Rosser's men turned out of camp to see a large force of dismounted cavalry, supported by two full divisions in a line that extended nearly across the width of the Valley. The first attack had been repulsed as Payne's brigade moved into line, but heavy columns soon flanked the Confederate positions and threatened to isolate each brigade. After a "spirited" fight of two hours, Rosser's men were fleeing in disorder along the Back Road, while the sound of Lomax's artillery, receding up the Valley Pike, was evidence of the collapse of that command as well.[623]

The fugitives finally rallied at Columbia Furnace and Mount Jackson, some twenty miles away, leaving behind "almost everything on wheels,"[624] including eleven fieldpieces, ambulances, caissons, a battery forge, the headquarters wagons and nearly all the official papers of Rosser, Lomax, Wickham, and Payne.[625] Sheridan's jubilant

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[621] Ibid.

[622] Report of Maj. Gen. Alfred Torbert on operation, Aug. 8-Oct. 31, 1864, Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, p. 431.

[623] Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1885), 134-39.

[624] Ibid., p. 139; Myers, The Commanches, pp. 335-41.

[625] Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 50-51; Neese, Three Years in the Confederate Horse Artillery, pp. 322-27.

troopers quickly began to call the incident "the Woodstock Races,"[626] claiming a loss by Rosser of over 300 men, mostly captured, with a loss to themselves of less than 60 killed and wounded.[627] Munford, accusing Rosser of rushing into "the greatest disaster that ever befell our cavalry during the whole war," called it "a clean sweep" and claimed that the battle had "utterly destroyed" the confidence of his officers in Rosser's judgment: "they knew that he could fight and was full of it, but he did not know when to stop, or when to retire."[628]

Early's meager resources were severely depleted by this reverse, and he wrote to General Lee:

> This is very distressing to me, and God knows I have done all in my power to avert the disasters which have befallen this command; but the fact is that the enemy's cavalry is so much superior to ours, both in numbers and equipment, and the country is so favorable to the operations of cavalry, that it is impossible for ours to compete with his.[629]

The Confederate cavalry were left with little more than the clothes they wore and the arms they carried. Gathering the men into organization again, Munford remarked: "A more discomfited looking body I have never imagined."[630]

On the next day, however, the division returned to duty and established a line of pickets at Edinburg, while Lomax led his men

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[626]Kidd, Personal Recollections of a Cavalryman, pp. 400-402.

[627]Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 31, 431, 552-53, 559-60, 612-13.

[628]Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1885), pp. 134-35.

[629]Early to Lee, Oct. 9, 1864, Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, p. 559.

[630]Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1885), p. 138.

into the Luray Valley to close the approaches at Millford.[631] But the dominance of the Confederate cavalry had been broken, while Sheridan's horsemen grew bolder and more aggressive. In the meantime the regiment was losing, as Munford expressed it, "some of the very 'seed corn,' the very best boys . . ."[632] The end was coming quickly.

On October 12 the march was resumed. Payne's brigade advanced to Pugh's Run on the Valley Pike. The next day the brigade led the way for Gordon's division of infantry.[633]

Early reached Fisher's Hill on October 13 and prepared to attack the Federal camps outside of Middletown. His order of battle was based on an attack by General John B. Gordon's corps, which would cross and recross the Shenandoah and strike the Federals on a flank they considered unassailable, while another force advanced down the Valley Pike. Rosser and Lomax were to harass the flanks by way of the Back Road and from the direction of Front Royal. Payne's brigade was assigned a special mission on the right, in conjunction with the flanking attack; they were to move directly against Sheridan's headquarters at Belle Grove mansion, in the midst of the Federal camp, and capture Sheridan himself. The column left camp at 1:00 A.M. on October 19, after the men had turned in their sabres and canteens in order to make as little noise as possible.[634]

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[631]Early, War Memoirs, p. 436.

[632]Munford, "Reminiscences of Cavalry Operations," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIII (1885), p. 136.

[633]Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 579, 1030.

[634]Ibid., pp. 580-81; Early, War Memoirs, pp. 437-44.

The attack began before dawn and was highly successful at first. Two corps of the Federal army were routed and driven from their camps with the loss of numerous small arms and artillery. The Confederates were slowed only when portions of the Sixth Corps rallied on the ridge west of Middletown, and when Early's men began to drop out of line to help themselves to the Yankee plunder.[635]

Payne and his men never quite reached Belle Grove--in the smoke and morning fog it was difficult to find, and the attack on that wing evidently had started late, giving the Yankees time to take the alarm. Sheridan was absent at the moment anyway, returning from a staff conference in Washington. Payne, with a total of 326 men, charged the enemy wagons, captured them, and accumulated some 400 prisoners.[636] Later the brigade took position on Gordon's flank where, as the only mounted unit present, they began a hopeless struggle to fend off a division of cavalry that was overlapping Early's line. During the latter part of the morning and early afternoon this force made a number of "bold attempts" to break the Confederate line, "but they were invariably repulsed."[637]

Elsewhere on Early's front the last Federal infantry had been broken up and driven through Middletown. But Rosser was reporting two divisions of cavalry threatening the left, and the exhausted rebel infantry in the center had lost their momentum. Early's attack was

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[635]Early, War Memoirs, pp. 444-51; Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp 560-64.

[636]Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 581-82.

[637]Early, War Memoirs, p. 448.

finally halted in the rolling, rock-strewn fields north of town, where only a skirmish line remained to wage a languid dispute across the autumn landscape. For several hours the fate of the Confederacy in the Valley hung in the balance as Early's scattered, milling soldiers waited to see what would happen next.

During the afternoon the Federals rallied and, led by Sheridan personally, began to recover their camp.[638] The first assault had nearly failed when a sudden demoralization spread among Early's men and they began to leave the field in disorder. Payne's brigade and some of Gordon's infantry repulsed another attack on the right, but the situation was hopeless and they finally joined the retreat.[639]

The army, as Early admitted, had brought about its own ruin. In defeat the men became a pathetic crowd of stragglers, surging along the Valley Pike to escape the Yankee cavalry. At Strasburg a bridge collapsed under the weight of the traffic, and because none of the troops could be formed a few of Sheridan's horsemen dashed among the artillery and wagons and captured everything that had not already crossed.[640] The situation was hopeless. "The officers went among the men and begged them to form in line of battle. But the commands were all mixed up, discipline was utterly lost, and as fast as a line was formed it would break and melt away like a rope of sand."[641] The

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[638] Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 32-34, 52-54, 433-35.

[639] Ibid., pp. 561-62; Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 600-608.

[640] Early, War Memoirs, pp. 449-50.

[641] C. S. M., "The Battle of Cedar Creek, By A Confederate Surgeon," Southern Historical Society Papers, XVI (1888) p. 445.

infantry rallied that night at Fisher's Hill and continued to New Market in better order, with Rosser's cavalry covering their retreat. Sheridan's men indulged in a brief and feeble pursuit, for less than might have been expected, then retired to a line on Stony Creek, a few miles below Early.[642]

The last days in October passed quietly. There would be more fighting, but the situation did not change substantially during the latter part of the year. A great many Federal soldiers remained in the Valley, unavailable to Grant, and in keeping them there Early had succeeded in one of the major goals of his campaign.[643] But the Valley lay in ruins, mostly occupied; the Confederate forces were reduced by casualties and attrition to the verge of helplessness; and one of the Confederacy's last real chances for a victory had vanished. Yet if Jubal Early, in 1864, could not achieve what Stonewall Jackson had achieved in 1862, perhaps the truth is that neither could Jackson.

Payne's brigade, which had fielded 600 men at Winchester, went into action at Cedar Creek with only 300.[644] Captain Harding still commanded the Fifteenth Virginia, but he had not been promoted to field rank and only one captain--James Deatley of Company E--was present at the time.

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[642] Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 562-63.

[643] Early, War Memoirs, pp. 452-58; Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, p. 611.

[644] Early, War Memoirs, p. 440; Official Records, I, XLII, part 3, p. 1236.

Late in the year the men received a modest issue of clothing, including trousers, "drawers," and infantry shoes. The list of company commanders who receipted for these items reveals the depleted chain of command:

Company A: Lieutenant Littleton T. Costin
Company B: Sergeant Robert A. Thurmond
Companies C and K: Lieutenant George Gornto
Company D: Lieutenant John Luttrell
Company E: First sergeant Charles G. Alexander
Company F: Sergeant John Old
Company G: First Sergeant John F. Pullen
Company I: Sergeant Virginus W. Bonney[645]

It is difficult to appraise the performance of the regiment as a combat unit, since so many reports for the period have been destroyed. Perhaps the best indication of its satisfactory conduct is the absence of any remarks to the contrary--and the length of its casualty lists. Although it received little notice for its role in the war, the regiment had entered late, after a poor beginning, and had fought as well and been as useful as any in the cavalry corps. Its reputation suffers nothing through comparison with the best of Stuart's regiments in 1864; but the other regiments had had their successes recorded, while the Fifteenth expended itself with no Blackford, or Cooke, or Von Borcke, or McClellan to immortalize its deeds.

Some of the companies had become greatly reduced in size. Companies C and F, which had been among the largest in the service in 1862, now had available for duty only 17 men and 16 men, respectively,

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[645]Clothing rolls, Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, Box 537, Record Group 109.

out of an aggregate enrollment of 134. Company B, which was nearest home, mustered 48 men. Companies A and D both reported some 35 men present, and Companies G, I, and K reported about 25 men each. Of the soldiers actually present, some were sick or on detached duty, so that the entire regiment probably had available not more than 225 men.[646] On an average, each squadron was scarcely larger than a platoon.

It was not enough. The attrition, the lack of officers in the regiment, and the continued hard service necessitated a reorganization. In November the orders were issued; the regiment was to be consolidated.

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[646]Company returns, Feb. 29-April 30, 1864 (submitted in October, 1864), Box 537, Record Group 109.

CHAPTER IX

"WHAT WORD FROM THE TRENCHES?"

Consolidation was an expedient, another unpleasant necessity by which the Confederate army sought to keep its forces in the field. The consolidation of the Fifteenth Virginia was incidental to the course of the war, an afterthought by which Jubal Early repaired the losses of the Valley campaign. But to the men involved it meant an end to a regimental career and an identity which they had created. The regimental standard was retired and the companies were reassigned in the new organization.

The unit they were joining was a good one--the Fifth Virginia, commanded by Colonel Reuben B. Boston and known thereafter as the Fifth Virginia Cavalry (Consolidated). The orders were issued on November 8, 1864,[647] and seem to have taken effect within the next few weeks. Captain Harding was at last promoted to major--the first and only promotion to field rank of any line officer in the Fifteenth.

The companies within the Fifth Virginia were rearranged, so that the remnants of the Fifteenth comprised four junior but separate

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[647]Roster of commissioned officers, Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, Oct., 1862-Nov., 1864, Box 537, Record Group 109.

companies--G, H, I, and K--under command of their own officers and with a structure still resembling the original company and battalion organizations. Captain Cooper was assigned, despite his absence, to the command of Company G, along with Lieutenant Gornto and others from Burroughs' battalion. Lieutenant John D. Luttrell, of Harding's Company D, became commander of the new Company H, which included personnel from Critcher's battalion. Lieutenant Carrington, of Gantt's Company B, transferred his command to Company I of the Fifth Virginia. Elements of Simpson's and Arnold's companies--from both battalions--were amalgamated into Company K under Lieutenant Cincinattus F. Brickhouse.[648] At about the same time, the entire cavalry brigade of General Bradley T. Johnson was disbanded and consolidated. The Eighth Virginia Cavalry and Thirty-sixth Virginia Battalion were assigned to Payne's brigade.[649]

Before the end of the year, the armies in the Valley fought several sharp skirmishes. Early advanced again on November 10, and Payne's brigade drove some enemy cavalry out of Middletown the next day. Fighting continued around Newtown through November 12, and the brigade fought well, repulsing an attack against the left of Early's line. Early estimated a loss by the Federals of 200 men captured, and reported that they had been pursued for several miles. "Rosser's command behaved very handsomely, particularly Lomax's brigade, under

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[648]Company abstract cards, Fifth Virginia Cavalry (Consolidated), and Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, reels 61 and 138, Microcopy 324.

[649]Official Records, I, XLVI, part 2, pp. 1199-1202; ibid., I, XLII, part 2, p. 1247.

Colonel Payne, and Wickham's, under Lieutenant-Colonel Morgan."[650] When the Federals continued to decline an attack Early retired to New Market, satisfied that his offensive had again prevented the dispatch of reinforcements to Grant.[651]

Late in November, after an advance by two divisions of Sheridan's cavalry to Mount Jackson had been repulsed, Rosser led his own and Payne's brigade across Great North Mountain to New Creek, on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. They surprised two regiments of cavalry, captured some 800 prisoners and four guns, destroyed four siege guns and a large number of stores, and brought off several hundred cattle and sheep.[652] "The fort, prisoners, the colors of the Fifth and Sixth West Virginia Cavalry (Federal), the garrison flag, and five guidons were captured by Payne's brigade. . . "[653]

In December, Early finally established winter camp. Lomax's cavalry, and Wickham's brigade, were sent into the Blue Ridge country to search for forage. Early moved the army to Staunton, posting a line of cavalry pickets across the Valley at New Market.[654]

Late in December the Federal cavalry moved towards Staunton and Gordonsville. Rosser, with about 600 men from his own and Payne's

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[650]R. E. Lee to Sec. of War Seddon, Nov. 13, 1864, ibid., I, XLIII, part 2, p. 921.

[651]Early, War Memoirs, pp. 453-56; Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 583-84, 1032.

[652]Early, War Memoirs, pp. 454-55; Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 82, 88-89, 655-56, 667-70; ibid., part 2, p. 924; Myers, The Commanches, pp. 344-46.

[653]R. E. Lee to Sec. of War Seddon, Dec. 8, 1864, Official Records, 1, XLIII, part 1, p. 668.

[654]Early, War Memoirs, p. 457.

brigades, attacked Custer's division in its camp during the night of December 20, and drove it back in confusion. Two Federal divisions advancing on Gordonsville were halted, then repulsed, by Lomax, Munford, and some infantry hurriedly dispatched from Richmond. Then the troops returned to Staunton; Rosser's cavalry encamped west of town, with Payne's brigade at Lexington and Fishersville,[655] and the companies from the old Fifteenth Virginia located near Forestville.[656]

Early in January Rosser again led a raid into West Virginia. With some 300 picked men he surprised the garrison at Beverly and captured the greater portion of the Eighth Ohio Cavalry and Thirty-fourth Ohio Infantry, plus numerous horses, arms and equipment, and 10,000 rations.[657] The Federals were in a "loose state of discipline,"[658] and claimed to have been deceived by the U. S. issue greatcoats worn by Rosser's men. The expedition was made during unusually severe weather, over mountainous terrain. Rosser's casualties were slight, but the colonel of the Eighth Virginia, then in command of Payne's brigade, lost a leg in the attack and had to be left behind.[659]

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[655] Ibid., pp. 457-58; Official Records, I, XLIII, part 1, pp. 38-39, 674-77; ibid., part 2, pp. 821-22, 825, 946-47; ibid., I, XLVI, part 2, pp. 386, 413, 496.

[656] Company returns, Feb. 29-April 30, 1864, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[657] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, pp. 447-51.

[658] Report of Col. Nathan Wilkinson, Sixth West Virginia Infantry, Jan. 20, 1865, ibid., p. 448.

[659] Early, War Memoirs, p. 459; Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, pp. 511-12.

The problem of forage for the cavalry mounts, which had always been a persistent problem, now became critical. By February the cavalry were scatterd throughout central Virginia because they could not subsist in one place and supplies could no longer be transported to them. On one occasion cavalry troops had to be brought forty miles when they were needed.[660] Sheridan's policy of buring the Valley had had its effect; the Confederacy was surviving on a day-by-day basis. His army faced with the utmost privation, Lee could only warn the authorities in Richmond that "you must not be surprised if calamity befalls us."[661]

If the men in the trenches suffered most from hunger, the cavalry also were forced to endure the cold weather. Picket duty on half rations was always a hardship, but exposure now made it a test of physical endurance. Half-starved men on half-starved horses stumbled along the frozen, rutted roads and numbly waited for the enemy. As the blockade continued, the most basic medical supplies became unavailable, so that wounds which would have been easily treated earlier in the war now resulted in blood poisoning and death.

The Northern resolve to prosecute the war was firmer since the victories in the Valley and the re-election of the Lincoln administration. Federal forces had ransacked Georgia and were now in South

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[660] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 382; ibid., part 3, p. 1319.

[661] R. E. Lee to Sec. of War Seddon, Feb. 8, 1865, Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 382.

Carolina, seeking a junction with Grant. Nothing could stop them, nor could Lee's men prevent the steady extension of the lines around Petersburg--to a point where the defenders were often six feet apart in the trenches. Soon the railroad lines that supplied that town, and the capital, would be disrupted; then the army could choose between surrender and retreat. Confidence in the Confederate government, and morale among the civilian population, was at its lowest point.[662] There seemed to be no hope.

Nothing but pride, and an extraordinary devotion to the cause and the army, held men to their duty. One artillerist, who had fought from the Wilderness to Petersburg, credited his comrades' "capacity for cheerful endurance" as being largely responsible for the survival of the Confederacy:

> It has always seemed to me the most remarkable and most significant fact in the history of the time . . . With mercenary troops or regulars the resistance that Lee was able to offer to Grant's tremendous pressure would have been impossible. . . . No historical criticism of our civil war can be otherwise than misleading if it omits to give a prominent place, as a factor, to the character of the volunteers on both sides, who, in acquiring the steadiness and order of regulars, never lost their personal interest in the contest or their personal pride of manhood as a sustaining force under trying conditions. If either side had lacked this element of personal heroism on the part of its men it would have been driven from the field long before the spring of 1865.[663]

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[662]Wiley, The Road to Appomattox, pp. 67-70.

[663]George Cary Eggleston, "Notes on Cold Harbor," Battles and Leaders, IV, p. 232.

That unquenchable resolve, and unsurpassed willingness to sacrifice and endure, had brought the war to this. While the Confederacy disintegrated around them, Lee's soldiers defied the inevitable. Brave men, equally to be pitied and admired, spent their lives for a cause they could not admit was hopeless.

In the end, numbers alone would decide the issue. Late in February Lee could muster only about 46,000 men in his army, of which only 4,000 were present and effective in the cavalry.[664] On February 20 Fitzhugh Lee's division had available only 1,945 effectives out of 2,499 present and an aggregate enrollment of 9,446.[665] A week later Payne's brigade mustered only 497 present and effective out of a total of 582 present and an aggregate enrollment of 2,147.[666] During the same period the total Union forces operating against Richmond were about 120,000,[667] not including some 10,000 cavalry under Sheridan[668] and a large number of infantry, soon to be available from the Valley.

Significantly, desertions by former members of the Fifteenth Virginia do not seem to have increased greatly until the last few weeks of the war--by which time even the most renowned units were afflicted with the same problem.[669] For men who had earlier been so dissatisfied

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[664] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, pp. 389-90.

[665] Ibid., p. 387.

[666] Ibid., p. 390.

[667] Ibid., pp. 61-63.

[668] Ibid., pp. 475, 1101.

[669] Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 622-25.

with the service, this is particularly revealing; those who were left from Collin's command seem to have retained their fighting spirit to the very end. Once established their morale never broke, even under the most discouraging circumstances--a further credit to the disciplinary momentum that had sustained the regiment since Collins' death.

By mid-February Payne's brigade seems to have concentrated at Swoope's Depot, west of Staunton, in preparation for a return to Richmond.[670] The news was reported to Sheridan, with rumors that the command was ordered to Moorefield, or to Greenville, North Carolina, along with others of the cavalry corps.[671] By February 22 Lee's entire division had joined Longstreet's infantry outside of Richmond, and Payne's brigade went on duty at Bottom's Bridge and along the Nine Mile Road.[672] A few days later Sheridan's cavalry were notified of the movement and also began returning to the lines around Richmond.

In the meantime, the singular career of Kincheloe's partisan rangers was nearing its conclusion. Since April, 1863, when the two companies in Capps' squadron were detached from the regiment,[673] Company H had become increasingly independent. Under command of James Kincheloe, promoted to captain after Brawner's death, the company had operated in northern Virginia. It had fully shared in

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[670] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 2, pp. 386, 413, 496, 566, 572; Myers, The Commanches, pp. 353-54.

[671] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 2, pp. 591, 605, 607, 626.

[672] Ibid., pp. 649-50, 680, 706.

[673] Ibid., I, XXV, part 2, p. 738.

the perils and successes of the partisans in that area, capturing or distracting a large number of the enemy and losing many of its own men in raids and surprise attacks.[674]

As partisans the men were able to prosper. Through captures from the enemy they managed to arm themselves completely. With an average of seventy-five men present for duty during most of 1863, they were well clothed and presented a fine military appearance. Though their captain admitted that the command was only average in discipline and instruction, he evidently considered his men to be a grade or two above the average soldier.[675]

Kincheloe's company was among the partisan units recalled to the army by the Secretary of War, at Lee's request, in 1864.[676] Orders were issued on May 5 directing the company to rejoin the Fifteenth Virginia.[677] Kincheloe's men refused, and were officially disbanded by the War Department.[678] They ignored this order, and a subsequent request to report for duty in the Shenandoah Valley,[679] and continued to wage war--though without the legal protection of "partisan" status.[680]

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[674]Ibid., I, XXIX, part 1, pp. 69, 662, 982-84, 986-87; ibid., I XXXIII, pp. 236-37, 780-81, 796; ibid., I, LI, part 1, pp. 217-19.

[675]Roster of Co. H, July 1, 1863-Jan. 1, 1864, Box 537, Record Group 109.

[676]Official Records, I, XXXIII, pp. 1252-53.

[677]Ibid., I, XXXVI, part 2, p. 959.

[678]Regimental abstract cards, reel 138, Microcopy 324.

[679]Compiled service record of Lt. James Kincheloe, Co. H, reel 142, Microcopy 324.

[680]Official Records, I, XXXVII, part 1, pp. 167-69; ibid., I, XLIII, part 1, p. 873; ibid., part 2, pp. 178, 291-92, 684; ibid., I, XLVI, part 2, pp. 595, 778, 797-98. See also: Mosby, Mosby's War Reminiscences, p. 86, and Jones, Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders, pp. 89-95.

As the war progressed, the nucleus of this command cooperated with Mosby's battalion and finally became affiliated with it informally. On April 5, 1865, Mosby, according to his practice, reorganized the company with a closed election. "In compliance with law," he wrote, "I had to go through the form of an election. But I really appointed the officers, and told the men to vote for them."[681] George Baylor, formerly of the Twelfth Virginia Cavalry, was installed as captain by this means:

> The mode of this election was unique and novel, and would do credit to the Sachem of Tammany. Colonel Mosby was present, and the men were drawn up in line facing him. The men were mostly personally unknown to me, and how a lot of strangers were going to elect me their captain was an enigma my juvenile brain could not solve. But Colonel Mosby had promised I should be captain, and I had abiding faith in him, so I remained near by to see how it would be accomplished. At that I was young and little versed in politics and the ways of the heathen Chinee. Colonel Mosby then called attention and said, "Men, I nominate George Baylor, of Jefferson county, captain of this company." He did not wait for a second, but continued, "All in favor of Baylor as captain, say aye." There was a feeble response along the line, and much apprehension was felt by me to hear the negatives, but no opportunity was afforded the negatives, and proclamation was immediately made by the Colonel, "George Baylor is unanimously chosen captain." The other officers were elected in the same extraordinary way, and the Colonel pronounced the company ready for service, . . .[682]

The next day the company raided the camp of the "Loudoun Rangers"--Unionists from the same region of the state as Baylor's men--and captured sixty-five of them. "This was a pretty good beginning," Baylor allowed, but it was also one of the last skirmishes of the war.[683] A few days later, Mosby disbanded his battalion and surrendered.

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[681]Mosby, Mosby's War Reminiscences, p. 157.

[682]Baylor, Bull Run to Bull Run, p. 311.

[683]Ibid., p. 312.

On March 2 the last handful of men in Early's army were defeated and captured at the Battle of Waynesboro.[684] Lee's division was alerted for a possible return to the Valley,[685] but the situation there was hopeless. A few days later Lee's troops marched up the James toward High Bridge, searching for parties of the enemy, and for food.[686] Their efforts seem to have been largely without result. The infantry complained of the slowness of the cavalry[687] and the Federals--who could now march almost anywhere with impunity--slipped past, as Lee again warned: "The want of forage and provisions paralyzes us."[688]

By March 21 Lee's division had returned to picket duty on the extreme left of the lines, north of Richmond.[689] A week later they were transferred to the Southside, where the Federal cavalry were massing near Dinwiddie Courthouse.[690] As they left, the dismounted men were detached for service in the trenches--a further loss of nearly 400 soldiers.[691]

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[684]Early, War Memoirs, pp. 461-64.

[685]Official Records, I, XLVI, part 2, p. 1278.

[686]Ibid., pp. 1277-82, 1291-94.

[687]Ibid., pp. 1308-17.

[688]Lee to Sec. of War John C. Breckenridge, March 7, 1865, ibid., part 1, p. 510.

[689]Official Records, I, XLVI, part 3, pp. 1317, 1326, 1333-59.

[690]Ibid., part 1, pp. 1298-99.

[691]Ibid., part 3, pp. 1347, 1352, 1358, 1360-61.

On March 30 the division formed line of battle among the "sombre pines"[692] near Five Forks and, most remarkably, reported driving the enemy from the field. General Payne was wounded in this encounter, however, and was lost to the brigade for the remainder of the campaign. Reinforced by Pickett's division the next day, the cavalry again drove the enemy from their front, capturing over 100 prisoners. Lee's division, led by Munford, made "a gallant advance" and carried the enemy works by frontal assault.[693]

At daylight on April 1 Fitzhugh Lee recalled his cavalry from its advanced position--actually in rear of elements of the Federal infantry--and retired to Five Forks, several miles west of Petersburg on the army's extreme right flank. The position, which Lee chose for its strategic value, was not well suited for defense. The enemy attacked in force that afternoon, and the lines soon were swept away.[694] The division fought briefly, then joined the retreat which continued for several miles, "degenerating into a rout."[695] Lieutenants Thomas Pullen, formerly commander of Company G, and Vincent R. Bell, of Harding's company, were captured;[696] other losses, because of the chaotic records, are undetermined.

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[692]Cooke, Wearing of the Gray, p. 536.

[693]Report of Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee on the Appomattox campaign, Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1299.

[694]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, pp. 659-71.

[695]Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1300.

[696]Compiled service record of Lieutenants Vincent R. Bell, Co. D, and Thomas E. Pullen, Co. G, reels 139 and 143, Microcopy 324.

The men rallied at Hatcher's Run, but the Confederate resistance had been broken. Almost simultaneously, Federal infantry began to advance along the lines around Petersburg, and Lee was forced to abandon the capital that night. The cavalry joined General Richard H. Anderson's division of infantry and protected the column on its march to Amelia Courthouse, where they rendezvoused with the troops from Richmond and Petersburg.[697]

The days that followed would be as harrowing as any the army had known.

> Soon began the continuous and final battle. Fighting all day, marching all night, with exhaustion and hunger claiming their victims at every mile of the march, with charges of infantry in rear and of cavalry on the flanks, . . . hour after hour, from hilltop to hilltop, the lines were alternately forming, fighting, and retreating, making one almost continuous shifting battle.
>
> Here, in one direction, a battery of artillery became involved; there, in another, a blocked ammunition train required rescue. . . while the different divisions of Lee's . . . army were being broken and scattered or captured.[698]

Even as they overwhelmed the rebels, however, Grant's men could only marvel at the fighting spirit that held them together.

At Deep Creek, on the way to Amelia, the division paused to check the enemy's pursuit. "The attack," Lee wrote, ". . .was principally sustained by Munford's command, of my old division, with a steadiness reflecting high credit upon the valor and discipline of his men."[699]

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[697] Official Records, I, XL VI, part 1, pp. 1102-06, 1300-01.

[698] John B. Gordon, Reminiscences of the Civil War (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903, pp. 423-24.

[699] Report of Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee on the Appomattox campaign, Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1300. See also: Myers, The Commanches, pp. 372-73.

From Amelia the cavalry turned down the road to Paineville as an escort to the army's wagon trains. They found some of the wagons already destroyed, but promptly drove the Yankee cavalry to within a mile of their infantry supports at Jetersville. About 30 of the enemy were killed, principally with the sabre, and another 150 were wounded and captured.[700]

These successes were temporary. The Federal pursuit could not be halted, and at Sayler's Creek on April 6 some 7,000 men were surrounded and made prisoner--nearly one-third of Lee's force. Enemy cavalry captured the wagons, and the Confederates were barely able to fight their way out. At the same time, Fitz Lee's cavalry attacked a party of Federals attempting to burn High Bridge, over the Appomattox. There was a sharp encounter, as both sides fought for possession of this vital link in the Confederate retreat. Lee's men captured nearly 800 prisoners, killed many more, and finally secured the crossing. But Colonel Boston of the Fifth Virginia, commanding Payne's brigade, died in the fight.[701]

The remnants of the army stumbled on, smaller and weaker. Men threw away their muskets, collapsed by the roadside, or straggled off in search of food. Three divisions of Yankee cavalry--more numerous than the entire rebel army---hovered on the flanks, harried the line of march, broke up the columns, and burned the last wagons with their contents and irreplaceable stores of ammunition. Close

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[700] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1301; ibid., I, LI, part 2, pp. 1083-84.

[701] Ibid., I, XLVI, part 1, pp. 1301-03; Myers, The Commanches, pp. 376-82.

behind them came the Federal infantry, ready to overwhelm anyone who straggled or paused to rest.

The cavalry continued west, fought a rearguard skirmish in the streets of Farmville that night, then crossed the Appomattox. They drove off another attack on the wagons the next day, capturing General J. Irvin Gregg.[702] The army filed across High Bridge, hoping to keep the river between themselves and Grant's army. Before the bridge could be destroyed by the engineers, however, the Federals seized it and the pursuit began anew. The failure to seal off this route gave the enemy an advantage that could not be overcome, and destroyed nearly all hope for the Confederate retreat.[703]

It ended at Appomattox Courthouse, with enemy columns pressing from the rear and enemy skirmishers suddenly blocking the road ahead. Early on Sunday morning, the 9th, as Gordon's infantry passed through the village on their way to the front, they found the cavalry corps ready to advance, drawn up as in a last tableau, the men asleep on their horses.[704] At daybreak the two forces attacked the barricades west of town, drove some dismounted cavalry back to their infantry support, and briefly opened the road to Lynchburg. Before the Federals could recover, Fitzhugh Lee and most of his command had

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[702]Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, pp. 1303, 1120.

[703]Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, III, 712-16.

[704]Burke Davis, To Appomattox: Nine April Days, 1865 (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1959), p. 344; Myers, The Commanches, pp. 389-90.

escaped, hoping somehow to continue the war on their own or unite with Johnston in North Carolina.[705]

Near the courthouse the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia was preparing to seek an armistice, and the moment was one of profound emotion:

> The real surrender was an event which was felt, not seen. It was nothing apparently; the mere appeaeance of a Federal column waving a white flag, and halting on a distant hill. But the tragic event was read in the faces of all. . . . A dreamy, memorial sadness seemed to descend through the April air. . .[706]

Eighty-eight members of Payne's brigade did not surrender--fewer than in nearly any other cavalry brigade. Most of the dismounted men assigned to Gary's brigade also surrendered with the army.[707] Of two soldiers paroled from the Fifth Virginia, both had belonged to the Fifteenth; one was Lieutenant William Carrington, from Company B,[708] and the other was Private E. Welford Mason, then serving as a courier.[709]

The provisions of the surrender were liberal. Officers could retain their sidearms, soldiers were permitted to keep their horses and equipment, the men would be paroled immediately and could return home--to remain unmolested as long as they observed the laws of the United States government. There were no reprisals, and none of Lee's soldiers went to prison.

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[705] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, pp. 1109-10, 1303-04.

[706] Cooke, Wearing of the Gray, p. 502.

[707] Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1278.

[708] Compiled service record of Lt. William Carrington, Co. B, reel 139, Microcopy 324.

[709] R. A. Brock (ed.), "Paroles of the Army of Northern Virginia," Southern Historical Society Papers, XV (1887), 456.

The general returned to his men, to tell them to go home and become good citizens. Soldiers thronged about him, weeping, and Lee was overwhelmed.[710] Later, officers read the general orders containing Lee's farewell address, a brief statement made eloquent by the times:

> After four years of arduous service, marked by unsurpassed courage and fortitude, the Army of Northern Virginia has been compelled to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources. . . . [711]

Federal quartermasters sent a week's supply of provisions into the Confederate camp. Some of Grant's veterans, out of curiosity, came over to see the conquered army and were courteously received. Officers from the old army, men who had plotted pranks together at West Point and stood up for each other at weddings on the frontier, shook hands and talked with cool detachment about the times their brigades had met in battle.[712] For a civil war, this conflict was ending with a remarkable degree of amicability.

But the old defiance never disappeared entirely. Still struggling along the road to Lynchburg, no longer considered worth pursuing even by the Yankee cavalry, Fitz Lee's troopers met a lone infantryman hurrying toward the village.

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[710]Gen. A. L. Long, quoted in "General Lee's Farewell Address to His Army," Battles and Leaders, IV, p. 747.

[711]"General Orders, No. 9, " April 10, 1865, Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1267.

[712]Horace Porter, "The Surrender at Appomattox Court House," Battles and Leaders, IV, pp. 738-46.

> "Never mind, old man," the general told him. "You're too late now. Lee has surrendered. You'd better go home."
>
> "What's that, Lee surrendered?"
>
> "Yes, that's right."
>
> The soldier stared tearfully, then declared, "You can't make me believe Uncle Robert has surrendered. It must've that goddam Fitzhugh Lee."[713]

The paroles were issued immediately, and little groups of Confederates began to leave the army for home. Fitzhugh Lee and his men roamed at large for a few days, then received news of the surrender of Johnston's army in North Carolina[714] and disbanded, "subject to reassembling for a continuation of the struggle."[715] For the next six weeks, throughout Virginia, cavalry soldiers straggled home and turned themselves in to the provost marshals in the neighborhood.

The men of Brawner's old command, now serving as partisans under Mosby, were in an embarrassing situation. They were not included in the armistice, and so would have to surrender individually. But the law concerning parole of partisans was not entirely clear, and these men had not endeared themselves to the Federals. Many of them suddenly rediscovered their allegiance to the regiment and surrendered as

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[713]Quoted in Davis, To Appomattox: Nine April Days, 1865, p. 398.

[714]Frank Dorsey, "Fatal Shot of 'Jeb' Stuart," Confederate Veteran, XI, (August, 1903), p. 347.

[715]Report of Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee on the Appomattox campaign, Official Records, I, XLVI, part 1, p. 1303; Myers, The Commanches, pp. 392-93.

members of Company H, Fifteenth Virginia--some of them even claiming to be infantrymen.[716]

The deception probably was not too successful; informers generally knew all the partisans and were ready to testify against them. In other civil wars Mosby's men might well have been hanged. But the law was applied with lenience, and the United States authorities did not make an issue of their activities.

For most of the men still with Major Harding the end of the war was simply a matter of getting home. John Staples, of Gantt's company, was paroled in Farmville on April 26. Several of his comrades surrendered in Charlottesville during May; and Charles Scruggs, from the same company, finally surrendered in Fluvanna County on May 20. Lieutenant Thomas Arnold and his men surrendered at King George Courthouse on May 1 and 2. Major Harding himself was paroled a week later at the Northumberland County Courthouse.

The dates and places of these paroles reveal how fragmented and scattered the regiment had become. Leonard Slater, formerly the regimental surgeon, was released in Salisbury, North Carolina, where he had been on duty in a general hospital. Captain Gantt, still suffering from nephritis, was paroled at Columbia, Virginia, on May 6. Lieutenant Charles Dudley, captured at Culpeper, finally took the oath of allegiance at Johnson's Island in June. Captain Cooper was released on June 19 from the prison at Fort Delaware. Adjutant

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[716]Compiled service records, passim, reels 138-45, Microcopy 324. See especially the compiled service record of Pvt. Wesley Ledman, Co. H, reel 142.

Dickinson surrendered in April at Greensboro, North Carolina, where he evidently had joined the Confederate forces under Johnston.[717] Private James Ackiss, who had spiked the heavy guns when Norfolk was evacuated in 1862, had been at his home at "Blossom Hill" recuperating from the wound he received in the Wilderness.[718]

The attrition of active duty and the extent of combat losses sustained by the regiment is evident in a survey of the principal officers:

> Colonel William Ball--resigned for disability.
>
> Colonel Charles Collins--killed in action.
>
> Lieutenant Colonel John Critcher--captured, exchanged, relieved of duty, resigned.
>
> Major Edgar Burroughs--resigned, captured as a partisan, killed.
>
> Captain Lucius Sandford (Company A)--died of illness.
>
> Captains Albert Gantt (Company B), George Cooke (Company G), and James Simpson (Company I)--unable to continue in the service on account of physical disability.
>
> Captain Edward Capps (Company C)--captured, died of wounds.
>
> Captains Cyrus Harding (Company D), and Virginius Pitts (Company K)--wounded, promoted.
>
> Captain Mark Arnold (Company E)--resigned.
>
> Captain John Cooper (Company F)--captured.
>
> Captain William Brawner (Company H)--killed in action.

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[717] Information on paroles has been gathered from the compiled service records, Fifteenth Regiment, and Fourteenth and Fifteenth Battalions, Virginia Cavalry, reels 138-45, Microcopy 324.

[718] Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 693.

The magnitude of defeat was more immediate to some. According to one account, Colonel Ball arrived home from a sea voyage after the surrender. He knew immediately that the war was over because he saw bread in the store windows and all the people were wearing shoes again. After a brief period of despondency he committed suicide.[719]

Captain Simpson, unable to travel at the time of the evacuation, was captured in a hospital in Richmond. He died in 1868, probably as a result of his exposure in the service. His son, William, then only fourteen, worked as an office boy for a cotton firm to support the family; eventually he assumed more important duties, but his youth and lack of formal education left him long at a disadvantage.[720]

Some men never returned at all. There was the case of Corporal John A. Edwards, wounded by a shell at Brandy Station. He died a few months later from a dislocated humerus. His widow received his back pay and clothing commutation--a total of $273.36, at a time when Confederate currency was increasingly worthless.[721]

Some men died in captivity, held in filthy, swarming conditions which the Federal government never managed to eradicate. Private Bonyer Cade, captured at the beginning of the Wilderness campaign, died in Elmira prison of pneumonia and was buried there.[722] Samuel Carroll, captured at Yellow Tavern, succumbed to a fever less than

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[719]Related to the author by Mr. Lenford Eastep of Poquoson, Virginia.

[720]Hotchkiss, Virginia, p. 1170.

[721]Compiled service record of Corp. John A Edwards, Co. E, reel 140, Microcopy 324.

[722]Compiled service record of Pvt. Bonyer Cade, Co. B, reel 139, ibid.

three weeks before Appomattox.[723] Lieutenant Alexander Edwards, commanding Company C when he was captured at Yellow Tavern, was loaded on a transport at Washington, D. C., and sent to the Department of the South "for retaliation."[724] At Hilton Head, in South Carolina, he and his fellow captives were herded to a camp exposed to the fire of Confederate batteries. In this unenviable situation, subjected to deliberate indignities and privations, Alexander Edwards died.[725]

If the war brought tragedy to some, there were many more who survived to repair their fortunes and their country, and who eventually replaced their bitterness with pride in the past, and in a gallant struggle to defend it.

John Critcher fared well. He returned to his home at "Audley," near Oak Grove, and to the practice of law. He became a judge, was elected as a Conservative to the United States Congress in 1870, and was residing with his family in Alexandria at the time of his death in 1901.[726] The colonel was, from first to last, an archetype of

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[723]Compiled service record of Pvt. Samuel Carroll, Co. C, reel 139, ibid.

[724]Compiled service record of Lt. Alexander Edwards, Co. C, reel 140, ibid.

[725]Joseph Lemon, "Six Hundred Confederate Officers," Confederate Veteran, I (February, 1893), 49-50; Richard Adams, quoted in ibid., II (March, 1894), 90.

[726]James L. Harrison (comp.), Biographical Directory of the American Congress: 1774-1949 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 1034; Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (5 vols.; New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1915), III, 113-14; personal letter to the author from Mrs. Frances H. Chandler of Montross, Virginia, April 6, 1964.

the politician-soldier. Though his ardor and personal courage were beyond repute, he made a poor commander because he was careless and a lax disciplinarian. Critcher blundered his way into prison, and connived his way out; he resigned from the service because his honor had been bruised, and he ultimately withdrew from a position of command which was beyond his capacities. For the rest of his life he remained sensitive about his career, defending his reputation as assiduously as he defended the old Southern order.[727]

Elijah Johnson's fortunes did not fail him. He survived the rigors of prison life, though transferred from Elmira to Old Capitol Prison to Point Lookout. He was paroled shortly before the surrender, and fought no more.[728] He migrated to Alabama, became a successful merchant in New Decatur, and married. In 1903 he came to Norfolk for a reunion with comrades who had been trying for forty years to locate him, and together they toured the Jamestown Exposition as minor celebrities.[729] His diary was preserved by his daughter as the record of a typical young man during the most profound upheaval of his nation's history.[730]

Private Horatio Hoggard, who had guarded the prisoners at Seven Pines and been wounded at Culpeper, was host to Johnson during his

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[727]"'Degrading Influence of Slavery'--Reply of Judge Critcher to Mr. Hoar," Southern Historical Society Papers, XII (1884), 59.

[728]Compiled service record of Pvt. Elijah Johnson, Co. B, reel 141, Microcopy 324.

[729]Undated newspaper clipping (c. 1903) filed with the Johnson diary, Virginia State Historical Society archives.

[730]Mr. Spencer L. Carter to Mr. Clayton Torrence, Director, Virginia State Historical Society, March 2, 1949, filed with the Johnson diary.

visit. He had been captured with Elijah at Yellow Tavern, but escaped from prison early in 1865. He reported for duty in Richmond and was on furlough when the war ended. His brother, Thurmer, left for dead on the battlefield at Yellow Tavern, recovered and returned to the family home at "Poplar Hill." After the war Horatio became a prominent farmer and real estate broker.[731]

Herbert L. Smith, of Simpson's company, was one of those who fought their way out at Appomattox and surrendered later. He became a superintendent of the Norfolk waterworks, treasurer of a railroad, and president of two stone mining companies. His brother, Robert, who served in the same company, became a proprietor of the Ocean View Hotel.[732]

Edwin Nelson, a lieutenant in Brawner's company, was captured in June, 1863, and endured a long confinement on Johnson's Island. After his release he became a farmer, deputy sheriff, clerk of Prince William County, and representative in the state assembly.[733]

Dennis Etheridge, from Currituck, North Carolina, was wounded three times by shells, felt his clothing torn five times by bullets, was finally taken prisoner at Luray, and was paroled from Point Lookout after the war. He became a successful businessman, president of the Merchants' and Farmers' Peanut Company, and the father of six children.[734]

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[731]Hotchkiss, Virginia, pp. 934-35.

[732]Ibid., pp. 1172-73.

[733]Ibid., pp. 1072-73.

[734]Ibid., pp. 862-63.

John Hargrove, captured and paroled at the same times as Etheridge, became a prosperous grocer.[735] John L. Nash became a migistrate and a member of the general essembly.[736] James Keeling, who had nearly been buried alive in his battle with the navy on the Blackwater River, became a prominent attorney and judge.[737]

And so the war ended--slowly, as in every war--with people trying to return to normal and discovering that the old ways were gone forever. The ruined countryside, the enormous loss of lives and resources, and the social dislocations that followed the fact of precipitate abolition, all were legacies of total war. What had begun as a quarrel over the nature of the Federal union had become "a war of unlimited objectives and of unpredictable results."[738] Now the Confederates were a conquered people, whose adjustment to the new system would have to be made within the framework of Northern attitudes. The Reconstruction, and the era that followed, would begin a conscious reworking of Southern society by victors who failed to realize how profoundly the war had disoriented American life and American government.

After several years the occupation ended, and the Federal troops were withdrawn. The cities were rebuilt, the farms reclaimed from

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[735] Ibid., p. 924.

[736] Ibid., p. 1068.

[737] Ibid., pp. 977-78.

[738] Catton, America Goes to War, p. 26.

idleness, and a measure of prosperity returned to the South. The veterans of both sides grew portly, matured, wrote their reminiscences, held reunions, and eventually forgave each other. In their old age they joined the throngs of bewhiskered characters who sunned themselves in the village square and told their tales to wide-eyed children. Theirs was a mingled legacy of destruction and wisdom. But they never forgot, and their land would never be the same.

CONCLUSION

If history should be something besides storytelling--and that is a point which seems not to be settled entirely--the narrative should lead to certain demonstrable conclusions. The findings of this study involve several aspects of the same subject.

Considering the tactics and style of warfare of both Union and Confederate forces, it seems clear that cavalry, as of 1860, were by no means obsolete. On the contrary, while the traditional role of cavalry was considerably diminished, there was much opportunity for innovation in the missions assigned to the cavalry, and in the development of dismounted tactics. The effectiveness of cavalry units in this new role was proven repeatedly.

While certain leaders, such as Stuart, have been criticized for their reluctance to fight dismounted, the performance of Stuart himself tends to refute these notions. Under Stuart the Confederate cavalrymen frequently fought dismounted; and while that general's preference for mounted combat was well known, he relied increasingly on dismounted tactics as the Federal cavalry grew more formidable in the summer of 1863 and after. The Battles of Culpeper and Jack's Shop, the Bristoe and Mine Run campaigns, the Wilderness and Yellow Tavern--all fought before Stuart's death--are notable for the extent

of dismounted combat. The battles of 1864 further developed this practice, one in which the personnel of the Fifteenth Virginia became as skillful and accomplished as any regiment in the army. In effect, Stuart disposed his regiments to fight in whatever manner best fit the situation, and had he commanded the cavalry through 1864 his willingness to adopt dismounted tactics undoubtedly would have become much more apparent.

If these developments are often overlooked, it is because the history of the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia is less than complete. The memoirs by Stuart's staff all end with Yellow Tavern--as do the studies by historians who allow themselves to follow this pattern. The same accounts share the tendency to disregard anything that happened away from Stuart's immediate direction, as though the general had some monopoly on all the action worth notice. Consequently, the cavalry campaigns are presented as rather one-sided narratives, with minimal concern for a perspective on operations throughout Virginia, and few objective evaluations of the nature of the cavalry assignments or the manner in which the mounted troops were handled. Subsequent histories have only begun to explore these areas; the campaigns of 1864 and 1865 are especially neglected.

The history of the Fifteenth Virginia, by necessity, illuminates some obscure facets of the war: the long watch on the Rappahannock; Dahlgren's raid; the prelude to the Battle of Fredericksburg; picket duty around Richmond and in northern Virginia during the summer of 1863; the fierce but little-known Battles of Culpeper and Todd's Tavern; and the complex campaigns around Richmond and in the Valley from the

Wilderness until the end of the war. Yet this is of minor significance--in many cases it is the mere filling in of military backwaters--and until some scholar can look beyond the transcendent personality of Jeb Stuart, the definitive history of his command will remain unwritten.

The need for a separate history of the cavalry may seem questionable, and even unnecessary, in view of the sound, general studies that have been written of the army. This is only partly the case, however. The singular style of warfare forced upon cavalrymen during the Civil War, and its resemblance to contemporary military tactics, make the adaptation of cavalrymen to the new combat a matter deserving particular attention.

For the same reason, the history of the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry offers some relevant lessons in regard to the administration and tactical leadership of military units. If nothing else, the career of the regiment should reaffirm the timeless axiom that discipline and training are essential to morale and combat effectiveness.

Adequate preparation for battle is something every soldier has a right to expect. A man who risks his physical well-being for a cause deserves the assurance that his efforts will have some tangible result. Above all else, a military force is liable to conduct itself best when it has the benefits of competent, professional leadership. While volunteers and civilians were good material for enlisted men they often did not, except for an occasional military genius, make the best officers. Certainly there was no predictable correlation between success as an attorney or farmer and success as a military

leader. The contrast between skilled and unskilled commanders was seldom more obvious than in the case of the Fifteenth Virginia.

To an even greater degree than individuals, military organizations require adequate preparation for war. They deserve the best possible training and equipment, and should be held accountable to the strictest possible standards. Unfortunately, this goal is attainable only within the pragmatic realm of politics and economics. Still, as experience has shown so repeatedly, when organizations are committed to battle without adequate preparation their performance tends to be a disappointing series of blunders and defeats until their members learn by experience what should have been taught to them beforehand.

The type of war the nation fought in the 1860's was a clear progenitor of the total conflicts of the twentieth century, and observations on its conduct are both relevant and essential to an understanding of developments since then. The Civil War provided an early example of the effects of modern nationalism merged with an industrial technology.

Dennis Mahan and his colleagues were pre-eminently rational in their view of warfare as a limited contest. And they can hardly be censured for attempting to insulate the destructiveness of warfare by vesting its conduct in a strict professionalism. But the theory was simply unworkable in their time; conditions which had restricted the wars of dynastic statecraft no longer applied, and contemporary leaders were able to mobilize enormous levies of men and support them more completely and for longer periods of time.

The results were more devastating because of the willingness of the American people to prosecute a total war. In 1861 both sides were ready for war, accepted it as a means of arbitration, and waged it with an increasing lack of moderation. And if neither side could anticipate the extent of the conflict they were entering, so has it been impossible to estimate the social disorganization caused by the death of many of the outstanding individuals of that generation. For decades the nation endured a series of second-rate leaders in its political and social affairs, at least part of which resulted directly from the long, appalling loss of life among the volunteer soldiers.

The risks involved in total warfare have vastly increased since 1860, and so has the complexity of the causes that propel a nation into war. But the lesson is the same: the society that risks its most productive members eventually will lose some of them. A limited war, detached from ideological and moral overtones, waged between smaller armies composed more entirely of professional soldiers or well-trained volunteers, might have been shorter and almost certainly would have been less destructive.

Even more than in 1860, a nation that engages in total warfare risks the consequences of total defeat; unfortunately, so too does a nation that attempts to refrain from total war. It may not be possible to alter these conditions, but it is possible to demonstrate their effects. And that, perhaps, is all one study can do.

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