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CHAPTER IV.
THE FIRST REGIMENT.

Organization of the First Regiment—Sketches of the Field Officers—Camp Fairbanks—Delays in Mustering—Off at Last for the War—General Scott's opinion of the Vermonters—Reception at Troy and in New York—Voyage to Fortress Monroe—Quarters in the Hygeia Hotel—Expedition to Hampton—Occupation of Newport News.

The First Regiment of Vermont Volunteers, as has been stated, consisted of the Brandon, Middlebury, Rutland, Northfield, Woodstock, Bradford, Cavendish, Burlington, St. Albans, and Swanton companies, of the Militia, designated by an executive order dated April 27th, 1861. The commissions of its field and staff officers bore date of the day previous, April 26th.

The wisdom with which this regiment was officered has never been questioned. The general desired that it should be placed under the command of an experienced soldier, was met by the appointment, as Colonel, of Captain John W. Phelps of Brattleboro. A native Vermonter, a graduate of the United States Military Academy (of the class of 1836), with a record of twenty-three years of constant and capable service as Lieutenant and Captain of the Fourth Artillery in Texas, on the Plains and in Mexico, where he was severely wounded; with abilities which caused him to be selected as one of a commission of three officers, to whom was entrusted the preparation of the manual for the artillery service of the United States army, which was in use for many years and

was largely his work; familiar with and studiously observant of military discipline and etiquette, Colonel Phelps was a trained and tried and true soldier.¹ His personal characteristics matched well his acquired qualifications. Just, upright, conscientious, a man who knew no fear, of kind heart and universal courtesy extended to high and low alike, observant of every duty as an officer and gentleman, and requiring strict obedience and faithful service of all under him, he came to be looked up to by the officers and men of his command as a father. He gave to them in turn the most fatherly care, and made his regiment not only a model in drill and good order, but an admirable school of military training and discipline for the hundreds of its members who became officers of regiments subsequently organized.

To the Lieutenant-Colonelcy, Captain Peter T. Washburn of Woodstock was appointed. He was a leading lawyer of the Windsor County bar, with a taste for military life which had led him to take an active part in the reorganization of the militia of the State, and to accept the captaincy of the Woodstock company. A man of liberal education, of precise knowledge, of firm will and of methodical industry, he was by nature a strict tactician and disciplinarian. He had made the Woodstock Light Infantry the best military company in the State. He carried the same characteristics into actual service; and had the condition of his health permitted him to remain in the army after the disbandment of the First Regiment, he would undoubtedly have won high distinction as a soldier. His subsequent most faithful, laborious and invaluable services as Adjutant

¹ John W. Phelps was commissioned as Second Lieutenant, Fourth Artillery, July 28, 1836, was promoted First Lieutenant in July, 1838, and brevetted Captain August 20, 1847, for meritorious and gallant conduct in the battles of Contreras and Cherubusco. This brevet, the record says, was "declined." He resigned his commission November 2d, 1859, "from conscientious scruples."

and Inspector General of the State, and his elevation to the governorship, in which office he ended his life, are known to all Vermonters.

Harry Worthen, of Bradford, was appointed Major. He was a young lawyer, had received military training in the Norwich Military College, and had been the drill master of the Bradford Guards—one of the best drilled companies in the regiment.

The line officers were men who had been most active in keeping up the military arm of the State and among the first to offer themselves and their commands for the support of the flag. The rank and file were native Vermonters of all professions and callings. They were young men—the average age of the regiment, as shown by the enlistment papers, being twenty-four years—and of more than the average stature.² In character and standing they represented the patriotism, intelligence and enterprise of the State.

The departures of the companies from their respective towns were scenes of extraordinary emotion. The occasions seemed to be for the masses the first full realization of the new fact of civil war. Public meetings were held in most of the towns to express approval and encouragement. Long processions escorted the companies to the railroad stations, and they took the trains in the presence of throngs of sober-faced men and tearful women and children, comprising almost the entire population. The vision which rose before the sight of these spectators as their sons, brothers, husbands and townsmen started for the war, was not of the summer-day experience of quiet and easy camp-life which was to fall to their lot, but of mortal conflict and bloodshed, from which few survivors

² In the Bradford Company were twelve men upwards of six feet in height, and one of six feet four inches. In the Rutland company, as stated in the newspapers at the time, were ten men who when extended on the ground head to feet measured sixty-seven feet. Each company had a considerable proportion of six-footers.

might return. Yet for most, even in the hour of parting, as for the soldiers themselves, high patriotic resolution overcame the sadness and cheers drowned the sobs. At the way-stations along the routes to Rutland many public demonstrations took place; and thus with salutes, speeches, collations, cheers, prayers, and every mark of pride, sympathy and approval, the troops were bidden farewell and Godspeed.

The companies were ordered to rendezvous at Rutland on the 2d of May. Several of them arrived there the evening previous and were quartered for the night in the public halls and buildings. The rest arrived the next day, when all went into camp, duly designated as "Camp Fairbanks," on the Fair ground, a mile south of the village of Rutland. Colonel Phelps assumed command on the same day. The first night under canvas gave the men a sudden introduction to the hardships of a soldier's life. Water froze that night in the tents. The next night a number of the tents were prostrated by a high wind accompanied by a cold rain. Most of the men had yet to learn how to cook and save their rations; and for a day or two discomfort enough prevailed. But under the faithful instructions of Colonel Phelps all became rapidly initiated, not only into the art of living comfortably in camp, but into the mysteries of guard-mounting, surgeon's call, fatigue service and battalion. Drill. Within three days Colonel Phelps reported that his regiment was equipped and ready to march; but delays, vexatious and threatening to be serious, occurred in the mustering of the regiment into the United States service.

The Secretary of War had designated Burlington as the place of rendezvous for the regiment, and Lieutenant-Colonel Gabriel J. Rains, Fifth United States Infantry, had been despatched thither to inspect and muster in the regiment. Rains was a North Carolinian. He was at heart a sympathizer with the secessionists, and three months later he threw

up his commission in the United States army and entered the Confederate service, in which subsequently he became chief of the rebel torpedo service. At this time he was an unhappy man, in doubt how the experiment of secession was going to turn, undecided as to his future course, but willing for the present to obey orders from Washington. Citizens of Burlington who conversed with him after his arrival there, perceived that his sympathies were with the South, and became apprehensive lest the regiment should be delayed if placed under his temporary control as mustering officer. This fear was communicated to Governor Fairbanks. He requested Colonel Rains to meet him and Adjutant General Baxter for consultation, and when this invitation was declined by Colonel Rains the Governor sent General Baxter to New York on the 27th of April, to request General Wool to order the regiment to rendezvous at Rutland, and to go on from thence without reporting to Colonel Rains. General Wool did not feel authorized to alter the arrangements of the Secretary of War, and more than a week's delay occurred in getting matters straightened out. Colonel Rains, obeying the letter of his orders, remained at Burlington while the troops he was to muster remained at Rutland; and not a little concern found public expression, lest the conflict between the plans of the War Department and of the State authorities should occasion serious delay in the departure of the regiment.

On the 7th of May, however, Colonel Rains received orders from Washington to report at Rutland and muster in the troops there, and on the 8th the regiment was formally inspected by him and mustered into the United States service, Hon. D. A. Smalley, United States District Judge, administering the oath of allegiance to the United States, to the officers and men. The colors of the regiment—a handsome regimental standard and a national flag—were presented by Governor Fairbanks. Addressing Colonel Phelps

the Governor said: "In your hands, supported by these troops, I feel that this flag will never be dishonored, nor the State of Vermont disgraced." He added, pointing to the single star on the Vermont flag: "I charge you to remember that this flag represents but one star in that other flag, which I now present, bearing the national emblem, the stars and stripes. Vermont claims no separate nationality. Her citizens, ever loyal to the Union and the Constitution, will rally in their strength for the preservation of the National Government and the honor of our country's flag." Colonel Phelps, who was a man of few words, resounded briefly, "accepting the colors "as emblems, the one of the Constitution and the laws we are going to defend, and the other of the allegiance and loyalty to the 's tar that never sets,'" and pledging the highest endeavors of the regiment to retain them in a way that should meet the approval of the freemen of Vermont. The marching orders of the regiment came that day by the hand of a special messenger from Washington, having been expedited in a way worthy of mention. The fact that the regiment was ready for service had been announced to the War Department several days previous by the Governor through Colonel William B. Hatch, Deputy Quartermaster of the State. It was the opinion of U. S. Adjutant General Townsend at the time, that troops enough had been ordered forward for the existing emergency, and that it would be well to hold the Vermont regiment in Vermont for a while. When General Scott, however, learned that a regiment of Green Mountain Boys, commanded by Colonel Phelps, whom he had known in the Mexican war, was awaiting orders, he at once declared that Colonel Phelps was the man and his regiment the troops that he wanted for responsible duty. "I want your Vermont regiments," said he, "all of them. I have not forgotten the Vermont men on the Niagara frontier. No," said he musingly, as his mind traveled back over almost half a century and his eye lighted up with the glorious

memories of those day, "I remember the Vermont men in the war of 1812."³

General Scott's plan of operations was to use the three months troops simply for the defence of Washington—and as essential to that to garrison Fortress Monroe with reliable troops—and for the protection of the Potomac and the railroad lines from Washington to the north and west; leaving all offensive operations for the new army of three years men, the formation of which had already been decided on. He wanted Colonel Phelps and his regiment for the garrison of Fortress Monroe, and thither they were ordered, as follows:

Headquarters United States Army,
Washington, May 6, 1861.

His Excellency the Governor of Vermont:

Sir,—Lieutenant General Scott has just received the agreeable information that you have a fine regiment, under Colonel Phelps, ready for immediate service. The General being exceedingly pressed with business, commands me to request your Excellency to sent the regiment with as little delay as practicable, by water, to Fortress Monroe, Old Point Comfort, Virginia. I have the honor to be, sir, very respectfully

Your obedient servant,

E. D. Townshend,

Assistant Adjutant General.

The regiment left Rutland in a train of twenty cars at 9 o'clock on the morning of the 9th of May. In Troy, N.Y., it was received by the "citizens corps," a local military organization, and a large concourse of citizens, and was addressed in brief speeches by the veteran General John E. Wool and by Hon. John A. Griswold. The regiment arrived in New York next morning and marched from the Hudson River Railroad station down Fifth Avenue and Broadway to the City Park, through streets crowded with citizens, who received the Vermonters with much cheering and every mark of admiration and approval. The effective appearance of the regiment in its gray uniform, (each man bearing in his

³ Washington Letter to the Burlington *Free Press*.

cap an evergreen sprig, badge of the Green Hills), and the unusual size of the men composing it, were matters for especial remark on the part of the press and the people of both cities.⁴

The sons of Vermont residing in New York, proud to see the State so creditably represented by her first volunteers, neglected nothing which could contribute to the comfort of the soldiers while passing through that city. The regiment was quartered for the day in newly erected barracks in the City Park, and the officers of the regiment were entertained at the Astor House by Mr. Stetson, its patriotic host. The men were allowed full liberty in the city and they did

⁴ The *Troy Times* said of the regiment: "The strong, sturdy looks of the men, their ability to withstand hardships, and the entire absence of small men from the ranks, were observed by all. By general acclaim the regiment was pronounced to be the finest ever seen in this section of the country. ** Each man bore himself like a true soldier and gentleman. *** We understand that there are one hundred graduates of colleges in the ranks, besides many men of large business interests and wealth in the State."

The *Troy Whig* said: "Certainly so complete a body of soldiers was never before seen in troy. There was not a weak, irresolute or apparently dissipated man in the ranks."

The *Albany Atlas and Argus* said: "They are by far the finest troops we have yet seen among the volunteers from any State."

The *New York Herald* said: "To say that every man of the First Regiment of Vermont Light Infantry is the exact type of a soldier, is nothing more than is justly due them. They are slashing, dashing, brawny, well-knit fellows with deep determination stamped in every lineament of their countenances."

The *New York World* said: Physically its members nobly maintain the renown of their native State for the production of stalwart men. Few are less than five feet ten inches in height, very many more than six feet, and all are capable of any amount of endurance. But the crowning glory of the regiment is its moral power. It has no mere machines. Its men are men. ** There can be no fears as to the account such volunteers will render of themselves."

"The exclamation of a dapper New Yorker of Jewish persuasion and Dutch extraction, as he gazed at the Goliaths of the Green Mountains expressed the astonishment of the crowd: 'Father Abraham, ain't them boomers!' Colonel Phelps at the head of the regiment, tall and of massive form, with an immense army hat and black ostrich plume, drew the inquiry? 'Who is that big Vermont Colonel?' The prompt answer was: 'That? Oh, that is old Ethan Allen resurrected.'"—*Address of Governor Farnham, at Bradford, May 2d, 1881.*

The *New York Sun* said: "It is an interesting study to move about among those groups of stalwart, kingly, yet modest men—every mother's son every inch a man. More formidable troops ought not with Allen, or Stark, or Cromwell. * * They are of the Cromwellian sort, who 'make some conscience of what they do.' But one profane oath reached our ears in several hours spent among them."

The *New York Times* of May 13th, 1861, mentioned the following incident of the passage of the regiment through that city: "A tall, splendid looking man, dressed in the uniform of the Allen Grays, Vermont, stood conversing with a friend on Broadway. He was entirely unconscious that his superior height was attracting universal attention until a barouche drove up to the sidewalk, and a young man sprang from it and grasped his hand, saying: 'You are the most splendid specimen of humanity I ever met. I am a Southerner, but my heart is with the Union, if it were not, such splendid fellows as yourself would enlist me in the cause! The subject of the remark, though surprised, was perfectly self-possessed, and answered the cordial greeting of the young Southerner with enthusiasm. He was several inches above six feet and his open countenance beamed with the ancient patriotism of the Green Mountain Boys. He had to walk fifteen miles from the village of Chittenden to enlist; but he was a host in himself.'

Other journals spoke in terms of hardly less praise. .And such things as these were by no means said of every regiment that passed through New York in those days.

not abuse it; and when the time for leaving came but one man was missing from the ranks. In other regiments, in after days, recruits were as carefully guarded while passing through New York as if they had been prisoners of war.

At 1 o'clock in the afternoon of the 11th of May, the regiment formed line on Broadway and marched to the Steamer Alabama, which was to convey them to Fortress Monroe. The steamer was so crowded that four companies had to be stowed in the hold; and the voyage was one of much discomfort to the sea-sick soldiers. At daylight on the 13th of May, the heavy bastions and massive walls of Fortress

Monroe came in sight, and during the day the regiment landed and went into camp on a small triangular plot on the north side of the fortress between the outer wall and the moat.

The garrison of the fortress at this time consisted of four companies of the Third and Fourth regiments U. S. Heavy Artillery, and two small Massachusetts regiments which had been there for several days—the Third Massachusetts, Colonel Wardrop,⁵ and the Fourth Massachusetts, Colonel Packard. The fortress was under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Justin Dimick, Second U.S. Artillery, a native Vermonter. The regiment arrived at a somewhat critical period, and was a welcome addition to the garrison.⁶ Norfolk had been evacuated the day before, after immense and needless destruction of federal ships and munitions of war, and the region outside of the little peninsula on which the fortress stood had been abandoned to the enemy. Supplies came quite irregularly from Baltimore by water. Four days after its arrival the regiment left its narrow campground within the fortress, and took quarters in the Hygeia Hotel—a large hotel which had been before the war, as since, a popular health and pleasure resort. It afforded ample accommodations for the entire regiment.

The regiment remained here three weeks, the men devoting their energies to company and battalion drill, with variations of fatigue duty in mounting heavy guns on the fortress, for which service a company was detailed daily. Among the few incidents worthy of mention in this period

⁵ The officer who brought Governor Andrew's message to Governor Fairbanks in January

⁶ An officer of one of the Massachusetts regiments in a letter to the Boston *Traveller*, dated at Fortress Monroe, May 14th, said: "The Vermont regiment which arrived yesterday are encamped in sugar loaf tents, numbering 86, outside of the main parapet, but within the outer inclosure, and their encampment looks finely. This evening they paraded. Their gray uniforms gave them a handsome appearance, and our more motley troops, some wearing uniforms and the large part wearing shirts, did not enjoy the contrast."

was the death of private Benjamin Underwood of Bradford, who was the first Vermont volunteer to give his life for his country.⁷

On the 22d of May, General Butler arrived and assumed command at Fortress Monroe, and on the next day directed Colonel Phelps to make a reconnoissance to the village of Hampton, three miles from the fortress. Hampton had been a place of about a thousand inhabitants, but its population was now reduced to less than two hundred by the departure of secessionists who found the proximity of the national forces unpleasant. It was reached by a wood bridge crossing the Hampton River. As the regiment approached the bridge a smoke was discovered to be rising from the centre span. Understanding what this meant, Colonel Phelps ordered forward the advance guard—a platoon of the Swanton company under Captain Clark—at double quick, leading them himself. Dashing upon the bridge they found the flames rising from a pile of straw in the centre, over which a barrel of pitch had been poured. In a moment longer the bridge would have been impassable; but the lacing planks were quickly torn up and thrown with the load of combustibles into the river. The opening was bridged with other planks and the regiment marched over. At the end of the bridge a gun carriage was standing, from which a six pound field-piece had just been thrown, and the Confederates who had made these preparations for defence were seen making a hasty exit from the village, having thrown their gun into the river and retreated without firing a shot. The regiment marched into the village, finding very few white inhabitants and but two soldiers, a major and lieutenant,⁸ who

⁷ He died of measles on the 20th of May, and was buried in a burying-ground a mile from the fort, two companies of the First Vermont, under Lieutenant Colonel Washburn, acting as a guard to the burial party.

⁸ An indication of the mild manner in which was conducted at this stage of hostilities is found in the fact that this major, one J. B. Cary, commanding a detachment of Virginia volunteers, and his lieutenant, both found in rebel uniform, were not taken prisoners, but were left in Hampton, whence that evening Major Cary reported the transaction to his superior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ewell, commanding at Williamsburg. In his report Cary says that his battalion numbered 130 men, and that he ordered them back to the village on the retirement of the U. S. troops.

inquired the purpose of the expedition and were informed by Colonel Phelps that it was a reconnoissance and that the village would not be harmed if his command was not molested. This warning was wisely heeded. After a short stay in the main street of Hampton the regiment returned to its quarters, accompanied by a number of negroes who embraced this opportunity to escape from slavery. They were anxious to know what would be done with them, and were informed by Colonel Phelps that he should do nothing with them, and that they could come and go as they pleased. This was among the first (if not indeed the first) instances of emancipation as an act and consequence of the war. Slaves were frequently returned to their owners by other officers of volunteers and of the regular army; but it is worthy of note that from the first the fugitives who sought the protection of Vermont troops were safe. Two days after the reconnoissance to Hampton, the Major Cary above alluded to, made his appearance at Fortress Monroe, under a flag of truce, to ask for the return of three colored men, the slaves of a Colonel Mallory, residing near Hampton. It was in response to this demand that General Butler rendered his famous decision, which gave the name of "contrabands" to fugitive slaves from that time on. Major Cary was informed by General Butler that he considered the fugitives "contraband of war," and had set them at work within the fortress.

On the 25th of May the regiment left its quarters in the hotel, which was thenceforth to be occupied as a hospital, and was ordered into camp on Mr. Segar's farm, about a mile

outside the fort, together with the Second New York Regiment, Colonel Carr, and the Fifth New York, Colonel Duryea, which had just arrived. The regiments were twice aroused during the first night by the long-roll sounded from the other regiments, and showed noticeable steadiness under the false alarms.

Two days later, May 27th, the First Vermont made what was called by the New York Tribune at the time, the "first permanent occupation of the sacred soil of Virginia," though it was not strictly the first, Alexandria having been occupied three days previous. The regiment, with forty rounds of ammunition and two days rations, was moved by transport, Colonel Phelps leading the way on the gunboat Monticello with the Middlebury and Rutland companies as an advance guard, to Newport News, at the mouth of James River, about ten miles from Fortress Monroe. Here was a settlement containing a store, two wharves and two or three houses, on a bluff about thirty feet high, back of which extended a plain covered with growing wheat, skirted by woods and an extensive swamp. This pleasant spot was the station of the regiment for the remainder of its stay in Virginia. Colonel Phelps landed and arrested the few men found there, and was followed by the regiment. The Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, Colonel Packard, and the Seventh New York, Colonel Bendix, followed, and all slept that night in the open air or under rude shelters of fence rails. Next day tents and intrenching tools arrived; and lines for a strong intrenched camp were laid out by an officer of engineers. The works were 1,800 feet long, extending from the river shore round to the shore again, enclosing a spacious camp.⁹ Each company was required to construct the intrenchment opposite its front.

⁹ The rampart was subsequently raised to seven feet; the ditch widened and deepened to seven feet in depth and ten in width; and an abatis or row of pickets added. Four brass field pieces were placed in the angles on the land side; and on the water front a battery of 8-inch columbiads was planted.

The portion assigned to the Vermont troops was first completed, and they built a portion of the works for the other regiments.

Colonel Phelps was placed by General Butler in command of the Post, designated as "Camp Butler," and the command of the First Vermont devolved, from this time on, upon Lieutenant Colonel Washburn. The intrenchments completed, the men resumed drill and maintained the usual routine of camp life, varied only by frequent scouting expeditions. The parties commonly consisted of from two to four companies, and were sent out in various directions into the surrounding country. One consequence of such occupation of the lower part of the Peninsula, was the abandonment of their homes by the larger part of the inhabitants. A few remained, claiming, when in the presence of the Union troops, to be loyal to the Government, and acting as rebel scouts and spies the rest of the time. Another result was the escape from their masters of numerous contrabands who sought the protection of the Federal camps. Before the 1st of June, General Butler, in a letter to General Scott, estimated the "money value in good times" of the fugitives within his lines, to their masters, to be not less than \$60,000, subsequently largely increased.

On the 1st of June, Lieutenant Roswell Farnham, of the Bradford Company, was appointed Provost Marshal of the Post; and it was made his duty to look after the contrabands. They came in commonly at night, bringing, in many cases, their families and portable property. All were animated by a common hatred of their late masters, and by a common faith in God and his purpose to break the bonds of their race. All had implicit confidence in the Union soldiers, in spite of the assertions of their owners that the Yankees would kill them if they went to them. Such as could find employment as camp servants were allowed to remain in camp. The rest were sent to Fortress Monroe

to the number of thirty or forty a day. Under the strict discipline of Lieutenant Colonel Washburn, the camp of the Vermont troops was a model of cleanliness and good order, and the regiment an example of attention to duty, and of freedom from the habits of rowdyism and pilfering which characterized too many of the troops.

Nothing more exciting than the exchange of a few shots between the U.S. cutter Harriet Lane, and a rebel battery on Sewell's Point, on the opposite shore of the James, took place during the first ten days of June. The quiet of the situation was then effectually broken by the unfortunate affair of Big Bethel.

The Battle of Big Bethel.

The engagement at Big Bethel was the first action of the war of consequence enough to be dignified with the name of a battle; the first assault by Union infantry upon rebel entrenchments; and the first experience of Vermont volunteers under fire. As such, and as an affair concerning which many incorrect accounts have been printed, it claims a space in this history out of all proportion to its dimensions or results.

The situation on the Peninsula, on the 8th of June, 1861, was as follows:

The troops under the command of General Butler, at Fortress Monroe and Newport News, had been augmented to an aggregate of about twelve thousand men. At Yorktown, twenty-two miles north, was a Confederate force, several thousand strong, under the command of General Benjamin Huger, late of the United States army. Scouting and foraging parties from both armies had ranged through the region between these points, with little molestation. Twelve miles South of Yorktown, at a point where the "Country road"—the main road between Yorktown and Hampton—crossed the Northwest branch of Back River, was a hamlet

and church, known to the Confederate historians as Bethel Church, and to the Union historians as Big Bethel. This point was occupied on the 6th of June, by the First North Carolina Regiment, Colonel D. H. Hill, late of the U. S. Army, and a portion of Randolph's Howitzer Battalion¹⁰ with three howitzers and a rifled gun; to which was added a day or two later the rest of Randolph's Battalion, with a Parrott gun and two howitzers, constituting a force of something over a thousand men with seven pieces of artillery. Hill fortified the position by constructing an enclosed earthwork and outlying curtains and rifle pits, the strength of which was increased by the natural features of the ground. The creek, or "branch," running through a morass in an irregular semicircle, protected the front and flanks of the works. The redoubt commanded the bridge over the creek in its front; and Randolph's guns swept the road and the approaches to the bridge.

Three miles or more south of Big Bethel, and between seven and eight miles from Newport News, was a small wooden meeting house, known as Little Bethel, which had been often occupied by the rebel foragers and cavalry, who were impressing inhabitants of the region into the Confederate service, and taking their slaves to work on the intrenchments at Yorktown and Williamsburg. Desiring to put a stop to these proceedings, and understanding that a rebel outpost of some three hundred men and two field pieces had been established at Little Bethel, General Butler directed Major Theodore Winthrop, a volunteer aid on his staff and his military secretary, to obtain all available information concerning the situation at the two Bethels, and prepare a plan for an expedition against one or both of them. This he did,¹¹ and it was adopted, with slight modification, by

¹⁰ A Virginia battery.

¹¹ The original minutes of this plan, in Winthrop's hand writing, were found among his effects after his death.

General Butler. That the information obtained by Major Winthrop was not very accurate, may be inferred from the facts, that on the chart, copies of which were supplied to the officers in command of the expedition, Big Bethel was located on the South, instead of the North side of the creek, and that one item of his memorandum was to "blow up the Bethels, if brick." The chief features of the plan were a night expedition, in two columns—one to march from Hampton to the rear of Little Bethel, and the other from Newport News to make a direct attack at day break on Little Bethel. Having captured the force supposed to be there, the two columns were to unite, and, supported by other regiments which were to march at a later hour, were to push on to Big Bethel and assault the Confederate camp there. To prevent collisions between friends during the night march, the men of the supports were to wear "something white" on the left arm, and before any order to fire, the watchword "Boston" was to be shouted.

On the other side, Colonel J. B. Magruder, late of the United States Army, arrived at Big Bethel June 8th, and took command of the Confederate force there. He was reinforced on the morning of the 10th, by two Virginia battalions, each of three companies, under Major E. B. Montague, and Lieutenant Colonel Stuart. He had also three companies of "dragoons," making an aggregate of about fifteen hundred men.¹²

On Sunday evening, June 9th, under General Butler's orders, issued to Brigadier General E. W. Pierce of Massachusetts, in command of Camp Hamilton near Fortress Monroe, and to Colonel Phelps, the Fifth New York, better known as "Duryea's Zouaves," was ferried across the Hampton River and marched from Hampton at twenty

¹² Colonel D. H. Hill, in his report, places the number at "about twelve hundred;" but the aggregate of the numbers mentioned in his own and other Confederate reports, exceeds that number by over two hundred.

minutes past midnight on the morning of the 10th. Duryea was directed to march out by the County road towards Little Bethel and then to move by by-roads to the rear of that point. As there was no by-road available for such a movement, the latter direction could not be obeyed. He marched out to New Market Bridge, across the Southwest Branch of Back River, and leaving there a guard pushed on in the small hours of the morning by the County road toward Little Bethel. A little before 1 o'clock, A. M., Lieutenant Colonel Washburn started from Newport News with a battalion of five companies of the First Vermont and five companies of the Fourth Massachusetts. The Vermont companies were the Woodstock company, Captain W. W. Pelton; the Bradford company, Captain D. K. Andross; the Northfield company, Captain W. H. Boynton; the Burlington company, Captain D. B. Peck; and the Rutland company, Captain W. Y. W. Ripley, numbering 272 rank and file. The battalion numbered 510 muskets. Two colored guides led the way in charge of Lieutenant Roswell Farnham,¹³ who, though on detached duty, had made special request to accompany the expedition. Washburn was followed by a detachment of three companies of the Seventh New York (a German regiment), Colonel Bendix, with two brass field pieces—one twelve pounder drawn by mules, and one six pounder drawn by hand. Lieutenant John T. Greble, Second U. S. Heavy Artillery, with a squad of eleven regular artillerists, accompanied the detachment to serve the guns. The second column marched quietly and rapidly, reaching the junction of the road from Newport News with the County road, about a mile beyond New Market Bridge, shortly after Duryea's Zouaves had passed that point. At the junction Bendix was left with his detachment and the smaller field piece, to guard the rear.

¹³ Afterwards Lieutenant Colonel of the Twelfth Vermont Regiment and Governor of Vermont, 1880-82.

An hour and a half after Duryea left Hampton, General Pierce marched from the same point with the Third New York Regiment, Colonel Townsend, and an artillery company belonging to the Second New York Regiment with two field pieces. This force reached the junction of the roads shortly before daybreak, just as Bendix was taking position there. Bendix's force was seen by General Pierce and Colonel Bendix's force was seen by General Pierce and Colonel Townsend in the dim light; and taking it as a matter of course to be a part of the expedition they marched steadily on. Not so Bendix. Seeing the mounted men of General Pierce's staff at the head of the column, he took them and the shadowy mass behind to be a body of rebel cavalry, and opened on them at once with both musketry and artillery.¹⁴ Twenty-one men of the Third New York fell by this fire, two being killed, and four officers and fifteen men wounded. Townsend's men, astonished by this reception, broke right and left from the road, down which Bendix was firing canister, into the fields, and thence returned for a few moments a scattering and ineffective fire. They soon regained some sort of formation, and were then withdrawn by General Pierce across New Market Bridge. They halted on the higher ground on the south side of the Branch,¹⁵ and General Pierce, not doubting that they had encountered a considerable force of the enemy, despatched an aid to Hampton for reinforcements.

When Bendix's unlucky and noisy blunder woke the early morning echoes, Duryea had reached Little Bethel, finding no enemy there, and his skirmishers, under Captain Judson Kilpatrick, had captured a picket post consisting of

¹⁴ Colonel Bendix in his report says he gave no word to fire; but that his men probably fired first, as they were "not expecting friends from that quarter." General Butler says that the evidence is strong that Bendix gave the order to fire.

¹⁵ General Pierce says in his report that this retrograde movement was intended "to draw the supposed enemy from their position."

an officer and two or three men, within a mile or two of Big Bethel.¹⁶ Washburn was about a mile behind Duryea. Each at once halted, and as the firing behind them kept up, supposing that their supports were attacked, each hurried back at double quick to their assistance. When Washburn reached the scene of action, the smoke still hung over the fields though the firing had ceased. Washburn marched past Bendix and formed his battalion between him and the supposed enemy. He placed a gun in the road, supported by two companies, sent a company of Massachusetts riflemen into the woods on his left, and formed the rest of his force in the open field and across the road. As daylight broke, Townsend's regiment was discovered across the river; and beginning to surmise that it might be a friendly force, Washburn ordered his men to shout "Boston." Receiving no response he advanced his line, and was fired upon by one of Townsend's howitzers, without damage. About this time some haversacks marked with the number and initials of the Third New York, were picked up by some of the Vermonters, and the further discovery that a house near by contained nine wounded and dying men of that regiment left no longer a doubt that it had been a fight between friends. The intelligence was soon conveyed by Washburn's skirmishers to Townsend's men. Duryea arrived about this

¹⁶ It was supposed at the time that the Confederate outpost at Little Bethel had retreated to Big Bethel; but the fact appears to be that there was no enemy at Little Bethel that night. None of the Confederate reports allude to any outpost at Little Bethel; and only the Confederate force South of Big Bethel that night seems to have been a scouting party of two companies of cavalry and one of infantry under command of a Captain Werth, who states that he was at new Market Bridge, at 5 o'clock Sunday afternoon; that with his glass he saw two forces, one from Hampton and one from Newport News, approach and fire into each other, near the Bridge and that "at dusk" he took up his march for Bethel Church, the enemy following him. It is difficult to make these statements match the facts, as regards the times of day.

time, and daylight having now fully come, the mistake and the situation became clear to all.

Gen. Pierce now assumed chief command, and called a consultation. Colonels Washburn and Duryea advised a return to camp. They felt that the affair had made a bad start, and that no surprise of the enemy was now possible. They thought it probable that the force at Big Bethel would be either withdrawn or heavily reinforced from Yorktown; and that with the failure of the movement against Little Bethel the expedition was properly at an end. Gen. Pierce, however, insisted that his orders required that a demonstration be made against Big Bethel and accordingly ordered an advance to that point. Meantime the men had breakfasted, and at 7 o'clock the column again moved to the front, the Zouaves, as before, leading the advance. A short halt was made at Little Bethel, where, in obedience to instructions, the meeting house was burned. Between 8 and 9 o'clock, the column halted again, in sight of the Confederate works at Big Bethel.

It is to be noted that thus far on each side there was extreme ignorance of the strength of the opposing forces. At 3 o'clock that morning word, sent by a resident of Hampton, reached Magruder that a considerable federal force had marched out from Camp Hamilton. Probably supposing that it was a reconnoissance, and hoping to surprise and cut it off, Magruder immediately marched out to meet it, with six hundred men of the First North Carolina regiment and two howitzers. He had gone nearly to Little Bethel, when his scouts brought him such intelligence of the numbers of the Federals that he thought best to fall back in haste to his earthworks. Here he awaited attack. Stuart's and Montague's battalions, which had just arrived from Yorktown, were posted so as to extend his line to his right, and had time to erect temporary breastworks, facing a ravine in their front.

A howitzer was placed in front, across the creek, in the road, supported by a single company.

On the other side Gen. Pierce had obtained from women in the farm houses and from contrabands, information that there was a force at Big Bethel, placed by the lowest estimate at four thousand, and by the highest at over twenty thousand. A reconnoissance by Captain Kilpatrick, commanding the advance guard of Duryea's regiment, brought him almost equally incorrect intelligence. Kilpatrick reported that he had "found the enemy with about from three thousand to five thousand men, posted in a strong position on the opposite side of the bridge, three earthworks, and a masked battery on the right and left, in advance of the stream thirty pieces of artillery and a large force of cavalry."¹⁷

General Pierce was much excited by these reports and was indiscreet enough to allow his trepidation to become apparent to all about him. He announced loudly that his scouts had brought him word that "the enemy had twenty guns in battery," dispatched an aid to Fortress Monroe for reinforcements, post haste, and gave other orders which indicated to all within hearing that he considered his command engaged in a desperate undertaking.

These enormously exaggerated reports of the enemy's force, spreading rapidly through the ranks, were of course not cheering for the members of a force which numbered less than two thousand men, with four field pieces. The men, moreover, were exceedingly weary. As unused to marching as to fighting, they had marched and countermarched for ten hours. Their ardor had been dampened by the unfortunate encounter of the night; and they were now to attack intrenchments, under a General whom all knew to be as inexperienced as themselves, and whose present nervousness was painfully obvious. It is not surprising that most of

¹⁷ Report of Captain Judson Kilpatrick. Vol. 2 of U.S. Official Records.

them were willing to keep pretty closely under shelter of the woods, which skirted the road on either side, and at some points extended up to the marsh in front.

The assault opened a little after 9 o'clock, and a desultory engagement of about four hours' duration followed. The four field pieces were taken to the front and stationed in the road leading to the bridge, and were subsequently advanced to within two hundred yards of the enemy's main work. They maintained, under the direction of Lieutenant Greble, a spirited fire, as long as their ammunition lasted. Duryea's regiment was first stationed in the woods on the right of the road and was then moved to the open ground on the left of the road. Two companies of the First Vermont, (Captain Ripley's and Captain Peck's) were detached from Washburn's battalion, and sent into the woods on the left of Duryea, to protect his flank. They were shelled by the enemy; but suffered no loss and did no firing. Duryea made several advances towards the works in front; but was prevented from charging them by the creek, which was supposed to be non-fordable, and contented himself with maintaining an ineffective musketry fire. He had six men killed and thirteen wounded—the largest loss sustained by any regiment from the enemy's fire.

Townsend was sent to the left of Duryea, with directions to advance upon, and if practicable, assault the right of the enemy's position. The movement was destined to failure, for the creek was considerably wider at this point than below, and he could not have reached the rear of the enemy's right, except by a long detour. It reached a sudden termination, by a blunder similar to that of Bendix the night before, though less excusable because made in broad day light. As his regiment, in line of battle, was closing up on his skirmishers, his left company became separated from the line by a farm ditch, skirted by a line of bushes. Seeing the bayonets of the company over the bushes, Townsend took them for a

hostile force on his flank, and hastily marched his regiment back to his former position.

The final and really the only formidable assault on the works was made by Colonel Washburn. Shortly before noon, he was directed by General Pierce to take his battalion round through the woods to his right and attack the left of the enemy's works. His command had been lessened nearly one half by the detaching of companies to act as skirmishers in other parts of the field, and consisted of six companies, mustering less than 300 muskets. With these he marched for some distance through a piece of tangled woods, twice coming out to the open ground in sight of the enemy's batteries, only to find that a further detour was necessary in order to bring him fairly on their left. Reaching finally a point from which he thought the works could be approached, he found a dry ditch, dug for a drain, leading towards the creek. Through this he took his men for some distance. Then, leaving this cover, he pushed straight across the marsh bordering the creek, leading the column himself, the men shouting: "Follow the Colonel!" The creek was found to be a dark and apparently deep stream; but the men took it without hesitation, and found it fordable. Holding up their cartridge boxes from the water, there about waist deep, they went through it, and straight forward across the open marsh beyond till Washburn found before him a wooded ridge ten or twelve feet high, under the cover of which he deployed his command. Thus far not a shot had been fired at them, and their approach was apparently unobserved by the enemy.¹⁸

¹⁸ Colonel D. H. Hill in his report says: "Those in advance [of the Federal column] had put on our distinctive badge of a white band round the cap, and cried out repeatedly, 'don't fire.' This ruse was practiced to enable the whole column to get over the creek and form in good order." This was not so. The men wore no white bands, and if any one said, "don't fire," it was some officer restraining his own men till they should received the order to fire.

A brief examination, made by Captain Pelton from the top of the ridge, disclosed the enemy's works in full view, perhaps ten rods distant, rifle pits and parapet being thickly lined with troops. Washburn at once ordered his command to the top of the bank, and announced his presence by a fire of musketry, so sharp and continuous that for twenty minutes hardly a man of the enemy ventured to show his head above the breastworks. The reports of the confederate officers show that the entire loss received on their side during the battle—stated by them to have been but one man killed, nine wounded, and eight artillery horses killed or disabled—was from this fire.

After the firing began, about sixty of Bendix's Germans joined Washburn's line. With this exception, no supports were sent to him, although General Pierce had now been reinforced by the First New York Regiment, Colonel Allen, which had been sent up from Hampton by General Butler. Moreover the demonstrations against the enemy's front and right, instead of being more vigorously pushed, now wholly ceased. General Magruder was thus enabled to strengthen his left by troops and guns brought from other parts of his lines; and soon in addition to the thickening patter of bullets, shell and grape began to rattle through the trees above the heads of Washburn's men. About this time a bugle across the creek sounded a retreat, and Washburn ordered his men to cease firing. He perceived that not a musket was being fired in any other part of the field, and that the attack had apparently ended, so far as any command but his own was concerned. Obeying the recall, he withdrew his command. He retired slowly across the log ground, re-forded the creek, halted in the woods to collect the stragglers, and then marched back to his first position on the left of the main road, to find that a general retreat had been ordered. The Zouaves were already out of sight, and Townsend's regiment was following them on the double

quick. Reporting to General Pierce for orders, Colonel Washburn was informed that the attempt to take Big Bethel was abandoned; and that the Second New York Regiment, which had just arrived from Hampton, would cover the rear. Colonel waited till the wounded men had been placed in wagons and taken off, and till the artillery had been withdrawn; and then, in good order, and with every man of his command in the ranks, except six, two of whom were killed,¹⁹ three wounded and one missing, took his lace in the retiring column.

The march up to Big Bethel, in the cool of the night and morning, in the excitement of a first march into battle, and in the confidence of victory, had been a not unpleasant experience. The return, in the dust and heat of a southern summer day, in the exhaustion of hunger and the depression of defeat, was a different thing. The weary tramp of twelve miles was relieved only by the thoughtfulness of colonel Phelps, who sent out wagons loaded with hard bread and smoked herring to meet the hungry troops. The regiment reached their quarters at Newport News and Camp Hamilton, about six o'clock, tired, footsore and disgusted, the Vermont and Massachusetts companies, however, feeling that none of the mistakes of the expedition were to be laid at heir door or that of their immediate commander.

A few incidents of this affair are worthy of mention. Soon after Washburn's battalion opened fire on the enemy's left, a stranger joined the ranks of the Northfield company, and taking a musket from a soldier, began firing rapidly. When the order to cease firing came, he stepped forward, as did others, on the top of the bank, to give the enemy a parting shot. As he fired, a ball struck him in the left breast. Privates D. E. Boyden and John M. Stone of the Northfield company caught him as he fell and bore him to

¹⁹ The killed were not Vermonters.

the foot of the ridge, when he expired without word or groan. Boyden and Stone opened his blouse, discovered from his uniform that he was an officer and then followed their company across the creek. The next day an order read at dress parade announced that Major Theodore Winthrop, of General Butler's staff, was missing, and called for information concerning him. The description thereupon given by Boyden and Stone of the man who expired in their arms, left no doubt that it was Winthrop. A Flag of truce sent by General Butler to Big Bethel next day learned that Winthrop's body had been buried where he fell.²⁰ It was subsequently disinterred and restored to his friends.

When the Woodstock Company started back across the creek, Private Reuben M. Parker, seeing Winthrop's body and supposing it to be that of a wounded man, returned to assist him. While thus separated from the battalion, he was surrounded and captured by a squad of the enemy. He was taken to Yorktown and thence to Richmond, where ten days later he was exchanged and rejoined his company. He always claimed that he was the first prisoner formally exchanged in the war. His observations while within the rebel works at Big Bethel, satisfied him that the enemy's loss was considerably larger than was reported or ever acknowledged by them.

The loss of Lieutenant Greble was only less mourned than that of Winthrop. He was killed by a piece of a shrapnel shell, fired at the last discharge but one from the redoubt, which struck him in the head, taking off part of the skull. Two artillerists were killed by the same shell.

As the Vermont companies halted near Little Bethel in the early morning, a man stepped out of a house near the road and fired upon the column with a rifle, the ball passing

²⁰ Various conflicting accounts of Major Winthrop's death have been given. This account is derived from Mr. Boyden, whose intelligence and accuracy are undoubted.

through the clothes of Sergeant Sweet, of the Woodstock company. A squad rushed for the bushwhacker and he was speedily captured, and Lieutenant Hiram Stevens, the tall Adjutant of the First Vermont, who had accompanied the battalion, administered to him on the spot the rather unmilitary punishment of a kicking. He proved to be an officer of a Virginia militia regiment, named Whiting. His house, with its contents, was burned, Stevens and Colonel Duryea, who came up at the time, applying the match. Later in the war bushwhacking often received a severer, if not more summary punishment.

Upon the retreat from Big Bethel, three companies of Confederate cavalry followed the rear of the Federal column, at a safe distance, as far as New Market Bridge. Magruder was reinforced by the arrival of a Louisiana regiment about the close of the action; but fearing a return of the Federal troops in stronger force, he evacuated the works at Big Bethel that night and withdrew his command to Yorktown.

Reviewing this action, it is to be noted that the enemy was commanded by trained and experienced officers; that the disparity in numbers, which for the first three hours of the fight, was less than 500, was more than made up to the confederates by the protection of their works and superiority in artillery; and that while they were entitled to the credit of repulsing superior numbers, they inflicted astonishingly little damage upon their assailants. The union loss was but 16 killed and 34 wounded by the enemy's fire.²¹

On the union side, the primal blunder was General Butler's , in committing a force not an officer of which had ever been under fire, to the command of a men without ex-

²¹ An eye witness of the fight, a member of the First Vermont, said in a published letter: "Their shots as a rule went over. During the last of the engagement, the rebels would not even put their heads above their works. They merely held their guns up in their hands and fired at random."

perience or the natural qualities fitting him for command. After this all the other blunder became easy.²²

The risky operation of marching raw troops, by night and by different roads, to a common point, was disapproved by Colonel Phelps; and when the firing near New Market Bridge was heard at Newport News, he said that it was a collision between portions of the federal force. Colonel Phelps also disapproved the making up of the column from Newport News by detachments from different regiments.²³ Had Phelps been in chief command at Big Bethel, it is altogether probable that he would not have accepted the statements of Virginia women, or Kilpatrick's crazy guesses, as the measure of the rebel force; that he would not have attempted to carry by direct assault, works well armed with artillery, and strengthened by morasses, ravines, and a natural moat; and that he would have made a different story of Big Bethel. As it was the whole affair was a series of blunders, redeemed only by the general good behavior of the troops. To Washburn's coolness and courage, there is ample testimony from both friends and strangers. His own opinion of the affair was thus expressed, in a private letter, written two days after the battle: "My men behaved like veterans. Not a man of y command flinches, or hesitated to go where I ordered him. If I had been supported, I would have charged, and I believe I could have carried the works. But I had no support. We had no head. I was not notified of the orders to retreat, and was left to fight alone with my slender force against the entire force of the enemy;

²² General Pierce retired to private life at the expiration of his three months' term, shortly after this battle. He subsequently enlisted in a Massachusetts regiment and made a good record in a more subordinate capacity.

²³ It was related by correspondents of the Vermont papers at the time, that on the return of the Vermont companies to camp Colonel Phelps said: "When the Vermont Boys go out again, they will all go together—and I'll command them."

and when I ceased firing I was three quarters of a mile from the point where I first formed. * * * All the different commands behaved nobly; but there was no reconnoissance, no plan of attack, and no concert of action. Hence the enemy were left to concentrate their whole force first against the Zouaves, then against Townsend's regiment, then against my men. A little military skill in the General, a little regard to the simplest rules of attack, would have rendered our charge successful. As it was, it was a failure—an egregious blunder." This opinion will stand with that of a Massachusetts officer,²⁴ that "if other troops had done their duty as well and gone as far as those from Massachusetts and Vermont, the name of Big Bethel would not have headed a long list of federal repulses."²⁵

The remaining service of the First Vermont was comparatively uneventful.

On the 16th of June a scouting party, consisting of the St. Albans, Cavendish and Brandon Companies under Major Worthen, went out some six miles and brought in a drove of cattle, the property of secessionists. While out they were fired on by a rebel cavalry picket, and three men were slightly wounded with buckshot. The rebels beat a rapid retreat and the first of their shot guns was not returned.

On the 22d of June, Private D. H. Whitney of the Woodstock company, in company with Lieutenant Becker of the Seventh New York Regiment, mounted on mules, left camp, unarmed, and contrary to orders. About five miles out from camp they were fired on by rebel scouts or bushwhackers. Becker's mule was wounded with buckshot and

²⁴ Adjutant Walker of the Fourth Massachusetts, quoted in Schouler's "History of Massachusetts in the Civil War."

²⁵ In a statement published by General Pierce after his return to Massachusetts, he said: "I think had the enemy's right and centre been as vigorously assailed by the New York troops as was their left by the Massachusetts and Vermont, we might at least have entered the battery though perhaps only to have been driven out."

threw him, when he crawled into the woods and made his way back to camp. A foraging party soon after found and brought in the dead body of Whitney, found lying in the road, riddle with buckshot. He was the only member of the First Vermont killed by the enemy.

The next day a report brought by two deserters from a Louisiana Zouave regiment, that a heavy force was on its way from Yorktown to attack Newport News occasioned active preparations to resist an assault, and hopes that an opportunity would be afforded to square accounts for the reverse at Big Bethel; but it proved to be a false report.

On the 26th, Sergeant Henry Bennett of the Middlebury company, the color sergeant of the regiment, a fine soldier who left Middlebury College to fight for the flag, died of typhoid fever in hospital at Fortress Monroe. His body was sent to Vermont.

The general health of the regiment was good throughout its term of service. The measles ran through it as through all the regiments that followed it, and there was some malarial fever; but there was surprisingly little dangerous illness, and no greater mortality than among the same number of men at home. One man, Whitney of Company B, was killed by bushwhackers. Three, Sergeant Bennett of Company I, and Privates Underwood and Lougee of Company D, died of disease. Four were discharged for disabilities. One man deserted while the regiment was passing through New York. Another obtained a furlough, went to Vermont and did not return. From the rolls of the Brandon, Burlington, Cavendish and St. Albans companies not a man was dropped for any cause. Not a death occurred at Newport News. On the whole it may be doubted if any regiment in the service throughout the war had a better time than did the First Vermont. There was at first the usual complaining over army rations among the men, who did not take kindly to army bread and salt beef. This was

more heeded at home than was the case subsequently, and the Governor despatched his agent, Mr. William B. Hatch, to Fortress Monroe, to inquire into the needs of the soldiers and if necessary to supply them. But as the season advanced, and supplies of fresh meat and vegetables were obtainable and "boxes" arrived from home,²⁶ these complaints ceased.

There was a good deal of scolding about the Surgeon, Dr. Sanborn, who was not very popular with the men, and charges of drunkenness and neglect of the sick were made against him in the Vermont papers and supported by affidavits. These charges were denied in published certificates by Colonel Phelps and Lieutenant Colonel Washburn.²⁷

But these minor troubles were merely ripples on the surface of an experience in the main astonishingly free from hardship and suffering. The men made themselves exceedingly comfortable in their camp at Newport News. They built porches to the tents and awnings of boughs over their company streets. They fished and foraged. They had sea breezes and sea bathing. Withal they had constant and thorough instruction in the duties of the soldier, till the First became one of the best drilled regiments in the army, as well as a model of obedience, order and efficiency. General Phelps, though he had crack regiments of other states under him, was especially proud of his Vermonters, and

²⁶ The friends of the members of the regiments at home, and all the people of the State made the comfort of the soldiers their care, to an extent not paralleled in the case of any other regiment. As the weather became hot, hundreds of "havelocks" were made by the women and sent to them. It being understood that their clothing was suffering from the war and tear of fatigue duty, the women offered to make overalls for the entire regiment if the State would supply the cloth, and the matter of so doing was seriously considered by the State authorities. The supplies of good things to eat, sent from Vermont, amounted to many tons in weight.

²⁷ Dr. Sanborn was subsequently appointed Surgeon of the 31st Massachusetts, and died at Ship Island, in the Gulf, in April 1862.

declared after they left that he greatly missed the influence of their example on the other regiments of his command.²⁸ He said, in a letter to Colonel Washburn that it was "a regiment, the like of which will not soon be seen again;" and the men returned his good opinion of them with unbounded respect and esteem.

The term of the regiment expired on the 2d of August. On the 4th it embarked with its arms and tents, at Newport News, on the steamers Ben de Ford and R. S. Spaulding. These sailed from Fortress Monroe on the 4th, direct for New Haven, where they arrived after a voyage of forty hours. The regiment took the train at once for Brattleboro. At Springfield, Massachusetts, it was lunched and refreshed with coffee by the citizens. It arrived at Brattleboro at midnight of the 7th. The citizens of the town had planned an impromptu reception, with music and torchlights; but it was not thought best to go into camp at that hour, and the men spent the night in the cars. The next morning they pitched camp on the Fair ground at Brattleboro.

But a single man of the regiment was left behind at Fortress Monroe. This was one of the Woodstock company who was suffering from a fracture of the skull, received by a fall from the second story window of the General Hospital at Fortress Monroe. Seventeen sick men embarked with the rest, took the journey home with safety, and were placed after the arrival at Brattleboro in a temporary hospital arranged for them in the upper story of the Brattleboro House. One of these, Private Tabor, of St. Albans, died before the regiment left. Of the 782 officers and men of the First that went to Virginia all but *five* returned to Vermont.

The regiment remained at "Camp Phelps," in Brattleboro, for eight days. It was reviewed, August 8th, by Gov-

²⁸ Colonel Phelps was promoted to be Brigadier General about the time the regiment left Newport News; and remained in command of that post after its departure.

ernor Fairbanks, and battalion and company drills were kept up regularly till the 25th, on which day and the day following, the regiment was paid off by Major Thomas H. Halsey—his first service as U. S. Paymaster—and mustered out of the service by Lieutenant W. W. Chamberlain, 14th U. S. Infantry. At 6 o'clock on the afternoon of the 16th, the regiment left Brattleboro, by train. The companies arrived at their homes that night or the next morning and received rousing welcomes from the citizens of their respective towns.

The term of service of the regiment from the date of the selection of the several companies to the final disbandment, lacked four days of four months.²⁹ Of course this did not end the service of the members of a regiment composed of such material. And the record of the First Vermont cannot better close than with mention of the facts that the field, staff and line officers of the regiment returned to the service almost to a man; that no less than one hundred and sixty-one of its members became field and line officers of the Vermont regiments and batteries subsequently organized, to which they took the careful drill and soldierly spirit and regard for discipline and order, which they had learned under Phelps and Washburn, and that a number received commissions in the service of other States or of the United States, making a total of two hundred and fifty who subsequently held commissions; and that of the 753 of its rank and file, over six hundred, or five out of every six, re-entered the service for three years.³⁰

²⁹ The officers and men were paid by the government from the 20th of April—the days after the first meeting of the militia company commanders, to select the companies—to the 15th of August.

³⁰ Adjutant General Washburn.