

To quote this book, use the following: Benedict, George Grenville. Vermont in the Civil War. Burlington VT: Free Press Association, 1888 (Note chapters 1-20 are in volume 1, chapters 21-32 in volume 2. Page numbers are true to the original.)

## **CHAPTER XV. THE FIRST BRIGADE--CONTINUED.**

*Preliminary movements of the Gettysburg campaign--Preparing to cross the Rappahannock--The Fifth Vermont crosses in boats and captures the Confederate pickets--The rest of the brigade follows--Sharp skirmishing on the south bank--The march to the north--Meeting of the First and Second Vermont brigades--hard marching in Maryland--"Put the Vermonters ahead and keep the column closed up."--General Meade succeeds Hooker--Arrival on the field of Gettysburg--The part taken by the brigade in the battle--Engagement at Funkstown--Recrossing the Potomac--The brigade goes to New York city--Services in sustaining the drafts--Return to and reception by the Sixth Corps--marching and counter marching--Battle of Rappahannock Station--The Mine Run campaign--Winter at Brandy Station.*

General Lee began his march to the north with great secrecy on the 3d of June, leaving the corps of A. P. Hill in the lines of Fredericksburg to mask the movement.

General Hooker, who was expecting some hostile development, was not slow to discover that Lee had an expedition of some sort on foot; and on the 4<sup>th</sup> orders to be ready to march at a moment's notice with three day's rations, warned the army that its time of quiet was about over. Sedgwick was at the same time directed to march his corps to the river below Fredericksburg and to throw a division across, to feel of the enemy's lines and discover if any considerable portion of Lee's army remained in them. For this service he selected Howe's division, and on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, it broke camp and marched to the river at Franklin's crossing. As it reached the ridge above the river at four p.m., several batteries were taking

position along the brow, and the pontoon trains were moving down to the river bank. On the other bank the enemy had a strong intrenched picket line, from which an annoying fire was kept up on the pontoniers, as soon as the latter began work. It soon became plain that the Confederates must be cleared out of their rifle pits, if the bridges were to be laid without serious loss. Four or five batteries were accordingly advanced, and shell and grape began to plow the rebel breastworks into ridges, almost hiding them in clouds of dust. Sheltered in their pits, however, the Confederates kept their place, and half an hour of vigorous artillery practice apparently made no impression on them. General Howe thereupon decided to try another plan and called on Colonel Grant for two regiments to cross the river in pontoon boats, and drive the Confederate pickets from their rifle pits. Grant sent the Fifth Vermont and Twenty-sixth New Jersey. It did not look like an agreeable errand, and a number of the Jerseymen, whose time was about to expire, and, as they claimed, dating their nine months from the date of their enlistment instead of from their muster in, had expired, refused to start at the order. The rest accompanied the Vermont boys, as at the word of command they ran rapidly to the river, under a sharp fire from the opposite shore, launched the boats with the aid of the engineers, and piling into them pulled with a will across the stream. Two boats, bearing as many companies of the New Jersey troops, first reached the opposite shore. Two companies of the Fifth, G., Captain Jenne and C., Captain Barney, with Major Dudley, always foremost in duty or danger, followed close behind them. The Jerseymen, however, on landing, halted under the shelter of the bank, while the Vermonters as soon as they struck the shore, dashed up the hill and pushed straight for the breastwork in front. Dudley and Private Henry Moren of Company G., were the first to spring into the rifle pits. The rest were close behind them, and at Dudley's summons the Confederate outpost, consisting

of six officers and 84 men, threw down their arms and surrendered without attempt at resistance. The other companies followed as fast as boats could be procured; and it was a lively scene for a time, as the men, cheering loudly, pulled across the river, the boats returning laden with prisoners.

As fast as the troops crossed they were ordered forward by Colonel Lewis, deploying as they advanced, till the line was halted along the stage road, half a mile from the river. Seven men of the Fifth were wounded during the crossing. It was a gallant and successful little affair. The bridges could now be laid without hindrance. While the work was in progress, the Second and Third regiments crossed in boats, and were stationed on the opposite bank, the Fourth and Sixth remaining till a bridge was completed, when they marched across. The brigade was then deployed, encircling the bridge head on the southern bank, with a picket line thrown out for nearly a mile, confronting the enemy's pickets a few rods beyond. That night a company of the Eighteenth Mississippi, two officers and 34 men, on outpost duty in the ravine of Deep Run, came in and surrendered to the Union picket reserve consisting of two Vermont companies,<sup>1</sup> saying that they supposed they were surrounded, and besides they had "got enough of the war." Next morning the enemy's skirmishers attacked the skirmish line on the left, held by the Sixth Vermont. The firing was very sharp for two hours, and there was more or less shooting all day. The enemy to all appearance had two men to the Vermonters' one; but the latter yielded no ground and the enemy's stretcher-bearers were kept pretty busy during the forenoon. By noon a fresh supply of ammunition were called for, many of the men having fired over thirty rounds apiece. In this skirmishing the Sixth Vermont lost four men killed and 13 wounded.

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<sup>1</sup> Company D of the Fourth, and B of the Fifth Vermont.

During Friday night and half of Saturday the Vermont brigade was the only Union force on the south side of the Rappahannock--with an entire Confederate corps posted along the heights above them. Saturday afternoon another brigade marched over, and shovels were called into play, and rifle pits and breastworks made the position more secure. It was not Lee's policy, however, to permit a serious engagement at that time and place. On the other hand Sedgwick found convincing indications that the heights were still held in force; and he accordingly attempted no formidable demonstration. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, letters and orders captured in a cavalry engagement between almost the entire mounted forces of both armies, at Brandy Station, revealed the fact of Lee's presence at Culpeper, and his design of the invasion of the North. Then came the news that Lee's advance had pushed across the Blue Ridge into the Shenandoah Valley and was threatening Winchester. Hooker's plan in this juncture was to attack and destroy Hill, and to call Lee back by placing the Army of the Potomac between him and Richmond, and cutting off his communications. It was a good plan; but it found no favor at Washington. Mr. Lincoln's quaint advice to Hooker was "not to take any risk of being entangled upon the river, like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other." The alternative plan, to fall back on Washington by the interior line, was consequently adopted; and the Army of the Potomac was at once put in motion to the north.

The Vermont brigade moved with the Sixth Corps at nine o'clock on Saturday evening, June 13<sup>th</sup>. The men had had eight days of almost constant marching, skirmishing and intrenching, by night and day; but they started without complaint. The night was dark; the roads, made slippery by thunder showers, ran for miles through thick woods, and the troops plunged on in the darkness, a long invisible pro-

cession of laughing, singing, swearing, and stumbling soldiers. At two o'clock next morning the corps halted north of Potomac Creek; and remained there that day, while the immense army trains moved by, three or four wagons abreast, hurried forward by voice and lash. Starting at nine that evening, the corps had another night march, the way lit for miles by the fires in the abandoned camps of the troops which had been stationed there. After a short halt at Stafford Court House, at daylight, the column moved on toward Dumfries. The day was terribly hot, and the dust, stirred by tens of thousands of hoofs and feet, rolled up in suffocating clouds. Hundreds of men fell out; many were sunstruck, and some died by the roadside; but the column pushed on, reaching the depopulated old town of Dumfries at three o'clock, when the exhausted men were permitted to throw themselves down in the fields, rest their blistered feet, and apply the internal remedies of "hard tack" and coffee. The brigade had perhaps no more trying march, in all its history. Here at Dumfries the Vermont brigade was drawn up in hollow square to hear the sentence imposed on forty men of the Twenty-sixth New Jersey, who had been court-martialed for refusing to obey orders at the last crossing of the Rappahannock, and to see part of it inflicted. The culprits were drummed out of camp to the tune of the Rogue's March, and were further ordered to be sent to hard service on the public works; but this portion of the sentence was subsequently remitted. On the 18<sup>th</sup> the New Jersey regiment was mustered out, and the brigade thenceforth consisted of Vermonters only.

The grateful sleep of the men that night was broken at two a.m. by the order to fall in; and at four the corps was again in motion. In the afternoon it reached and forded the Occoquan at Wolf run shoals, where it crossed the outer liens about Washington, there held by the Second Vermont brigade. A rest of two hours, a chance to bathe, and a visit

with the Fourteenth Vermont, whose camp was at the Shoals, refreshed officers and men after another hard and dusty day's march; and they moved on cheerily six miles, to Fairfax Station, having made about twenty miles in fourteen hours. Here the corps halted for a day, which was made the most of in resting and visiting with the men of the Second Vermont brigade and First Vermont Cavalry, who came in large numbers to see the veterans whose praise was in the mouths of all. The two brigades fraternized cordially on this their first meeting, and parted with mutual good wishes.

While here the news came to the army that Ewell had overwhelmed Milroy, at Winchester, and that Lee was pushing unopposed for Maryland; and the halt was improved to overhaul the corps train, reduce officers' baggage, and make other preparations for the hard marching and fighting likely to come.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the brigade moved to Fairfax Court House. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Sixth Corps was sent to the southwest ten miles, by the well worn way of Centreville, Bull Run and Manassas Junction, to Bristoe's Station. Here it lay, picketing a wide circuit, for three days, on two of which the artillery duels in the fights between Pleasanton's and Stuart's cavalry, near Snicker's and Ashby's Gaps, were plainly audible. On the rainy night of the 25<sup>th</sup>, the brigade returned with the corps to Centreville, where the Second Vermont brigade, which had now joined the Army of the Potomac, was found, and the two brigades marched near each other from there to Maryland. Passing through Drainsville on the 27<sup>th</sup>, the corps crossed the Potomac on pontoons, and bivouacked that night near Edwards Ferry, once more on northern soil, where crops of corn and ripening wheat told of undisturbed cultivation, and made a landscape strongly in contrast with the war-scathed region in which the troops had been for eight months.

The army was doing some pretty good marching at this

time; and the corps made its twenty miles a day through Poolesville, New Market and Westminster, reaching Manchester, Md., on the 31<sup>st</sup>, thirty miles southeast of Gettysburg, Pa., whither Lee was moving.

The Army of the Potomac now once more changed commanders. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, Hooker, provoked by the refusal of General Halleck to permit the garrison of Harper's Ferry to be attached to his army, resigned the command; and on the 28<sup>th</sup>, Major General George G. Meade, the quiet, undemonstrative, self-contained and efficient commander of the Fifth Corps, was placed at the head of the army.

### MARCH TO GETTYSBURG.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, the first day of the battle of Gettysburg, the Sixth Corps lay quietly at Manchester, unaware that the great battle which all expected had already begun. At night, however, came orders to move to Gettysburg. Howe's division started at once, but was delayed by the moving of other troops, and made but four or five miles before daylight. It then struck the Baltimore and Gettysburg turnpike, and the corps moved off freely on the longest, most rapid and most exciting day's march in its history. It was thirty miles to the field, and it was on this march, when the fate of the army and the issue of the war might depend on the presence of the corps, that General Sedgwick complimented the Vermont brigade by his famous order: "Put the Vermonters ahead and keep the column well closed up."<sup>2</sup> As the brigade crossed the State line into Pennsylvania, at eleven

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<sup>2</sup> "It was during this time that Sedgwick directed me 'to put the Vermonters ahead, and keep everything well closed up.' It was not the only time he complimented the soldiers from Vermont. His compliments many times cost them very dear; for they were the high compliments of placing them, on many battlefields, in the foremost position of danger."--Colonel M. T. McMahon, Adjutant General Sixth Army corps.

A. M., the first shadow of the great battle-cloud reached it, in a rumor, floating back along the road, that there was heavy fighting in front, and that General Reynolds of the First corps had been killed. About midday the regiments filed into the fields beside the road and the men sank upon the ground. "Make no fires, for there will be no time to cook anything--only a few minutes for rest," was the instruction as the line halted. All too soon came the summons to fall in again, and the column started on. At Littletown, Pa., ten miles from the field, the signs of strife became unmistakable in carriages bearing wounded officers, and soldiers limping into the village--the first of the "red rays" streaming from the battle field, so soon to crimson earth and air and sky, over all the country round.<sup>3</sup> Pressing forward at a rapid rate, and nearing the field, the sound of the battle, like a mighty pounding echoing among the hills, became more distinct; and the battle clouds rising at the front and frequent puffs of white smoke appearing suddenly high in air, told of showers of bursting shells and shrapnel raining upon serried ranks.

The sun was scalding hot, and the men, each loaded with gun, blanket, haversack, cartridge box, five days' rations and forty rounds of cartridges, had made already more than a long day's march; but they hurried on. The farmers' wives and daughters along the way, brought water for the thirsty defenders of the Union. The stragglers multiplied; but few of the Vermonters fell out, for every man felt that he was needed, and wanted a hand in the battle that they hoped would end the war.

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<sup>3</sup> "Already the corps was meeting the tide of wounded hastening with desperate energy to the rear--that most demoralizing experience to a body of troops approaching a battlefield. With scarcely any exception the tale they told was one of disaster to the Federal army. 'You fellows will catch it; the whole army is smashed to pieces!' said more than one brawny fugitive with a bleeding arm or a bandaged head, glancing over his shoulder as though fearing the pursuit of a rebel column."--Army letter.



The roar of the combat grew louder and louder, and filled the air with almost deafening volume, as between five and six o'clock, Howe's division, approaching the field from the southeast by the Baltimore pike, crossed Rock Creek, and halted, about a mile in the rear of General Meade's headquarters and between the extremities of the great horseshoe line of battle. A mile to the left, but seeming to be not half the distance, rose the wooded knoll of Little Round Top; and from beyond it and to its right came the incessant roll of musketry and thunder of artillery. The fiery Hood was then making his desperate and well nigh successful attempt to carry Little Round top, and Longstreet, having driven back the Third Corps, was endeavoring to break through on Meade's left. Within the last three hours the third, Fifth and Second Corps had lost 10,000 men. The army had thus far lost about 20,000. It was an anxious times around General Meade's headquarters. The Sixth Corps was welcome.

"I was at Meade's headquarters," says Mr. C. C. Coffin, describing the moment. "It was nearly six o'clock. The sound of battle grew louder and nearer. Hill was threatening the centre. A cloud of dust could be seen down the Baltimore pike. Had Stuart gained our rear? There were anxious countenances around the cottage where the flag of the commander-in-chief was flying. Officers gazed with their field glasses. 'It is not cavalry, but infantry,' said one. There is the flag. It is the Sixth Corps!' We could see the advancing bayonets gleaming in the setting sun. Faces which a moment before were grave, became cheerful. It was an inspiring sight. The troops of that corps had marched thirty-two miles during the day. They crossed Rock Creek, filed into the field past the ammunition trains, threw themselves upon the ground, tossed aside their knapsacks and wiped the sweat from their sunburned cheeks."

They were not allowed to rest long, however, before the order to fall in again came, and though it was supposed to

mean an advance into battle, it was promptly and eagerly obeyed. "The dashing readiness," says General Howe, "with which the division went on to the field, on the evening of the 2d, after its long and continuous march of the previous day and night, and the handsome way it bore itself during the engagement, was worthy of its former reputation." Howe's division was divided, Neill's brigade being sent to the right to reinforce General Slocum, while the First Vermont brigade was moved a mile and a half to the left and stationed near Little Round Top, in one of the most important and responsible positions on the field, holding the extreme left of the Army of the Potomac, and picketing that flank of the army that night. During the next and final day of the battle, while the Second Vermont brigade was doing its first and last fighting, and winning laurels on the left centre, the First brigade held its position on the left, between the Taneytown road and Round Top. Some stray shot and shell came over into its lines and splattered some of the men with earth; but they saw but little of the fighting which shook the solid ground beneath their feet, and suffered no loss.

On the 4<sup>th</sup>, the Fourth regiment was on the picket line, and was ordered forward a mile and a half, till it struck the enemy's skirmishers, and had a little brush with them, in which one man was wounded. This skirmish was about the last fighting done on the field of Gettysburg.

That night Lee began his retreat; and the next morning the Sixth Corps, passing around Round Top and across the battlefield to the Fairfield road, followed on his rear for some ten miles. The houses and barns along the way were full of Confederate wounded, in charge of their own surgeons. A mile or two beyond Fairfield, the Fairfield pass opens across the mountains. Through this Lee retreated with the mass of his army, leaving a rear guard so strongly posted in the gorge that Sedgwick did not venture to try to force the pass without distinct orders, though he reported that he could

do it if so directed. He remained in front of it during the 6<sup>th</sup>, when, General Meade having concluded that he could make a more effective pursuit by a flank route, the corps was withdrawn, save a single brigade left to harass the enemy's rear, and marched due south, by way of Emmettsburg and Lewistown, till it nearly reached Frederick, when turning west, it struck across the Catoctin mountain range, to Middletown. The crossing of the mountain was effected over a narrow and rocky mountain path, through Highland Pass, in the rainy night of the 7<sup>th</sup>. The march was a scramble up and a tumble down the mountain, in the darkness, and the soldiers, wet, muddy, footsore, and in hundreds of cases barefooted, were lad to halt and rest the next day near Middletown, where Meade's army was concentrated.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the corps, turning to the northwest, marched across the South Mountain by Middletown Pass, to Boonsboro. Thence, turning back to the north, the Sixth Corps moved up the Antietam Valley toward Hagerstown, where a large part of what was left of Lee's army lay, the rest being stretched for seven miles along the road from Hagerstown to Williamsport on the Potomac, waiting for the river to subside, and for a pontoon bridge to be built which should take them back to Virginia. General Meade had made a wide detour, and having marched his army two miles for his opponent's one, was now fairly on Lee's flank.

#### FUNKSTOWN.

Two miles below Hagerstown is the little village of Funkstown, notable as the spot where the First Vermont brigade held a skirmish line against repeated attacks of strong Confederate lines of battle. This engagement occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Howe's division headed the column of the corps, that day, preceded by Buford's cavalry. Moving toward Hagers-

town along the turnpike, in the early morning, Buford came on the enemy's cavalry about three miles out from Boonsboro, and drove them for three miles, to and across Beaver Creek, a small stream emptying into the Antietam, south of Funkstown. Following the cavalry, Howe crossed the stream, and, under orders from General Sedgwick, halted to wait for the rest of the corps. During the forenoon Buford, after driving the enemy's cavalry through Funkstown, found himself confronted by a strong force of Confederate infantry, with artillery, which advanced from their entrenchments and gave him battle. He fell back fighting to a crest just south of Funkstown, where he made a stand. While his men were holding the enemy in check, Buford rode back, in person, to Howe, whose division was a mile and a half back, to ask him to come on and relieve him, as his men were getting out of ammunition. Howe's orders were such that he did not feel justified in advancing without authority from General Sedgwick. To procure this took some time, and Buford, whose troopers, fighting dismounted, had exhausted their carbine cartridges, drew off his command to the right before the infantry supports arrived. General Howe at once--it was now noon--ordered colonel Grant to occupy the position in front with his brigade, and Grant, seeing that there was no time to be lost, immediately moved forward. Deploying the Fifth and Sixth regiments as skirmishers, he hurried them to the wooded crest from which the cavalry had retired. It was a race with the enemy's skirmishers to gain the crest; but the Vermonters reached and occupied it first and did not leave it. The position was a good one, with a fair amount of cover for the men. The skirmish line, when formed, stretched nearly two miles along the crest. The Sixth Vermont was on the right, its right posted in a piece of woods, and the Fifth on the left. A gap between the left of the Fifth and Antietam Creek was filled by two com-

panies of the Second. The rest of the Second regiment was held in reserve; and the Third and Fourth regiments supported a battery which General Howe had sent forward, to meet artillery with artillery. The enemy soon opened a very severe fire from several batteries near Funkstown; and it became clear that he was in strong force there and that the position was an important one to him. In point of fact Lee had been brought to bay by his antagonist and the elements; and he was that day disposing his army, two or three miles away, from the desperate encounter which he fully expected. It was of very great consequence to him to guard the approach from Funkstown to his position while making his dispositions and throwing up his intrenchments, and Anderson's brigade, of Georgia troops,<sup>4</sup> commanded at this time by Colonel White, Anderson having been wounded at Gettysburg, was sent to hold back the Union advance, as long as possible, along the line of Antietam Creek. To this end the Confederate commander wished to occupy the crest in question. Colonel Grant saw that the enemy wanted it; and accordingly decided to hold it. He took the sharp artillery fire to mean an infantry attack to follow, and prepared to meet it. The Third regiment was sent forward to support the Sixth, three companies of the Third being deployed to strengthen the centre of the skirmish line, which was everywhere much extended. In like manner the Fourth was sent to support the Fifth, and two companies put in to strengthen that part of the skirmish line. The eight companies of the Second not on the skirmish line supported the battery. The orders to the Colonels were to hold the line at all hazards.

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<sup>4</sup> Consisting of the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Eleventh and Fifty-ninth Georgia, and Tenth Georgia battalion. Colonel Grant speaks of the Confederate force as "Anderson's old brigade, of seven regiments." If this number is correct, another regiment was attached to the brigade in this engagement.

About two o'clock and while the supports mentioned were moving into position, the enemy advanced in full line of battle, preceded by skirmishers, against the centre of Grant's line. The Confederates probably supposed that the skirmishers before them were dismounted cavalry and expected to brush them away with ease. But the Vermonters did not budge an inch, but stood and met the lines of gray with a fire so close and deadly that they recoiled and fell back to cover. Having reformed his line, White again advanced, throwing out at the same time a regiment from his right, to ford the Antietam and take Grant's line in reverse from the left. To meet this, Colonel Walbridge was sent to the left with the left wing of the Second regiment; and while the brigade again repulsed the front attack Walbridge repulsed the flanking movement, driving the enemy well back from the stream and extending the skirmish line of the brigade along it.

The brigade was now, with the exception of three companies of the Second which remained as a support to the battery, all deployed on a skirmish line two miles long, with no supports within a mile and a half. The men took advantage of such partial shelter as they could get from the rail fences and timber; and when the Confederate line of battle again advanced, they for the third time received and repulsed it, and followed it up for a short distance towards Funkstown, whither the enemy retired. As the centre of the enemy's line fell back in confusion through a cornfield, some of the Vermonters sprang upon the fence in front and tauntingly called on them to come back, as there was nothing there but "some Yankee militia." But the discouraged Confederates did not return. The men of the Vermont regiments had sixty rounds of cartridges in their boxes and pockets, and many of them used them all, and a fresh supply was sent for, and was brought up on stretchers, during the engagement. At no point was their skirmish line pushed back; and the

brigade held the ground the rest of the day and night and till relieved by other troops of Howe's division, next morning.

The Confederate brigade which suffered this rebuff was a part of General Hood's division, and a portion of it received the desperate charge of the Vermont cavalry at Gettysburg. The deaths of Farnsworth and the Vermonters who fell with him in that charge, were doubly avenged by the men of the Old brigade, at Funkstown. Had the Sixth Corps been pushed in on Lee's flank after this transaction, and properly supported, some serious trouble might have been made for ten army of Northern Virginia. But the orders to the generals were not to bring on a general engagement; and General Lee was not molested. The exploit of the Vermonters, however, was a tall feather in the cap of the brigade, and they were not allowed to remain wholly unconscious that they had done a good thing. Colonel Grant in his report says: "It is believed that another instance of a skirmish line, extending over so great a distance, repeatedly repelling the assaults of strong lines of infantry at different points, cannot be found in the history of any war." General Howe said of it: "The troops that happened to be there on our line, were what we considered in the Army of the Potomac unusually good ones. They quietly repulsed the rebels twice, and the third time they came up they sent them flying into Funkstown."<sup>5</sup> General Sedgwick, always chary of praise, said in his report: "The Vermont brigade (Grant's of the Second division) were deployed as skirmishers, covering a front of over two miles, and during the afternoon repulsed three successive attacks made in line of battle. The remarkable conduct of the brigade on this occasion deserves high praise."

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<sup>5</sup> --General Howe, before the Committee on the Conduct of the War. Vol. I, 1865, p. 315.

The loss of the brigade was nine killed and 59 wounded, of whom seven died of their wounds, as follows:<sup>6</sup>

	Killed.	Wounded.	Died of wounds
Second Vermont Regiment,	1	6	0
Third	1	4	1
Fourth	1	24	2
Fifth	3	6	0
Sixth	3	19	4
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Total,	9	59	7

Colonel Stoughton of the Fourth, who distinguished himself, as did all the regimental commanders, by his coolness, had the misfortune to receive a bullet wound in the head during the afternoon, which cost him his right eye, and there were several line officers among the wounded. Colonel Grant estimated the enemy's loss at not less than 200. Citizens of Funkstown variously stated the rebel killed at from 30 to 50, and their wounded at from 100 to 150.

On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the Sixth Corps moved on through Funkstown, the Confederates falling back as they advanced, and down toward Williamsport, where it formed line of battle along the hills in front of Lee's lines, dimly seen through the mist of a rainy day. But General Meade waited a day too long to get forward his reserves, and during the dark and foggy night of the 13<sup>th</sup> Lee succeeded in placing the swollen current of the Potomac between him and his enemy. The disappointment of his escape, was, however, alleviated for the army, but the belief that the Confederates had got enough of invasions of the North, and by the news of the fall of Vicksburg; while the "fire in the rear," of the draft riots in New York, then in progress, intensified the determination of every good soldier to fight the issue through, whether it was to take one year or ten.

Countermarching on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Sixth Corps moved

<sup>6</sup> These casualties are erroneously reported in the U.S. Official Records as occurring at the battle of Gettysburg.



back to Boonsboro; camped that night on the same ground it occupied on the march from Maryland in October, 1862, and crossing the South Mountain next day, moved down the valley via Middletown and Petersville, to the Potomac at Berlin. Here several corps were waiting for an opportunity to cross the river by the bridge. The turn of the Sixth Corps came on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup>, and as it moved back to the sacred soil, the bands played: "O, carry me back to Old Virginny."

The route of the corps down the valley was mainly the same as that taken by it eight months before, except that instead of going by White Plain and New Baltimore it kept on to Salem, and thence was sent out toward Manassas Gap, which had been occupied by the enemy. Ewell was driven out of the Gap on the 23d, and the Sixth Corps, not being needed there, turned back and passing south by the way of Orleans, halted and went into camp on the 25<sup>th</sup>, on the hills just west of Warrenton. Howe's division here camped about an old and ruined Baptist Church, surrounded by a thick growth of timber. Here the brigade had five days of comparative rest--the first since they left the Rappahannock in June. The weather was hot and showery, and the fields full of ripe blackberries, and the good effect of wholesome fruit on the health of the troops was unmistakable. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of August the division marched to Waterloo, six miles west of Warrenton, remained there five days, and on the 6<sup>th</sup> marched back and camped two miles from Warrenton Springs. General Lee in the meantime withdrew his army to the south of the Rapidan. Drills and inspections and light picket duty were the occupation of the troops of Howe's division.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "It is safe to say that no division in the army performed more labor in drills, than Howe's."--Surgeon Stevens.

## SUMMER VACATION IN NEW YORK.

A novel piece of service now fell to the lot of the brigade. The New York draft riots, in July, in which colored orphan asylums, armories and draft stations were sacked and burned; black men hung from the trees and lamp posts; rioters knocked from the tops of six-story blocks by the police and provost guards; and fights of the mob with the few regulars on duty in the city took place, which left the streets strewn with dead and wounded; together with the subsidiary riots in Jersey City, Boston, Troy and other places--had aroused the strongest feeling throughout the North, and grave apprehensions on the part of the government. In consequence of these disturbances, and at the request of Gov. Seymour, the draft had been suspended in New York city and other places. But if the government was to sustain its authority at home, of course the draft could not stay suspended. The Federal authorities determined that it should be resumed, and inflexibly completed; and they did not propose to leave any opportunity for further outbreaks. General Dix, in whose wisdom and resolution there was full reliance, was in command of the department, with his headquarters in New York. The cool and judicious Canby was detailed to assist him, and two brigades of regulars--being about all that was left of the regular army--under General R. B. Ayres, was detached from the Army of the Potomac, and ordered to New York. To this force the government decided to add several thousand of the best volunteer troops in the army--selecting for the purpose troops of tried courage and steadfast loyalty, who could be depended on in any emergency, and who would set an example of order, sobriety, and general good conduct. For this service, the Vermont brigade was the first volunteer organization selected. This was done, not at all at the instance of any one connected

with the brigade;<sup>8</sup> and when an order came to the brigade commander to turn in the quartermaster's supplies, march to Warrenton Junction, proceed thence by rail to Alexandria, and report to General Halleck for further orders, no one in the command, high or low, had any idea where it was going. The prevailing opinion in the corps was that the brigade was wanted to carry Fort Wagner, in Charleston Harbor, the attempt to storm which had just failed. Several individual regiments of high character for discipline and reliability were also detached--the whole making an "army of occupation," for New York city, of some 12,000 men.

The order above alluded to was received by Colonel Grant on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August. The Fifth Vermont, which was out five miles, on picket, near Hart's Mill on the upper Rappahannock, was at once recalled. The brigade broke camp next day and marched to Warrenton Junction; and on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> the regiments went by rail to Alexandria, embarked on the transports *Illinois* and *Ericsson*, and were taken to New York, arriving here on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Here Colonel Grant reported to General Canby, and was ordered to land his brigade and march, without special parade, to Tompkins Square, and to establish there his headquarters, stationing three of his regiments there, one in Washington Square, and one in Madison Square. The regiments landed and went into camp in the squares named on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>d</sup>. Two regiment of regulars that had been already stationed in Tompkins Square--which was near "Mackerelville," one of the worst parts of the city, swarming with rioters and criminals--were also placed under the command of Colonel Grant. The ammunition supplied to the troops included no blank cartridges. The officers were resolute and the men perfectly ready to obey orders; and there would

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<sup>8</sup> It was stated, at the time, that General Sedgwick was asked to detail his "best brigade," and that he at once designated the Vermont brigade.

have been no trifling about the business, if they had been called on to face a mob. The law-abiding people of the metropolis slept more soundly after the arrival of the troops; and the city was never more quiet, since its first settlement, than during the draft which soon followed.

In the first week of September, the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth regiments were sent respectively to Poughkeepsie, Newark and Kingston, N. Y., where drafts were ordered, and took place, during their stay in those cities. A week later they returned to New York, whence the regiments went by rail and transports, on successive days, to Alexandria, where the brigade was collected on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The respect of the New York mob for the uniform and the authority of the United States was noticeably strengthened by this little campaign in the north. About the time of the departure of the troops an order was issued by General Canby, complimenting them in high terms for their good behavior; and the *New York World* said of them: "The admirable conduct of the soldiers and officers of the 'army of occupation' in this city has been remarked by all classes of our citizens. The brawls, drunkenness and scenes of violence, which are so common in European cities where large bodies of troops are quartered, we are happily free from. Nothing could be better than the behavior of the troops now in New York. If the soldiers now in this city are a fair sample of our armies, we can safely claim having the best, in a moral sense, as well as the bravest and most patient troops on earth." On the other hand the troops were well treated by the people of New York and the other cities where they were stationed; and the brief return to civilization, the scenes and pleasures of the city, and the opportunities to see friends, hundreds of whom sent down from Vermont to visit the soldiers, made this episode in their army life as agreeable as it was unwonted. Though the opportunities for desertion were almost unlimited, the desertions from the Ver-

mont regiments were very few during their northern vacation.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, in a pouring rain, the brigade started from Alexandria once more, for the front the soldiers taking their overcoats which had been stored in that city since the previous spring. The brigade guarded on the march an army train of 150 mule teams and 1,000 beef cattle, for the supply of the army; and as cattle move slowly the march was made at a moderate speed. It was over the old route, via Fairfax Court House, Centreville, and the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, which 10,000 of the Eleventh Corps were at this time guarding against less than 1,000 guerillas.

Crossing the Rappahannock below the railroad bridge, on the 22d, the brigade marched next day to Culpeper Court House, around which the Army of the Potomac was lying. The march past the camps of the various corps from Brandy Station to Culpeper was quite an ovation for the Vermont boys, the troops lining the roadside and cheering them heartily. Three miles south of the village of Culpeper, the brigade passed the camp of the Tenth Vermont, now part of the Third Corps, and halted there to exchange salutations. Two miles more brought it to the camp of the Sixth Corps. Here it was met by a cavalcade of corps, division and brigade staff officers; and passing on to the camp of Howe's division, General Neill's brigade was found drawn up to receive the Vermonters, who were greeted with music and military salutes, as well as the less formal welcomes of their old comrades. The brigade had made its mark in the army, and its return was a welcome event. And though camp life was quite a different thing from their "white-glove service" in New York, the men had had about enough of the latter, and were on the whole glad to be back again at the front.

About this time some 600 recruits, chiefly drafted men and substitutes, arrived, and were distributed among the

Second, Third and Fourth regiments, and squad-drills were plenty.

During the first week of October, after two weeks of undisturbed quiet, the Sixth Corps was ordered forward to relieve the Second Corps, on the line between Cedar Run Mountain and Robinson River--a small affluent of the Rapidan. The corps was here to picket a line two miles long, from Rapidan Station to the right. Across the stream, a few rods away, was the picket line of the enemy. From the signal station on the summit of the mountain near by, the eye ranged over one of the finest views in Virginia, embracing the scene of the battle between Banks and Stonewall Jackson a year before. The long lines of fresh red earth, winding with the river, showed that Lee had strongly intrenched his position, and the course of the Rapidan could be followed for 20 miles by the smoke of his camps. The corps marched with eight days' rations, and with no little growling on the part of the men that they should be "made pack-mules to carry wormy bread," and the recruits especially found the fourteen miles' march a trying one. The service on the line--though requiring especial vigilance, was amicable as between the opposing pickets, and daily exchanges of newspapers, instead of bullets, took place between them.

The eight days' rations had not been exhausted, when a movement on the part of General Lee, occasioned a sudden withdrawal of the corps. Chafing under his reverse at Gettysburg, and aware that two corps of the Army of the Potomac had been detached and sent to Tennessee, Lee put his army in motion, past General Meade's right, hoping to place himself across the latter's communications with Washington, and force a general engagement, on ground of his own selection. Meade's first plan, when he discovered the movement, was to attack Lee while crossing the Rappahannock; but his purpose was defeated by erroneous information and want of information, and the campaign became a

series of flank movements for position and finally a race of the two armies for the heights of Centreville. In the course of these operations there was plenty of skirmishing, and several sharp cavalry fights; and an engagement of the Second Corps with A. P. Hill's division took place at Bristoe's Station, in which Warren took 450 prisoners and five guns, with slight Union loss. The Army of the Potomac was the first to reach and occupy Centreville, and no general engagement took place. In this campaign the Vermont brigade left its camp fires burning below Cedar Mountain an hour before midnight on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and stacked arms on Centreville Heights at three o'clock P. M., on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The movements of the brigade and the corps during that time were briefly as follows: In the night of the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Sixth Corps crossed the Rappahannock at Rappahannock Station. On the 12<sup>th</sup> it re-crossed the river--the Vermont brigade leading and taking position on the right bank to cover the re-crossing of the Fifth and Sixth Corps--and advanced to Brandy Station, expecting to give battle to Lee at Culpeper Court House; but he was not there. The next night the corps camped two miles south of Bristoe's, twenty-five miles as the crow flies north of where it lay the night before, having marched thirty miles between midnight on the 12<sup>th</sup> and nine P. M. of the 13<sup>th</sup>, with two halts of several hours each at Rappahannock Station and Warrenton Junction. The brigade camped that night, with the corps, between Centreville and Chantilly, the men tired and footsore, but plucky and prepared for the battle, of which the sound of Warren's fight at the rear that afternoon was taken to be the prelude. At daybreak next morning the troops stood to arms, and in the afternoon a skirmish between part of the Second Corps and a cavalry force with artillery, at Blackburn's Ford, aroused momentary expectation of an order into battle. But Lee knew better than to fight on ground so favorable to his antagonist; and after once more destroying a good part of the railroad

between Bull Run and Warrenton, he retired behind the Rappahannock. The only loss sustained by the Sixth Corps in this movement, was from the guerrillas which infested the region.<sup>9</sup>

The Sixth Corps started back to the south on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Howe's division moving over the old Bull Run battlefield to Gainesville, where, about five o'clock P. M. on the 9<sup>th</sup>, it met Custer's brigade, of Kilpatrick's cavalry division, which an hour or two before had been attacked on flank, front and rear by Stuart and Fitzhugh Lee, at Buckland's Mills, and driven back in serious disorder. Lee was pressing on Custer's rear, and the sight of a Union infantry column was not an unwelcome one to the latter. Letting Custer's men, among whom were the First Vermont cavalry, pass through their liens, the infantry made hasty preparations to received the pursuers. A skirmish line consisting of the Sixth Vermont and Seventh Maine was thrown forward, and had barely deployed when the Confederate troopers came up in hot pursuit of a light battery, which they would probably have captured in the next five minutes. As they emerged from a piece of woods, and dashed into the open in front of the Union skirmishers, they were received with a volley and a cheer, and their charge ended suddenly. They returned the fire; but found minie balls too plenty about their ears, and soon disappeared in the direction from which they came. Next morning the brigade, leading the advance of Howe's division, came again upon the Confederate cavalry, who retired before them. At Buckland's Mills they passed the scene of the running cavalry fight of the day before, marked by the bodies of several Union cavalrymen lying beside the road, stripped of all but their underclothing. The march ended at Warrenton,

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<sup>9</sup> Among the captures made by the guerrillas were those of Captain Galt, A. Q. M., and Lieutenant E. O. Cole of the Second Vermont, acting provost marshal on General Howe's staff. Lieutenant Cole, however, after being disarmed, made his escape from his captors.



where General Meade made his headquarters, and where the army remained nearly three weeks, while the railroad was being rebuilt, and the army provisioned. "This campaign of manœuvres," says Swinton, "added no laurels to either army; yet it was none the less attended with much toil and suffering--sleepless nights and severe marches, and manifold trying exposures. But this is a part of the history of the army, of which those who did not bear the heat and burden of the day, can never know much."

During the stay at Warrenton, the brigade was reviewed by Colonel Grant, the division by General Howe, and the corps by General Sedgwick. The weather, which had been cold, grew milder in the first week in November, and, as usual, by the time the men had built huts and made their quarters comfortable, the order: "Reveille at half past four, move at daylight!" came, and the Fifth and Sixth Corps, under command of General Sedgwick, started; November 7<sup>th</sup>, for the Rappahannock, along which lay the army of Northern Virginia. It was mainly south of the river, Lee's headquarters being at Brandy Station, but he was holding also a position on the left bank at Rappahannock Station.

#### BATTLE OF RAPPAHANNOCK STATION.

General Meade now proposed to move the Army of the Potomac rapidly to the heights of Fredericksburg; but his project was disapproved by General Halleck, and as the only other practicable offensive operation open to him, he decided to make a demonstration against Lee, whose men were building huts and evidently expecting to go into winter quarters where they were, and at least force him farther south. His plan, which was successfully carried out, was to throw two columns across the river. One, of three corps, under General French, was to cross at Kelley's Ford; the other of two corps, under Sedgwick, was to force the crossing at Rappa-

hannock Station. The two were then to unite and push on to Brandy Station. French accomplished the crossing at Kelley's Ford without much difficulty, taking 400 prisoners. Sedgwick had a more formidable task at Rappahannock Station. At that point, Early's division, so often opposed to the Sixth Corps, occupied the southern bank, with Hays's brigade in the earthworks on the north bank, originally built by the Army of the Potomac, which had been reconstructed and turned into a strong *tete de pont*, guarding a ponton bridge, by which communication was maintained between the opposite banks. A dam below the works made the river unfordable. The position was strong naturally, the redoubts and rifle pits elaborate and well provided with artillery, backed by batteries of heavy guns on the south bank. Hays was reinforced, when Sedgwick's advance came in sight, by Hoke's brigade.

Marching from Warrenton in the early morning, the Sixth Corps deployed in front of and a mile away from the Confederate works at Rappahannock Station, at noon. The men stacked arms and sat down to eat their dinners, while the enemy's cavalry pickets, within pistol shot, looked on, not a shot being fired from either side. At one o'clock the corps was formed for the assault; the first division on the left, under General Russell--General Wright its commander being in command of the corps, while Sedgwick commanded the wing, consisting of the Fifth and Sixth Corps. Howe's division was on the right; the Third division General Terry, was in reserve. The first and second divisions were each in two lines, and the Vermont brigade had the right of the second line, curving round toward the river. A portion of the Fifth Vermont was thrown out in front as skirmishers. At two o'clock the corps advanced. The Confederate videttes whirled and fled; the enemy's skirmish line was encountered and driven in, and the lines advanced to some higher ground in front. Here they came within range

of the enemy's artillery and were halted while the Union batteries came to the front, and for three hours a heavy artillery duel was kept up. While this were in progress the Vermont brigade lay behind the crest from which the Union batteries were firing. The enemy's shot and shell flew thickly over their lines, and several casualties occurred, one man of the Fourth losing a leg by a shell; but the men were kept close to the ground, and the stretchers were rarely called for. The lines of the corps were gradually advanced; but nothing decisive took place till dusk, when six regiments of the first division of the Sixth Corps, led by General Russell in person, gallantly stormed the works, taking four guns, 103 commissioned officers, 1,200 enlisted men, 1,225 stand of small arms and seven Confederate battle flags. Early lost 1,700 men killed, wounded and missing, out of 2,000 men of Hoke's and Hays's brigades in the works. The loss of Russell's division was 336 killed and wounded and two missing. The Sixth Maine suffered especially, losing 16 out of 24 officers, killed and wounded.

Howe's division was ready to co-operate; but was not needed, and the men had only to echo the final shout of victory, which rang around the lines in the darkness. It was something to be present at, and in support of, so brilliant an exploit.

Early burned his end of his bridge that night, and the next day Sedgwick threw a ponton bridge across and advanced to Brandy Station, Lee retiring beyond the Rapidan. This was the *seventh* time the Vermont brigade had crossed the Rappahannock, in advance or in retreat.

The camp of the Sixth Corps at Brandy Station was on the land of John Minor Botts, who used to assert that the Army of the Potomac burned 600 miles of rails belonging to him, in its first week at Brandy Station. It is true that his fences and forests disappeared rapidly, but they were not all taken by the Union soldiers. It is also true that the chief

quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac paid him a good deal of money for firewood for the army. The soldiers had now two weeks or more of comparative quiet, during which the Sixth Corps was reviewed by General Sedgwick, accompanied by some English officers, and the division was paraded to witness the punishment of two deserters by branding. But one other movement of any consequence took place before the army went into winter quarters. This was the short and unsuccessful campaign of Mine Run.

Mine Run is a muddy stream running through a deep and marshy valley at right angles to the Rapidan, into which it empties ten miles south of Brandy Station. The right of General Lee's line rested along the left bank of this stream and valley, which afforded a good natural protection. This was strengthened by a line of intrenchments, extending back several miles from the Rapidan. This line was held by Ewell's corps. Realizing that the country was impatient of the inaction of the army, and desiring to strike an effective blow at his antagonist before the winter set in, General Meade decided to throw his army in three columns across the Rapidan below the mouth of Mine Run, turn the right of Ewell's position, and fall upon him from the rear. The movement was to begin at daylight on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the Third Corps, which was nearest the river, moving first and the Sixth following. The Sixth Corps was moving at the hour, but found, on reaching the camp of the Third Corps, that that corps had not stirred, most of its men being in fact still asleep in their quarters. The troops of the Sixth Corps accordingly had to stand in the mud for hours, waiting for the Third to get in motion and get out of the way. Further delays occurred because the two ponton trains each proved to lack a boat of enough to span the river, and instead of being at Robertson's Tavern, in the rear of Lee's right, before nightfall, the Third Corps did not begin to cross the Rapidan till after dark, and the Sixth Corps did not cross till midnight. The latter corps

moved on till on o'clock in the morning and then halted for the rest of the night. The night was cold, the ground wet, and the sleep of the soldiers brief and restless. In three hours they were aroused, and the slow and interrupted march was again resumed. Soon the scattered shots of skirmishers, and an occasional discharge of field artillery, showed that the enemy was awake, and the advance resisted. Had, however, the commander of the Third Corps, General French--to whose sluggishness and irresolution the failure of the campaign must be attributed--even now showed an enterprise or energy, the movement might have been successful. Coming, however, to a fork in the roads, General French halted for hours, because he did not know which road to take, though had he moved on by either he would have reached Robertson's Tavern at eleven o'clock, at which hour the Second Corps reached that point by a much longer route, and the two corps, supported by the Sixth, which crowded on the heels of the Third, could at least have cut off and destroyed Ewell's corps. But French waited till he was confronted by a division of Ewell's corps, and allowed himself to be held in check all the rest of the day by a force not a third as large as his own. In the course of the afternoon, he received a peremptory order from General Meade to push on, and prepared to force his way; but was himself attacked while taking position. He repulsed this and a succeeding attack, losing nearly 1,000 men, and did no more. Howe's division was sent forward by General Sedgwick to assist French during the latter part of the engagement, and was under fire from shells coming over the lines fighting in front, but was not engaged.

That night Lee drew back his outlying forces and concentrated his army behind Mine Run, where he extended and strengthened his earthworks, placed abatis of felled pines in front, and made his position exceedingly secure. Another day--Sunday, November 29<sup>th</sup>--a cold and rainy day, was consumed by the Army of the Potomac in moving up to and

reconnoitring Lee's position. That night orders were issued by General Meade for a general assault the next morning. In this, the Sixth Corps was to attack from the right, and at one o'clock in the morning the corps moved two miles to the right and front, under cover of the darkness, to a position on the left of Ewell's line. The night was stormy and bitter cold; the men were not allowed to light fires, and could keep their limbs from stiffening only by leaping and constant motion. Howe's division was in the front line, with the Second Vermont thrown out as skirmishers, and was to lead in the assault. Those who passed the hospital tents, and saw the operating tables set, water-pails filled, and amputating knives ready for the surgeon's grasp, understood that bloody business was in hand. All, officers and men, knew that the dawn would bring desperate work General Howe thus described the feeling of his troops: "We placed the men where we could look right into the enemy's camp, which was but a little distance from us. There seemed to be entire confidence throughout my division, that it was an easy as well as a sure thing to carry the enemy's left. General Neill said: 'I believe I can carry that with my brigade.' Another brigade commander in my division expressed this opinion: 'I believe there is one regiment in the Vermont brigade that can take the key of that position--which was an opening that commanded the position.' They were under some excitement, and were pretty sanguine. The men were fired up and all seemed eager for the order to attack."<sup>10</sup> Daylight came and hours wore away; but the order to attack did not come. At last, at eight o'clock, the artillery opened, the men fell into line and shouldered muskets with beating hearts, waiting the word forward!' when suddenly an aid dashed up to General

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<sup>10</sup> Testimony of General Howe before the Committee on the Conduct of the War. Vol. I, 1865, p. 435.

Howe with an order countermanding the attack. The morning light had disclosed to General Warren, who was to open the assault on the extreme left, a very different condition of things from that of the evening before. Lee had so strengthened his lines during the night, that the attempt to storm them had become a forlorn hope. Warren saw that his men understood it, as, stern and silent, they pinned on their breasts slips of paper on which each had written his name, that his grave might not be marked "unknown,"--and he assumed the responsibility of postponing the attempt. His judgment that it would be fruitless was confirmed by General Meade after a personal view of the ground; and as the carrying of Lee's right was essential to the general plan, the attack was everywhere suspended. It remained suspended. Nothing could be gained by fresh manœuvring. The weather had become so severe that some of the pickets perished on their posts with cold. The six days' rations brought by the men, were about exhausted. General Meade abandoned the effort, and during the night of December 1<sup>st</sup> withdrew his army to the north side of the Rapidan. The Sixth Corps retired by Germanna Ford, leaving the Third Vermont, Seventy-seventh New York and a battery to guard the ford, while the rest of the army continued its march to its former camps. The brigades of Howe's division halted in the woods, for the night of the 2d, eight or ten miles from the Ford, where a wagon train met them with bread and fresh meat, which was right grateful to men who had been marching for twenty-four hours on coffee. Resuming their march next morning, they marched past Brandy Station and filed into their old camps. The eight days since they left them had been among the roughest in their experience, and there was little mourning over the end of active campaigning for the winter.

The winter of 1863-4 at Brandy Station, was perhaps the most cheerful one passed by the First Vermont brigade.

The weather was generally fine. The health of the troops was good, the sick lists averaging only about seventy to a regiment. The men were in huts of poles or slabs, plastered with Virginia clay and roofed with canvass. The officers had made their quarters not only comfortable but often almost luxurious. Many wives of officers graced the camps with their presence. The picket duty was light and drills not severe. Lyceums and debating societies were organized in several of the regiments. Religious services were well attended, and a good deal of religious interest prevailed among the troops. In December, the question of whether to re-enlist or not to re-enlist was presented by the government's offer of bounties and furloughs to re-enlisting veterans, and formed a steady subject of discussion among the men. The result was that one thousand and thirty men of the brigade, who had served two years or more, re-enlisted for three years more or for the war. No further movement of the Sixth Corps took place during the winter, with a single exception. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, the corps was sent to Madison Court House, twenty-three miles to the southwest, to support Custer's cavalry division, which made a demonstration further south to Charlottesville. The object of the movement was to draw troops away from Richmond, while General Kilpatrick made his celebrated raid against the confederate capital, which would have made him forever famous, if his heart had not failed him after he was fairly within the defences of the city.<sup>11</sup> The Vermont brigade accompanied the corps on this expedition, which occupied five days, and was wholly uneventful. The march out was made in two days. A winter storm of rain and snow made the mud deep, but the return march was made between sunrise and sunset.

A visit to the camps from Governor Smith, and brigade

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<sup>11</sup> "The only force opposed to General Kilpatrick was 500 men with six field guns, and had he made a determined charge he would have taken Richmond."--General A. A. Humphreys.



review before Mr. Edmunds, Hon. F. E. Woodbridge, and one or two other prominent Vermonters, in a drenching rain, were among the incidents of this period. As the winter wore on, deserters from Lee's army came in, in increasing numbers, with uniform accounts of scanty rations and general destitution in the Confederate camps. As the spring opened the work of reorganization and preparation, in the Army of the Potomac, for one of the mightiest campaigns in human history, became active. The antagonist armies which had wrestled for nearly three years, were soon to grapple again in the bloodiest struggle of the war. Few of the Vermonters of the First brigade, however, foreboded that it was to bring death or wounds to three out of every five of their number.