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THE BATTLE OF REAMS' STATION

By:

Edwin C. Bearss,
Research Historian

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PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

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THE BATTLE OF REAMS' STATION

Chapter I

Hancock's Troops Occupy Reams' Station—Lee Prepares to Strike

Major General Winfield S. Hancock, accompanied by the First and Second Divisions of the II Corps, left this Deep Bottom encampment shortly after dark on August 20, 1864. The troops took the road to Jones' Neck, Major General John Gibbon's Second Division in the lead. Hancock's blueclads commenced crossing the pontoon bridges at 7 p.m.—the infantry on the upper bridge, Brigadier General David McM. Gregg's cavalry on the lower. General Hancock and most of his staff remained on the north side of the James until the last of the soldiers had crossed. Rain beat down throughout the night, and the corps pressed on over roads turned into ribbons of mud. Hancock recalled the night's march as "one of the most fatiguing and difficult performed by the troops during the campaign." Day was starting to break, when the exhausted corps halted and went into camp near the "Deserted House," east of Petersburg. ¹

The soldiers were soon turned to preparing breakfast. Hardly had the bluecoats finished eating, before Hancock received orders to put his corps into position near the Strong house.

By 11:30 on August 21, the officers had formed and mustered their units. Hancock gave the word and the column moved out. Marching via the Jerusalem plank and farm roads, the two divisions reached the Strong house early in the afternoon. Short as was the distance, hundreds dropped out along the roadside, overcome by the heat and the exhausting efforts of the previous ten days, and particularly of the night before.

Within a short time, Hancock received further orders; the corps was to march to Gurley's house and take position in support of Major General Gouverneur K. Warren's V Corps, which had secured a stranglehold on the Weldon Railroad at Globe Tavern. Hancock's bone-weary troops fell into ranks once again, and the mud-spattered column started for Gurley's. Upon reaching Gurley's, the two divisions were allowed to camp. ²

Because of the terrible Virginia mud, Major General George G. Meade had decided that for the time being it would be unwise for Hancock to take his artillery and trains west of the Jerusalem plank road. ³ Hancock had

accordingly issued orders that the only wagons which were to accompany his column to Gurley's would be those hauling entrenching tools. The quartermaster, commissary, and ordnance people were to keep the rations, ammunition, and forage packed and be ready to forward these items when called upon. ⁴ The artillery brigade in view of Hancock's orders camped near Jones' house, a short distance west of the plank road. ⁵

General Meade had left his headquarters about noon to visit the scene of the fighting at Globe Tavern. While en route to the Weldon Railroad, Meade passed Hancock's divisions. At 2:30 p.m. Meade telegraphed Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, "As soon as I get on the field and Hancock is up I will assume the offensive--before if practicable." Meade had been distressed to see how "weary" Hancock's troops were. As he informed General Grant, they "will not be fit for much to-day and will not much more than get into position." ⁶

After examining Warren's position astride the Weldon Railroad, Meade at 5:25 wired Grant, "Hancock's men are so exhausted with their long march that nothing can be expected of them this afternoon." Having concentrated two divisions of Hancock's II Corps at Gurley's, Meade had shifted Major General John G. Parke's IX Corps to the right. At the moment, Parke's soldiers were extending to the east to link up with Brigadier General Gershom Mott's division of the II Corps at Strong's house. ⁷

By 9:20 p.m. Meade was back at his headquarters. Reporting to Grant, Meade announced that he had "found it impracticable to arrange any offensive movement for to-morrow." While Warren was confident of holding his grip on the Weldon Railroad, he had advised Meade against attacking. Hancock's men at the same time were fagged out by their forced march from Deep Bottom. Nearly one-third of the troops had straggled. ⁸

Grant at 10 o'clock acknowledged Meade's latest dispatch. The commanding general assured Meade that he didn't expect any offensive operations on the 22d, unless Major General Benjamin Butler's Army of the James scored a success in its projected attack between the Appomattox and Eaks-House Creek. If Warren's V Corps could retain its grip on the Weldon Railroad, Grant observed, it would be "a great advantage."

Grant inquired, "Has much of the railroad been destroyed?" After Hancock's men had rested, Grant felt that it would be wise to support the cavalry with a division of infantry and wreck as much of the Weldon Railroad as possible. 9

At 11 o'clock Meade replied that he would be prepared to act on the 22d "according to developments." During the day, the pioneers had been burning ties and twisting rails, but as yet no reports of their progress had reached his headquarters. If necessary, Meade promised to reinforce with infantry the force of cavalry covering the pioneers. 10

Chief of Staff Andrew A. Humphreys before retiring for the night telegraphed Hancock and Warren to alert them that "circumstances may render it necessary to assume the offensive to-morrow." Consequently, Meade wanted the two corps commanders to have their men turned out and under arms at an early hour. 11

* * *

Grant on the morning of August 22 notified Meade that Butler's attack north of the Appomattox had been cancelled. As to the Weldon Railroad, Grant wanted Warren to maintain his hold at Globe Tavern, while the tracks were being ripped up as far to the south as possible. Grant assured Meade that he didn't plan to assail the Confederates behind their fortifications, unless General Robert E. Lee pulled a large number of troops out of the Petersburg defenses. There was therefore no need for Warren to shift his corps, unless he could gain a better position by doing so. In case the Rebels resumed their attacks on Warren's troops during the next 48 hours, Grant had directed Butler to hold the X Corps ready to assault the Confederate line north of the Appomattox. 12

General Meade paid a second visit to Warren's command post at Globe Tavern on the morning of the 22d. While en route from army headquarters to the Weldon Railroad, Meade had been delighted to see that soldiers of the IX Corps were rapidly entrenching the line from the railroad to Strong's house. Meade was elated to learn from Warren that the Confederates had disappeared from the V Corps' left flank, west of the railroad.

Touring the front with Warren, Meade was impressed. He was satisfied that the V Corps was "occupying the most favorable point in case a permanent lodgment on the railroad" was determined upon. Meade told Warren to hold his ground, and push forward skirmishers to feel the Rebels' position. 13

Hancock's troops at daybreak had fallen out under arms. When no Confederate attack came, the men were organized into fatigue parties and put to work repairing roads. When Meade had stopped at Gurley's house, while en route to see Warren, he had told Hancock to send one of his divisions "to assist in destroying the railroad and covering the working party." Reports reaching Meade's headquarters had indicated that many of the pioneers charged with wrecking the railroad had been alarmed at the stepped up activities of the Rebel cavalry and had deserted their work. Hancock's other division for the time being would be held in reserve at Gurley's. 14

Early in the afternoon, Warren's scouts reported that as they pushed northward, they had established contact with Confederate outposts about one mile north of Globe Tavern. This was about 1,300 yards south of the Petersburg fortifications. The V Corps skirmishers, however, had been unable to pinpoint any Confederate troop concentrations, notwithstanding the reports that Warren had been receiving from personnel in the signal towers telling that the Southerners were massing troops about the "lead-works."

When Meade relayed this news to Grant's headquarters, he reported that the pioneers worked very indifferently at tearing up the railroad. 15

At the time that General Meade told Hancock to send a division to assist in wreaking havoc on the Weldon Railroad, the commander of his First Division, Brigadier General Francis C. Barlow, was sick. With Barlow absent, the ranking brigade commander, Brigadier General Nelson A. Miles, led the division. Chief of Staff Charles H. Morgan at 12 o'clock called at Miles' command post and told him "to move the division to a point on the Weldon railroad near the Perkin's house, to the left of the position occupied by the Fifth Corps, and to destroy the railroad, keeping half...[his] force at work, the remainder being held in reserve and covering the working party." One of Gregg's cavalry regiments, the 13th Pennsylvania, would report to Miles and be assigned the task of screening the infantry's left flank. 16

At a word from Miles, the division was formed in column of fours. Before giving the word to move out, Miles sent a staff officer to draw from the V Corps implements needed to tear up the track. According to the latest information, the 200 men sent by the Quartermaster's Department to do this work had all returned to City Point. 17

Miles' troops were cheered and jeered by their comrades as they left Gurley's. The division halted in the vicinity of the Perkins' house, where Miles and his brigade commanders deployed their troops into line of battle east of, and parallel to the Weldon Railroad. Skirmishers were advanced well to the west of the tracks, and the remainder of the Yanks were turned to wrecking the railroad. Teams of burley soldiers were put to work tearing loose rails; others collected and piled the ties in heaps. The torch was applied to the ties. As soon as they were blazing fiercely, several men laid the rails across the ties. After the middle of the rail had been heated to a cherry red, soldiers seized the ends and wrapped them around trees. If the rails were to be used again, they would have to be sent to a rolling mill.

By nightfall, Miles' division had destroyed two miles of track. Miles now recalled his brigades. Except for the units assigned to outpost duty, the soldiers bivouacked near Perkins' house. 18

* * *

Chief of Staff Humphreys early on August 22 had advised Cavalry General Gregg that the Confederates had retired from Warren's front. Meade wanted Gregg to see that the country west of the railroad was thoroughly reconnoitered. If the information gleaned from Rebel prisoners were true, Humphreys warned Gregg, a formidable Rebel mounted force, Major General William H. F. "Rocney" Lee's division and Brigadier General James Dearing's brigade, was operating west of the Weldon Railroad. 19

Meanwhile, Colonel Samuel P. Spear, whose brigade had been co-operating with the V Corps since August 18, was preparing to report back to Brigadier General August V. Kautz. Preparatory to being relieved by Gregg's horsemen, Spear had sent a staff officer to tell the quartermaster and commissary people not to send any more rations and forage for his command to the

Weldon Railroad. As soon as Gregg showed up, Spear would recall his pickets and start for the Blackwater. 20

Pending Gregg's arrival, Spear led a reconnaissance to the area where the Confederate right had rested the previous evening. Spear found the Rebels. Notifying Warren of this situation, Spear theorized that if the grayclads had disappeared from the Vaughan road as reported by the V Corps scouts, then the foe had either "swung around or divided." The Reb cavalry, Spear found, were becoming very cautious and were constantly shifting their picket posts.

At the time (10 a.m.) that Spear addressed this note to Warren's headquarters, two of Gregg's regiments had arrived and were relieving his outposts. As soon as all his troopers had reported, Spear proceeded to Globe Tavern. There, he found a number of senior officers—Meade, Humphreys, Warren, and Parke. Meade, after listening to Spear's report of the situation in the Reams' Station sector, determined to hold his brigade for several more days. Instead of rejoining Kautz, Spear was to "report to General Gregg for duty." 21

The addition of Spear's command gave Gregg a mounted striking force of three brigades. Gregg determined to employ Colonels William Stedman's and Charles H. Smith's brigades to picket the expanse of countryside from the Jerusalem plank road on the east to the left flank of the V Corps on the west. Spear's troopers were sent on a forced reconnaissance west of the railroad with instructions to "proceed and attack Lee's cavalry." 22

Spear's column marched as directed, taking a country road. At Wyatt's, the Federals encountered several hundred Confederates. The bluecoats attacked the Johnnies. A sharp three-quarters of an hour clash ensued. Overpowered, the grayclads fell back cross-country toward Petersburg. Spear's cheering troopers followed until stopped by a bridge the butternuts had destroyed. Before rejoining Gregg on the railroad, Spear was told by several Negroes that the Confederate infantry had retired into the Petersburg defenses on the night of the 21st via the Squirrel Level road. 23

Late in the afternoon, Chief of Staff Humphreys notified Gregg that if the Confederates still held Reams' Station, they should be driven out. If need be, Gregg was authorized to call on General Miles for assistance. The railroad wrecking operation would be continued for another "day or two."

Accompanied by the 1st Maine Cavalry, General Gregg proceeded to find out if there were any Rebels at Reams' Station. Entering Reams' Station, the bluecoats found no greyclads. Questioning several of the inhabitants, Gregg was told that a Rebel cavalry brigade (Colonel J. Lucius Davis') was camped behind Rowanty Creek, three miles away. 24

* * *

General Meade on the morning of August 22 got in touch with Grant. He wanted Grant's opinion on how far Miles' division "should go down the railroad destroying it." To assist Grant in making his decision, Meade reported that the division in question was "small, less than 4,000 effectives." A cavalry brigade of about 1,000 troopers had been attached to Miles' division.

From the stories told by Confederate deserters, Meade's staff had reason to believe that the Rebels had sent infantry to defend the Weldon Railroad on the night of the 21st. In addition, Union intelligence officers knew that "two divisions" of Confederate cavalry were in the area, besides the troops rushed up from North Carolina to oppose Miles' advance. Meade was of the opinion that Miles ought not go beyond Rowanty Creek.

To make matters worse, Miles, because of muddy roads, hadn't taken his artillery or his trains with him. If Warren were satisfied that his position at Globe Tavern was secure, Gibbon's division and a second brigade of cavalry could reinforce Miles. But, Meade warned, "this is extending very far and leaves no means of repairing any casualties should the enemy, by a successful movement, penetrate our line at any point." 25

Not having received a reply to his dispatch to Grant, Meade at noon sent another. Since his last, Meade reported, Warren had assured him that he had so strengthened his position at Globe Tavern that he felt "secure against any attack without the aid of the Second Corps."

In determining future movements of the II Corps, Grant would have to take into consideration the condition of the roads on the Southside. Except for the principal roads, all the others were "impassable for artillery and wagons." The rain which had beaten down on the evening of the 22d would, Meade feared, keep them so for some days, unless there was an improvement

in the weather—"a warm sun and drying winds." The question of supplying a large detached force had thus become very important. With pack mules, the Quartermaster's Department could keep supplies moving to the troops, provided they weren't too far removed from the trains. 26

At 2:15 o'clock Grant wired Meade that "it would be imprudent to send General Miles with his small force beyond the support of the main army to destroy" the Weldon Railroad. If the Federals could just hold their ground till the roads dried, Grant would send Major General Edward O. C. Ord with the XVIII Corps and cavalry to wreak havoc on the railroad as far south as Hicksford. 27

Chief of Staff Humphreys at 9:50 a.m. had telegraphed General Hancock that Miles' division might be required to remain at its work of destroying the Weldon Railroad longer than had been originally anticipated. Consequently, arrangements would have to be made to see that additional supplies were forwarded to Miles' soldiers. Meade's headquarters, not Hancock's, would determine when the division would be recalled. Miles, upon reaching Reams' Station, was to leave a force to hold that point, but under no circumstances were his troops to go beyond Rowanty Creek. 28

Hancock saw that this dispatch was forwarded to General Miles for his guidance. 29

Miles put his soldiers back to work early on the 23d tearing up the railroad. During the morning, Colonel Spear reported as directed to Miles' Perkins house command post. Miles told Spear to take his two regiments and make a forced reconnaissance down Vaughan road to Stony Creek. Spear's troopers were to return via the railroad. While executing this sweep, Spear was "to ascertain the strength and location of the enemy's picket-line, their reserves, &c." As soon as Spear had reported, Miles released the 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry to allow it to rejoin Gregg's division. 30

By 11 a.m. Miles' troops had destroyed the railroad to within one mile of Reams' Station. At that hour General Barlow returned from the hospital and resumed charge of the division. As soon as Barlow had taken over, Miles took command of his old unit, the 1st Brigade.

Upon questioning Miles, Barlow was disturbed to learn that Reams' Station hadn't been occupied. Barlow told Miles to rush a force to the station. Within a few moments, Miles had organized a special task force to occupy Reams' Station

led by Colonel James C. Lynch.

Placing himself at the head of the 81st and 183d Pennsylvania, Lynch started southward down the Halifax road. No opposition was encountered as the Federals moved into the village on the double quick. Miles reached Reams' Station with the rest of his brigade at 1 o'clock. After stacking arms near the abandoned rifle-pits, Miles turned his troops to tearing up and twisting the track north and south of the station. 31

The Consolidated Brigade had fallen out at an early hour. Colonel Levin Crandell led his troops down the railroad. Near Church road, a halt was called; the soldiers stacked arms and began tearing up track. After the rails were wrenched loose from the ties, they were heated, and twisted. Pickets took position west of the road to protect the working parties against dashes by Rebel cavalry. 32

Most of the troops of the 4th Brigade remained on outpost duty till early in the afternoon. At 2 p.m. Lieutenant Colonel K. Oscar Broady assembled his troops and marched them to within a mile of Reams' Station. Broady's troops as they tramped southward passed Crandell's bluecoats. Here, Broady's troops discovered a section of track still in operating order. A halt was called, while fatigue parties were organized and put to work wrecking the railroad. 33

* * *

General Gregg at 8:30 a.m. notified Chief of Staff Humphreys that Miles was working his way down the Weldon Railroad toward Reams' Station. The cavalry leader wanted to know if he ought to send additional units to co-operate with Miles, or should he keep his troopers concentrated to patrol the ever increasing gap between the left of the V Corps at Globe Tavern and Miles' division. Currently, Gregg reported, he had one brigade posted at Crowder's, a mile north of Reams' Station, where the road to Monk's Neck Bridge and Dinwiddie Courthouse veered off to the southwest. Moreover, a number of his mounted units were becoming embarrassed because of a shortage of forage. 34

A "change of circumstances," Humphreys replied, made it "desirable that a brigade of cavalry" should accompany Miles' division. Meade had

suggested to Humphreys that Gregg detail Spear's troopers to assist with the destruction of the railroad. The cavalry leader was to see that this was done. Gregg was to employ the remainder of his troopers to cover the army's left. The animals of the cavalry division's supply train would have to be employed to pack forage from the depots to the front. 35

At 11 o'clock Meade determined to alter slightly Gregg's mission. The cavalryman was to concentrate his troopers at Reams' Station, and picket from there to Warren's left. In case it was decided to send out another infantry division, Gregg was to hold his horsemen ready to cross Rowanty Creek and destroy the railroad. 36

Thirty minutes later, Humphreys notified Hancock that an examination of the ground between Globe Tavern and the Confederate entrenchments had satisfied Meade that Warren's troops could hold their position. Since a farther advance up the railroad toward Petersburg had been vetoed, Meade wanted Hancock to send Gibbon's division to assist the First Division in the destruction of the Weldon Railroad. 37

Humphreys shortly thereafter advised Hancock of the decision to have Gregg concentrate his division at Reams' Station. Consequently, General Barlow wouldn't have to leave any of his troops at the station, as he pushed southward toward Rowanty Creek. 38

Hancock at 12:10 acknowledged the receipt of Humphreys' communications. On doing so, he announced that marching orders had been issued to General Gibbon. 39

It was a number of hours before Gibbon's troops could get their gear squared away and break camp. The sun was setting when Gibbon's troops, with Brigadier General Thomas A. Smyth's brigade in the lead, moved out. Four batteries of artillery (the 12th New York, Batteries A and B, 1st Rhode Island, the 3d New Jersey, and the 10th Massachusetts Battery) accompanied the division. 40

The 3d New Jersey Battery, one of the artillerists recalled, was commanded by Captain Christian Koerner, and was known in the corps as the "Dutch Battery." This battery:

was well officered and well disciplined, and did good and effective service; but the captain was a little peculiar sometimes in his ideas of military duty. One day the batteries of the corps, being in great part in service

in the forts, a vigorous cannonade broke out, putting all the other batteries, and headquarters as well, on the alert for fear of a sudden attack on some point. Aids [sic] and orderlies were hurriedly sent to every battery of the corps to find out the cause of the sudden outburst. The aids [sic] sent to the other batteries found them all aroused and ready for action, but not firing. The one sent to Captain Woerner found him firing case-shot along the line of the enemy's pickets, on a portion of which his position had an enfilading fire. In response to an inquiry as to the cause of his firing, he replied: "Oh, I was firing at those pickets; I likes to make them jump." 41

Because of the terrible condition of the secondary roads, Hancock determined to move the long column to Reams' Station via the Jerusalem plank road. To reach the plank road from Gurley's, the division tramped eastward past Williams' house. Turning into the Jerusalem plank road, the head of the column pushed on about two miles. As it was starting to get dark, General Hancock, who rode with Gibbon, spied a large open field on the right of the road. Hancock called a halt. The division was moved into the field, and the troops were allowed to camp. 42

As the troops were going into bivouac, there was a hard shower. After it was over, large numbers of soldiers collected under trees, "and woke the evening echoes in their attempts to drive away discomfort by singing with unusual unction, 'John Brown's Body,' 'Marching Along,' 'Rally 'round the Flag,' and every other song of kindred character generally familiar." 43

Meanwhile, Colonel Spear and his troopers had moved out to make a reconnaissance down the Vaughan road to Stony Creek. Four miles northwest of Reams' Station, Spear's troopers encountered a Confederate roadblock manned by hard-nosed cavalymen from Brigadier General Matthew C. Butler's division.

Major General Wade Hampton on the previous day had assembled Butler's troopers, who were guarding the roads leading eastward from Richmond. Accompanied by Butler's people, Hampton moved to the Southside. On the morning of the 23d, Butler's troopers relieved Rooney Lee's outposts on the picket line west of the Weldon Railroad. 44

A hard fight ensued between Spear's and Butler's troopers. Satisfied that he was outnumbered, Spear sent an aide galloping off to contact General

Gregg with an appeal for help. Long before the courier returned with word that Gregg could do nothing to help him, Spear had been compelled to fall back, leaving eight dead and wounded on the field. Spear now dispatched a plea to General Miles for reinforcements. When this man returned, he reported that Miles could send only 100 men. 45

After retiring to the railroad, Colonel Spear addressed a note to Warren's headquarters. Besides describing what had occurred and his difficulties with Gregg and Miles, Spear reported that he had encountered the Confederates in force. Spear believed that if he were reinforced by one or two regiments of infantry, he could rout the Johnnies. Could Warren send his hard-pressed fighters any help? Spear inquired. His troopers were exhausted, Spear reported, but they would continue at all hazards to protect the V Corps' left. Spear was satisfied that where Miles and Gregg had gone there were no Rebels. 46

Upon receipt of Spear's dispatch, Warren replied that the cavalrymen were so far out that he would be unable to send any V Corps units. 47

General Hancock was surprised by Spear's communication. When he forwarded it to army headquarters, Hancock pointed out that he had asked General Barlow, if Spear still held the field, to have the Rebel dead counted. In his report of the engagement, Spear had claimed that his men had counted 184 dead Confederates. 48

Meade fairly boiled when he saw a copy of Spear's report. He dashed off a message for Hancock "to call on Generals Gregg and Miles for an explanation of the charge" against them lodged by Colonel Spear. 49 Hancock in turn asked Barlow to submit a report covering the accusations made by Spear against Miles and Gregg. 50

Gregg, in accordance with Hancock's instructions, had marched his division early on the afternoon of August 23 down the railroad from Perkins' to Reams' Station. Shortly after his arrival at the station, Gregg was told by his scouts that Spear's troopers had encountered the Rebs about four miles out on the Dinwiddie stage road. To ascertain if there were any greyclads on the road linking Reams' Station with the Dinwiddie stage road, Gregg ordered out two regiments from Colonel Smith's brigade. Should the Southerners be encountered within "reasonable distance" of Reams' Station, the combat patrol was to be prepared to engage them.

The rest of the division would then be marched to the patrol's support.

Gregg accompanied the two regiments (the 2d and 16th Pennsylvania) as they rode westward. About one and one-half miles from the station, Gregg spotted a large force of dismounted cavalry massed in the open field ahead. Gregg estimated that the Rebel force to his front totalled "more than a division." As Gregg formed his command and dispatched aides to the rear to bring up the rest of his command, the butternuts advanced toward his position. 51

When the shout "Yanks were coming" was raised by Confederate pickets, General Butler called out his division. Troopers of the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion were quickly mustered. Captain F. M. Myers with the first squadron reported to General Butler on the right of the road, while Lieutenant Colonel Elijah White with the remainder of the battalion joined Brigadier General Thomas L. Rosser's brigade on the left.

Butler's first order to Myers was to "find the Yankees in his front and tell him how many there were." Accompanied by five men, Captain Myers moved out. Deploying at the edge of a wood, the butternut scouts rode out into a field "covered with tall sedge grass and small pine bushes." The scouts hadn't advanced very far before they were fired upon. Wheeling their horses about, the Johnnies galloped back to where General Butler was impatiently waiting. Calling to Butler, Myers exclaimed that he had found about 1,200 Yankees on the left of the road.

"Very well," General Butler replied, "I know what's on the right." Calling to Brigadier General John Dunovant, Butler told him to dismount and advance his brigade. As soon as horse-holders had been detailed, the officers formed the South Carolina Brigade into line of battle. One of the men recalled, "this wooden-legged General [Butler] led them in a furious attack upon the enemy, galloping along full fifty yards in front of his line, and exposed to the fire of both friends and foes."

Gregg's combat patrol retired in the face of the South Carolinians' slashing onslaught. Butler and his cheering greyclads pursued the blueclads for about one-half mile. Here, Butler's advance was checked by the arrival of Union reinforcements. 52

Each reinforcing Federal regiment as it reached the field was dismounted and brought to the front. By 5 o'clock "the action had fairly begun." Rosser's

Confederate brigade now moved up and took position on Dunovant's left. Recalling the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion, Butler had Colonel White mass his "Comanches" on a hill in the road. White was told to hold his men ready to charge should the Federals attempt to advance. 53

Butler maneuvered his troopers skillfully. Testing the bluecoats' strength, he jabbed "successively" at different points in Gregg's line. Gregg by 7 p.m. had all nine of his regiments on the field. Of this force, eight regiments were dismounted and engaged with the Rebs; the other command remained mounted to protect Gregg's flanks and be ready to move to the point of danger in case Butler sent a mounted column surging toward the Yanks' main line of resistance. 54

The roar of battle on the western approaches to Reams' Station caused General Barlow to have the "long roll" between. As soon as the alarm was raised, the infantrymen ceased twisting rails and assembled on the double. Barlow dispatched his staff officers to see that the brigade commanders posted their units in the rifle-pits covering the approaches to Reams' Station from the west. These earthworks had been thrown up in June by the VI Corps.

General Miles' 1st Brigade filed behind the breastworks, "its right extending across the railroad and facing north and west." 55 Colonel Broady's 4th Brigade took position behind the fortifications on Miles' left. 56 At the time that the alert reached him, Colonel Crandell of the Consolidated Brigade called for his troops to stop what they were doing and fall in. After the pickets had been recalled, Crandell's brigade guided by Captain Silas Marlin started down the railroad. The column reached Reams' Station at dusk. Crandell placed his men in the works on Broady's left. 57

General Butler misinterpreted Barlow's actions. He feared the Union infantry was en route to join in the fight. As the general sat his horse under a "very hot fire," he called for a courier to go to his line of dismounted troopers and tell them to retire. The messenger was shaken by the storm of minie balls that whistled around him. Seeing this, General Butler remarked, "Young man, you're scared; go back to Captain Myers and tell him to send me a courier!"

At this, the fellow lost no time in getting in touch with the captain, who detailed Sergeant George F. Everhart to carry out the mission. When Everhart reported to Butler, the general asked if he would carry a dispatch to the dismounted men. The sergeant replied, "By God! I'll start! don't know so much about going."

"You'll do," Butler snapped.

Everhart turned his horse about and relayed Butler's instructions to the brigade commanders. Securing their horses the Confederates pulled back. 58

The action had lasted till 8 o'clock. By that hour General Wade Hampton had satisfied himself that the Federals were demolishing the railroad in the Reams' Station sector. Hampton had taken advantage of the fighting to reconnoiter the ground. Returning to his camp, Hampton notified General Lee that the Federals were not "well placed." If Lee could see fit to send infantry reinforcements, Hampton felt that the Reams' Station Yankees could be isolated and overwhelmed. 59

Following the withdrawal of the butternuts, Gregg's bluecoats held their ground. Gregg, notifying army headquarters of what had transpired, pointed out that although the Southerners were armed with "muskets," he didn't think that any of Lee's infantry was present. A hasty check had indicated that Union losses in the engagement wouldn't exceed 75. 60

While the fighting was in progress west of Reams' Station, Union surgeons established a field hospital in the village church. Within a short time, ambulances began to arrive from the front. Assistant Surgeon Elias J. Marsh of Gregg's division reported, "Many of the cases were severe and required operations, and all were dressed and made comfortable for the night." 61

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General Hancock at 7:30 p.m. on August 23 notified Chief of Staff Humphreys that the heavy rain, that had been falling throughout the day, had hindered the First Division's working parties. The soldiers had had a difficult time keeping the fires used to heat and bend the rails going. 62

Thirty minutes earlier, Hancock addressed a note to General Barlow. Barlow was informed that Hancock, along with Gibbon's division, was en route

to Reams' Station by way of the Jerusalem plank road. If all went well, Gibbon's troops would join Barlow in the morning. Gibbon's command and the artillery were slated to occupy Reams' Station, thus freeing Barlow's troops, reinforced by Spear's cavalry, to wreck the Weldon Railroad to Rowanty Creek, and, if possible, as far as Stony Creek. Should Barlow be hard-pressed during the night, he was to call on Gibbon for help. 63

At 8:08 Barlow replied. The general proudly reported that the First Division had destroyed the railroad to Reams' Station. At the moment, his troops were posted in the rifle-pits covering the western approaches to Reams' Station.

Barlow reported that Gregg's cavalry had been heavily engaged. The Yankee troopers had held their ground, and the firing had ceased. According to the information which reached him from the front, Gregg's entire division had been engaged. Gregg had notified Barlow that he considered the position taken up by his troopers as "a desirable one," but he was afraid that an ammunition shortage might compel him to abandon it. The cavalryman had intimated to Barlow that it would be appreciated, if he would send his footsoldiers to relieve the horsemen if they were withdrawn. Barlow, however, opposed such a move, because it would require him to march his troops a mile west of Reams' Station and place them in a position which could be easily turned. Furthermore, as he understood his instructions, they were to destroy the railroad. In the morning, if things were quiet, Barlow wrote, he would put his men to work wrecking the railroad south of Reams' Station.

There was one question raised by Hancock that Barlow failed to answer. While Barlow informed his chief that Spear's cavalry, reinforced by a detachment of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery, had been in contact with Rebel cavalry throughout the day, he failed to mention the charges lodged against Miles and Gregg by Colonel Spear. 64

Hancock acknowledged Barlow's communication at 10:30. On doing so, he announced that Barlow's view of his primary mission was correct. But, should the Rebels press Gregg so hard as to prevent the infantry from destroying the railroad, Barlow was to march to the cavalry's aid and await the arrival of Gibbon's division. Hancock assured his division commander that "it is not supposed that the railroad can be destroyed

before the enemy are driven off." Barlow was advised to send back for ammunition in case he was "likely to need more." 65

* * *

Revsille sounded well before daybreak on August 24, in General Gibbon's camp. By 3:15 the troops had wolfed down their breakfasts, gulped their coffee, and had taken their positions in the ranks. General Smyth's brigade took the lead as the division moved out. The long blue column left the Jerusalem plank road, soon after the troops had crossed Warwick Swamp, and turned into a road leading westward toward the railroad. Smyth's brigade reached Reams' Station at 7 o'clock. In accordance with instructions from General Gibbon, Smyth had his troops file into position behind the breastworks on the left of Barlow's division. 66

Gibbon's two other brigades (Rugg's and Murphy's), along with the artillery, reached Reams' Station by 9 a.m. Lieutenant Colonel Horace P. Rugg posted the men of his 1st Brigade in the rifle-pits north of the station, while Colonel Mathew Murphy's bluecoats were kept standing in ranks. 67 The cannoneers massed and parked their guns in an open field on the left of Oak Grove Church, east of the railroad. 68

One of the cannoneers recalled, "By daylight we found ourselves in the midst of a country which had not been much desolated by the march of war. Through this we passed cheerily along amid apple-trees laden with fruit, and cornfields whose ears were just ready for roasting." 69

The works at Reams' Station had been thrown up in the latter part of June by troops of the VI Corps, at the time they had been ordered out to cover Brigadier General James H. Wilson's cavalry on its return from the raid on the South Side Railroad. They had been hurriedly thrown up, badly constructed, and poorly positioned. Instead of utilizing the railroad dump for a base, the rifle-pits, facing west, were located about 20 to 40 yards west of the railroad. From 70 to 80 yards in front of the rifle-pits were thick pine woods. The rifle-pits paralleling the railroad extended about one-half mile and were not more than three feet in height, and "of frail structure, being built of fence-rails within," and "slightly banked with sods and loose earth." There were openings in the center for

the Dinwiddie stage road and at each end for the Weldon Railroad and Halifax road to pass through.

After crossing the railroad, there was a "return" extending in a northeasterly direction for about 1,000 yards, forming an obtuse angle at the right. The section of the railroad inside the fortifications passed through a cut on the right and along a fill on the left. On the left, the ground behind the breastworks rose slightly. In case of attack, troops posted there would be for practical purposes in an enclosed work, making "it impossible for ammunition or reserves to be brought up, except at the greatest disadvantage, from the rear, or for the troops thus inclosed to retire without exposure to observation and to fire."

South of the site of the depot, the Dinwiddie stage road (an important route linking Dinwiddie Courthouse with the Jerusalem plank road) crossed the Halifax road and the railroad and disappeared in the pines to the west. A second road also connected Reams' Station with the Jerusalem plank road. This road, which had been followed by Gibbon's troops on their march, passed to the north of the Dinwiddie stage road. 70

* * *

Early on the 24th General Barlow succeeded in obtaining, on the presentation of a "surgeon's certificate of disability," a 20 days' leave of absence. As soon as he could turn over command of the First Division to General Miles, Barlow left for City Point, where he planned to catch a boat to Washington. 71

Upon his arrival at Reams' Station from the Gurley house, Hancock called for General Miles. Hancock told Miles that his troops were to be relieved from duty in the rifle-pits by Gibbon's. After this had taken place, Miles' division, accompanied by Spear's cavalry brigade, was to move southward destroying the railroad as it advanced. 72

After recalling their pickets, Miles' brigade commanders formed and mustered their units. Exchanging good-natured cheers and jeers with Gibbon's troops, Miles' men marched down the Weldon Railroad about a mile and one-half. Colonel Lynch, who had resumed command of the 1st Brigade, halted his soldiers. After pickets had been thrown out, Lynch put his men to work wrecking the

railroad. The Consolidated Brigade and the 4th New York Heavy Artillery were likewise put to work tearing up, heating, and twisting rails. Miles' other brigade, Broady's, was deployed into line of battle to cover the working parties. With skirmishers thrown forward, Broady advanced his battle line and took position in a cornfield west of the railroad. 73

Colonel Spear with his two cavalry regiments had preceded Miles' infantry and had taken post at Malone's Crossing. Before very long, Spear's pickets on the Stony Creek and Malone's roads were attacked by Rebel patrols from Rooney Lee's mounted division. Spear called for help. Miles sent the cavalryman two of Broady's regiments--the 145th and 148th Pennsylvania. Reinforced by the sturdy infantrymen, Spear's horsemen made a forced reconnaissance down the railroad to within a short distance of Rowanty Creek. Roadblocks were established and manned by Spear's bluecoats on all roads leading from Rowanty Creek toward the area where Miles' footsoldiers were burning ties and twisting rails. 74

Meanwhile, General Gibbon had organized a large number of his soldiers into fatigue parties to breakup the railroad between Reams' Station and the sector where Miles' troops were working. Colonel Rugg put 500 men of the 1st Brigade to work "destroying in a more complete manner railroad property, &c., which had been partially damaged." 75 One of Rugg's regiments, the 19th Massachusetts, was sent out as skirmishers to cover the approaches to the rifle-pits held by the brigade west of the railroad. Rugg's bluecoats had occupied these breastworks at the time that Miles' division had marched south. 76

Upon the withdrawal of Miles' troops, General Smyth, in compliance with orders from Gibbon, had shifted his brigade to the right. Smyth anchored his left flank on the Halifax road. The 1st Delaware, reinforced by two companies of the 2d Delaware, was thrown forward and picketed the front to the left of the outposts manned by the 19th Massachusetts. The 69th and 106th Pennsylvania picketed the area east of the earthworks manned by Smyth's brigade. Upon moving into position, the Pennsylvanians relieved the 4th New York Heavy Artillery.

Throughout the remainder of the day, fatigue parties from three of Smyth's units worked to complete the destruction of the Weldon Railroad in rear of the rifle-pits held by the brigade. 77

As soon as Miles' command was out of the way, Colonel Murphy's brigade occupied the "return" east of the railroad and to the right of Rugg's troops. 78

Shortly before noon, Captain J. Henry Sleeper of the 10th Battery, Massachusetts Light Artillery had his gunners unlimber their four 3-inch rifles west of the railroad in the interval between Rugg's and Smyth's brigades. The rifles were emplaced behind a low line of breastworks, and the gun captains were told to register their pieces on the Dinwiddie stage road. 79

Between the cannoneers and the railroad embarkment, a distance of not more than eight rods, the ground rose slightly. In this open space the limbers were parked, while the caissons were posted just across the Halifax road. Having taken the station assigned them, Sleeper's artillerists had nothing to do but enjoy themselves as they chose, "for fatigue duty did not usually pertain to the lot of light artillerymen." One of the men recalled:

A cornfield not far off furnished us a liberal quantity of roasting ears during the day, and some good early apples were brought into camp by the more enterprising foragers. We remember the day as an extremely pleasant one, both in respect of the weather and our enjoyment of the surroundings. It seemed very holiday-like to us as we lounged about the guns.... 80

The right section of Batteries A and B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery manhandled its guns into position behind the breastworks on the left of Sleeper's rifles. Soon thereafter, the left section joined the right section. Batteries A and B were separated from the Massachusetts cannoneers by a traverse, and they had "stronger and better constructed works with embrasures." Lieutenant Walter S. Perrin, who was in charge of the battery, to be ready in case of an emergency issued instructions for his cannoneers to keep the teams harnessed. 81

Lieutenant George K. Dauchy had the men of the 12th Battery, New York Light Artillery emplace their four 3-inch rifles about 300 yards west of Oak Grove Church, near the angle made by the right "return" with the railroad. Here, the works were "quite high and strong, with embrasures for artillery." Captain Woerner's unit, the 3d New Jersey Battery, unlimbered its four guns behind the barricades to the right of the 12th New York Battery. 82

To free Spear's brigade to co-operate with Miles, General Gregg early in the day called for Colonel Stedman. Stedman's troopers had relieved Spear's and took position west of Reams' Station on the Dinwiddie stage road. The regiments of Gregg's 2d Brigade (Smith's) were given the task of picketing the country between the Dinwiddie stage road and the left flank of the V Corps, and from the Weldon Railroad to Gary's Church on the Jerusalem plank road. 83

General Hancock at 10:30 had notified Meade that Gibbon's division was occupying the entrenchments covering the western approaches to Reams' Station, while Miles' division was "pushing on with the destruction of the railroad." According to the reports reaching Hancock's command post from the front, the Confederates had shown no force. Their outposts retired as the Federals advanced. Hampton's cavalry, which had been present in heavy force west of Reams' Station the previous evening, had disappeared. The Rebels, however, continued to hold the junction of the stage and the Dinwiddie-Reams' Station roads. 84

Late in the afternoon, Colonels Lynch, Broady, and Crandell reassembled their brigades. After the soldiers had fallen into ranks, the troops were put in motion for Malone's Crossing. Upon reaching the crossing, the bluecoats resumed wreaking havoc on the railroad.

About 5:30 p.m. Colonel Crandell received instructions from General Miles to withdraw his pickets, march his brigade back to Reams' Station, and bivouac for the night. Before reaching the rifle-pits, Crandell was told by Miles to take charge of the picket line covering the western approaches to Reams' Station. It was starting to get dark before Lynch's and Broady's troops stopped work and started back up the railroad. The 145th and 148th Pennsylvania rejoined their parent unit--Broady's command--before it marched from Malone's Crossing. Spear's troopers remained behind to hold the crossing. 85

Upon the return of Miles' division at 8 o'clock, Gibbon redeployed his troops. Colonel Rugg, after recalling his fatigue parties and the 19th Massachusetts, shifted his brigade to the right about one-half mile. His troops now occupied the earthworks on the extreme right of the Reams' Station perimeter. 86 General Smyth moved his brigade east of the railroad, and occupied the breastworks "in two lines" on the left of

Rugg's troops. Soldiers from Colonel Murphy's brigade held the rifle-pits on Gibbon's left. After the officers had been alerted to have their units ready to march at 5:30 in the morning, Gibbon's bluecoats retired for the night. 87

Miles saw that his division took position behind the earthworks on Gibbon's left. From left to right Miles posted his brigades: Lynch's, the Consolidated, and Broady's. Lynch's brigade was west of the railroad, with its right flank anchored on the cut. 88

Upon the return of Miles' division, Hancock at 8 p.m. notified Chief of Staff Humphreys of the day's happenings. The railroad, he reported, had been destroyed for "about three and a half miles beyond Reams'." Miles' troops had returned from their work and were safely behind the breastworks. In the morning, Miles' command was to be rested, and Gibbon's given the tasks of ripping up the railroad from Malone's to the Rowanty. The Rebel cavalry had been very quiet throughout the day. According to General Gregg, the greyclads still occupied the junction of the stage and the Dinwiddie-Reams' Station roads.

Hancock warned Humphreys that his troops were "much fatigued." That very day, Miles had warned his corps commander that his men were fagged out. Hancock was satisfied that the men hadn't "recovered from the fatigue of their late marches." When General Gibbon moved out in the morning, Hancock observed, he would be separated from Miles' division by three or four miles. In case the Rebels cut between Gibbon and Reams', he could fall back via the Jerusalem plank road.

According to a Negro who had come into the Union lines during the day, the Confederates were expecting the Federals to push on to Dinwiddie Courthouse. 89

* * *

It was apparent to Hampton and his principal subordinates that the Federals were in too heavy force at Reams' Station to be dislodged by cavalry. Hampton accordingly addressed a note to General Lee proposing the dispatch of a strong infantry force from Petersburg to attack and, if possible, destroy Hancock's isolated command.

To this communication General Lee replied, pointing out that he deemed

it inadvisable to send any portion of the infantry so far from the Petersburg lines. 90

But on mature consideration of the high stakes involved, Lee determined to do something about the Yankees, Hampton had pinpointed at Reams' Station. If the Federals were allowed to destroy the tracks from Reams' Station to Rowanty Creek, it would compel the Southerners to haul supplies being brought in from North Carolina over the Weldon Railroad by wagon from Stony Creek Depot to Dinwiddie Courthouse, and then over the Boydton plank road to Petersburg, a distance of 30 miles. It was desirable therefore that the Federals not be left free to destroy the railroad indefinitely to the southward, for this would increase the distance between Petersburg and that section of the railroad still in Confederate hands. In the political arena, also, every defeat inflicted on Union armies would tend to discredit the war party in the North. With these considerations in mind, Lee read Hampton's proposals for an attack on the Union force operating out of Reams' Station sympathetically and determined to adopt it. But the mistake made at Globe Tavern of attacking piecemeal with an insufficient force would not be repeated. 91

Two brigades of Heth's division, two of Mahone's, one of Field's, and three of Wilcox's were alerted to march for Reams' Station. Two divisions of Hampton's cavalry corps (Butler's and Barringer's) were to co-operate in the attack. As plans developed, Lee decided to increase the force that Major General Charles W. Field had been directed to bring to Petersburg from north of the James. In addition to the two brigades already sent, Field was alerted to hold a third in readiness to join the others. 92

The experiences of John F. Sale of Colonel David A. Weisiger's brigade were typical of those of the soldiers assigned to march against the Reams' Station Federals. Sale wrote in his diary that the command was turned out at 1 p.m. Upon being formed and mustered, the troops were told to "prepare to move & leave your baggage." Major General William Mahone put his column into motion at 4 o'clock, and the troops marched along behind the breastworks as far as Battery No. 41.

Early in the afternoon, Hampton, not knowing that Lee had changed his mind, started for army headquarters. While en route, he encountered an orderly bearing a dispatch from Lee, stating that Lieutenant General

Ambrose P. Hill had been ordered into the field with a strong force of infantry. Later a second messenger arrived with information that Major General Henry Heth's combat-ready division was to accompany Hill. Hampton was to report to Hill, and do all in his "power to punish the enemy." Lee wanted Hampton to send his scouts to ascertain the Northerners' "position and the best point to attack them." 93

General Hill had quietly marshaled his infantry brigades in the area west of the "lead-works." Major General Cadmus M. Wilcox's Light Division--less Thomas' brigade--took the lead as the column marched out. Close behind came MacRae's and Cooke's brigades of Heth's division and Anderson's brigade of Field's division, which had been organized into a "provisional division" led by General Heth. Accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel William J. Pagan's Artillery Battalion, the long column tramped down the Squirrel Level road. General Mahone with his two brigades (Weisiger's and King's) brought up the rear. 94

Hill's army, turning into the Vaughan road, crossed Hatcher Run near Armstrong's Mill. It was starting to get dark when the division commanders halted their men near Holly Point Church. After preparing their rations, the troops bedded down for the night.

Hill and Hampton spent the night of the 24th at Monk's Neck Bridge. 95

While waiting for reinforcements, Hampton had told his division commanders to keep their men well in hand and to be ready to take the offensive on a moment's notice.

Except for the half-hearted resistance offered by Brigadier General Rufus Barringer's (Barringer was in temporary command of Rooney Lee's division.) outposts to the advance of Spear's Union horsemen beyond Malone's Crossing, the Rebel cavalry displayed little activity. General Barringer reported at 10 a.m. that the Yanks didn't seem disposed to advance beyond Malone's Crossing. A Union deserter had turned himself into Barringer's pickets, and, upon being questioned, had identified the troops at Malone's as belonging to Miles' division of the II Corps. To check on the Yankees' movements, Barringer dispatched scouts to Stony Creek. 96

Since his command was short of forage, Butler determined to send his train to Stony Creek. The wagons were rolling early on the 24th. It was 11 o'clock when the vehicles reached Stony Creek Depot. One of the troopers detailed to escort the wagons recalled, "Here they found big, luscious

watermelons from North Carolina by the car-load, which they enjoyed to their utmost until late in the evening."

By 2 o'clock the wagons had been loaded with forage and had started back to Butler's camp. After enjoying their watermelon feast, the troopers of the escort put their spurs to their mounts, and soon overtook the lumbering wagons. It was midnight before the train returned to its base, and the escort disbanded. 97

* * *

Men manning Union observation posts along the Petersburg lines kept track of the Confederate troop movements. At noon, 700 grey-clad footsoldiers with knapsacks on their backs appeared from the woods in front of the Federal earthworks and moved off in the direction of the Weldon Railroad. Two and one-half hours later, a column of infantry, estimated to number from 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers, emerged from the woods near the "lead-works" and marched southward along the Squirrel Level road. A four-gun battery headed this column. At the same time, a 3,000-man column crossed the railroad and took position near a large fort east of the tracks. After remaining there one-half hour, the Rebels returned in the same direction (westward) from which they had come. About 40 wagons and 25 ambulances were sighted rolling southwestward along the Vaughan road. 98

At 5:30 Chief Signal Officer B. F. Fisher notified Chief of Staff Humphreys that a "column of infantry, extending a mile and a quarter in length, four files deep and well closed up" had moved out of Petersburg along the Squirrel Level road. When last seen, the Confederate footsoldiers had disappeared into the woods a mile southwest of the "lead-works." Fifteen minutes later, another column, numbering about 2,000, came out of Petersburg and took the road pioneered by the first. Sixty-six wagons and 17 ambulances had preceded the first column. 99

Several hours later, Major Fisher notified army headquarters that a third infantry column, three-quarters of a mile in length, had appeared in the vicinity of the "lead-works." Like the others, this one was marching via the Squirrel Level road and was accompanied by ambulances and wagons. 100

General Humphreys, on the receipt of these reports from Major Fisher, studied the battle maps of the area. After doing so, he decided to alert

Generals Hancock and Warren. Humphreys at 8:20 p.m. dispatched identical messages to the two corps commanders. They were warned that the signal people had sighted "large bodies" of Rebel "infantry passing south from their intrenchments" by the Vaughan and Squirrel Level roads. Hancock was cautioned that these troops were "probably destined to operate against General Warren" or his troops. Humphreys felt that the II Corps was probably in the greater danger of being assailed. 101

It was 11 p.m. before the courier with Humphreys' message reached Hancock's command post. Hancock, on acknowledging the receipt of the chief of staff's communication, pointed out that nothing was said about the Confederates' strength nor the time they were observed. If the Rebels had ordered out a "considerable force to operate" against the II Corps, Hancock questioned the wisdom of sending his force so far from any supporting elements of the Army of the Potomac. 102

Humphreys was in receipt of Hancock's message by 1 a.m. Replying immediately, he noted that the Rebel troops reportedly moving southward out of the Petersburg defenses numbered 8,000 to 10,000. The time that they had been seen last "was a little before sunset." 103

A copy of a 9 p.m. message Chief of Staff Humphreys had received from General Warren was also handed to the staff officer for delivery to Hancock. Warren, after having read Humphreys' 8:20 dispatch, had advised headquarters that the butternuts observed marching out the Vaughan and Squirrel Level roads might be working parties. All prisoners questioned during the day at V Corps headquarters had said that the Confederates were throwing up new earthworks. If the Rebels did plan to attack, Warren wrote, it would be Hancock's corps, as his position at Globe Tavern was impregnable. 104

Here is a severe indictment of strategic thinking at Union headquarters. The destruction of the Weldon Railroad between Malone's Crossing and the Rowanty cannot be cited to have been a matter of such vital consequence at that time as to justify any considerable loss, much less to run the risk of a serious disaster. Moreover, it was becoming evident that in the face of stiffening Confederate opposition that not much further progress in wrecking the railroad could be anticipated. If General Hancock were to fight, he should have his troops concentrated and well in hand. This would be inconsistent with the continued destruction of the track. It seems that

the alternative should have presented itself to Meade--either withdraw Hancock or reinforce him immediately.

General Meade had frequently expressed the desire that the Rebels might come out of their works, so the Army of the Potomac could fight them in the open. The movement of Hill's columns offered to Meade and his army the long-desired opportunity.

Hancock had at Reams' Station 7,000 infantry, with perhaps 2,000 cavalry. Meade could have rushed 25,000 men to Reams' more easily than Lee could send 13,000. The fresh divisions, which might have been deployed at Reams' on the morning of August 25, would have been in far better fighting trim than the jaded troops of the II Corps.

If Meade did not intend to fight, Hancock should have been recalled. If he intended to give battle, Hancock should have been heavily reinforced. Even conceding that Hancock might be able to repulse the Confederates, what was the use of putting anything in jeopardy when everything might be made entirely secure? But more than this: if Hancock were really to be assailed, where was the justification of losing the long sought for opportunity of encountering the foe in the open, with advantage of numbers corresponding to the excess of Meade's army over the Army of Northern Virginia. 105

THE BATTLE OF REAMS' STATION

Chapter I

Hancock's Troops Occupy Reams' Station--Lee Prepares to Strike

Notes

- 1 The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 244. (Cited hereafter as O. R.); F. A. Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 271; _____, History of the Second Army Corps in the Army of the Potomac (New York, 1886) 580-581.
- 2 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 244; Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 271. General Hancock and his division commanders slept on the ground alongside their men in a pouring rain.
- 3 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 363.
- 4 Ibid., 364.
- 5 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 406.
- 6 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 357.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid., 358.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid., 363.
- 12 Ibid., 391.
- 13 Ibid., 391-392.
- 14 Ibid., 391-392; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 269. A battalion of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery had drawn the assignment of building a corduroy road from Gurley's house to Globe Tavern.
- 15 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 392.
- 16 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 250-251.
- 17 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 399.
- 18 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 251, 261, 269, 277, 278, 279, 282, 285. Colonel Broady's 4th Brigade spent the night on the picket line.

- 19 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 407.
- 20 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 833.
- 21 Ibid., 834; Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 417-418.
- 22 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 606, 834.
- 23 Ibid., 834. In the clash at Wyatt's, Spear reported the loss of six men, one dead and the rest wounded. The Confederates made no report of their casualties, although Spear claimed the capture of several prisoners.
- 24 Ibid., 87, 606, 617; Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 408. Davis' brigade of Barringer's division was encamped at Tabernacle Church. R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, in the War Between the States (Richmond, 1899), 142.
- 25 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 418-419.
- 26 Ibid., 419.
- 27 Ibid., 420.
- 28 Ibid., 425.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., 427; Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 251, 269, 834, 835. Two companies (A and H) of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery had been mounted and were ordered to report to Colonel Spear.
- 31 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 251, 261, 269; Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 428.
- 32 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 287-288. The 2d and 3d Brigades of the First Division, II Army Corps had been consolidated on June 27, 1864.
- 33 Ibid., 278, 279, 283.
- 34 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 435.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., 436.
- 37 Ibid., 425-426.
- 38 Ibid., 426.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Q. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 244, 302, 322, 331, 406. Two of the batteries (the 10th Massachusetts, and Batteries A and B, 1st Rhode Island) were to report to the First Division upon reaching Reams' Station.

- 41 George K. Dauchy, "The Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 128-129.
- 42 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 244, 302, 406; Dauchy, "The Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 129.
- 43 John D. Billings, The History of the Tenth Massachusetts Battery of Light Artillery in the War of the Rebellion 1862-1865 (Boston, 1909), 301-302.
- 44 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 269, 835; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 427; Frank M. Myers, The Comanches: A History of White's Battalion, Virginia Cavalry, Laurel Brig., Hampton Div., A.N.V., C.S.A. (Baltimore, 1871), 322; Edward L. Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry in '64 (Richmond, 1899), 227.
- 45 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 427; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 269, 835. In the fighting, the two companies of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery serving with Spear's brigade lost 9 men: 3 killed, 4 wounded, and 2 missing.
- 46 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 427. During the afternoon, the two companies (A and H) of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery which were serving with Spear's brigade were replaced by companies G and M of the same regiment. At first, Spear held the heavy artillerists in reserve. Late in the afternoon, Companies G and M were engaged against a Rebel cavalry patrol. In the fighting, the New Yorkers lost three men, one killed and two wounded. O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 269-270.
- 47 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 427.
- 48 Ibid., 426.
- 49 Ibid., 427.
- 50 Ibid., 429.
- 51 Ibid., 436; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 606-607, 617.
- 52 Myers, The Comanches, 322-323; Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 277.
- 53 Myers, The Comanches, 323; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 606-607, 617. The 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion was known as "The Comanches."
- 54 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 606-607, 617.
- 55 Ibid., 261.
- 56 Ibid., 277, 278, 279, 282, 285, 286.
- 57 Ibid., 287-288.
- 58 Myers, The Comanches, 323-324.

- 59 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 436; Douglas S. Freeman, E. E. Lee, III, (New York, 1935), 488; Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 277.
- 60 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 436; Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 277. In the fighting, the Confederates lost 21 killed, 103 wounded, and 12 missing.
- 61 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 617-618.
- 62 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 428.
- 63 Ibid., 429.
- 64 Ibid., 430.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 322, 328, 331.
- 67 Ibid., 308, 317.
- 68 Ibid., 414.
- 69 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 308.
- 70 Walker, History of the II Corps, 582-583; _____, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 272-274; Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 308, 311; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 129-130.
- 71 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 447.
- 72 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 251.
- 73 Ibid., 261, 270, 278, 280, 282.
- 74 Ibid., 222, 251, 285, 286, 835.
- 75 Ibid., 302, 308.
- 76 Ibid., 302, 305, 311.
- 77 Ibid., 322-323, 328, 331. From right to left, Smyth's troops were posted: the 14th Connecticut, the 4th Ohio (battalion), the 10th New York (battalion), the 12th New Jersey, the 7th West Virginia (battalion), and the 108th New York.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid., 322, 414.
- 80 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 311-312.
- 81 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 407, 423; Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 311; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 130.

- 82 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 407, 420; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 130; Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 311.
- 83 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 607.
- 84 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 448.
- 85 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 222, 261, 282, 288.
- 86 Ibid., 302, 308, 311.
- 87 Ibid., 323, 331.
- 88 Ibid., 261, 278, 282, 288.
- 89 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 448.
- 90 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 278-279.
- 91 Freeman, R. E. Lee, III, 488; Humphreys, Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65, 278, 279.
- 92 Freeman, R. E. Lee, III, 488-489; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 1193.
- 93 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 1202; Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 279; Diary, John F. Sale of the 12th Virginia (Virginia State Library).
- 94 Freeman, R. E. Lee, III, 489; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 445-446; J. F. J. Caldwell, The History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, Known as "Gregg's," and Subsequently as "McGowan's Brigade" (Philadelphia, 1866), 180; W. S. Dunlop, Lee's Sharpshooters; or, The Forefront of Battle, (Little Rock, 1899), 189-190; Diary, Sale (Virginia State Library).
Pegram was accompanied by: the Letcher Virginia Artillery, the Purcell Virginia Artillery, Battery A, Sumter Artillery, and sections of Hurt's Alabama Battery and Clutter's Virginia Battery. O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 858.
- 95 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 279; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 180; Diary, Sale (Virginia State Library).
- 96 O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. II, 1037.
- 97 Myers, The Comanches, 324.
- 98 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 445.
- 99 Ibid.

- 100 Ibid., 446.
- 101 Ibid., 449.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid., 481.
- 104 Ibid., 452; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 223.
- 105 Walker, History of the II Corps, 584-585; _____, "Reams' Station,"
Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V,
275-276.

THE BATTLE OF REAMS' STATION

Chapter II

The Confederates Drive the II Corps from Reams' Station

At daylight on August 25, 1864, General Miles, as previously directed, relieved Gibbon's pickets. Gibbon at the same time was told by Hancock to have his troops remain where they were. The destruction of the railroad would be postponed pending the recall of Gregg's cavalry. ¹

Hancock at 6:15 issued instructions for General Gregg to have a combat patrol visit the junction of the Dinwiddie stage and Vaughan roads to ascertain whether there was any Rebel infantry west of the Weldon Railroad. If possible, Gregg's troopers were to drive the Confederate horsemen from that strategic point to insure that the Federals would have timely warning "should any considerable force advance." Hancock promised to give Gregg "a good brigade of infantry" to bolster his cavalry division. ²

Army headquarters was notified by Hancock that in view of the reported Rebel threat to his corps, he had decided not to send Gibbon's division to continue the destruction of the Weldon Railroad, until he had satisfied himself that no large enemy force was lurking in the neighborhood. Hancock informed Chief of Staff Humphreys that Gregg's horsemen were being dispatched to "clear the roads" to his right and front. In closing, Hancock warned, "I consider my force too small to separate such a distance until sure that the enemy's infantry is not in my front." ³

Gregg's cavalry advanced westward and reached the Vaughan road at two different points. The troopers in the course of their forced reconnaissance saw no Confederate infantry.

After studying the reports sent in by Gregg, Hancock determined that there was no immediate threat to his corps. Orders were drafted for General Gibbon to assemble his troops, march southward, and proceed with the wrecking of the railroad as far as Rowanty Creek. ⁴

Gibbon had pulled his division out from behind the breastworks covering the approaches to Reams' Station by 7 a.m. The troops were massed in a sorghum field in rear of the railroad, facing west. At 9 a.m. Gibbon was notified by Hancock "to move down the railroad and continue its destruction." When the column left the sorghum field and started down the Halifax road, Smyth's brigade had the lead. ⁵

As soon as Gibbon's troops had been pulled out of the rifle-pits east of the track, facing north, Colonel Lynch was directed to occupy them. Lynch's men promptly carried out this assignment. When he inspected the brigade in its new position, Lynch found that its left flank was anchored on the railroad. 6

The Consolidated Brigade held the breastworks west of the railroad. Major John W. Byron, with Colonel Crandell absent in charge of the picket line, inspected the sector held by the Consolidated Brigade. He found that the brigade's right rested near the gap in the works through which the railroad passed through a cut. A heavy growth of pine and underbrush fronted the Consolidated Brigade's right and center. The timber had been slashed to a depth of about 30 feet. On the left of the brigade, there was an open field, and a ten yard opening in the works to allow for the passage of the Dinwiddie stage road between Byron's unit and the right of Broady's brigade. 7

Colonel Broady's bluecoats and the 4th New York Heavy Artillery--the ex-artillerists on the left--held the rifle-pits to the left of the Consolidated Brigade. 8

Upon occupying the works, Miles put all his pioneers, reinforced by 50-axmen, to work slashing timber in front of the division and cutting roads behind the line to facilitate the movement of troops and artillery. 9

Colonel Spear's cavalry brigade had spent the night at Malone's Crossing. Strong outposts watched the roads leading from the Crossing to Rowanty Creek. 10

* * *

Over at the

Over at Holly Point Church, Confederate Generals Heth and Wilcox had roused out their combat-ready footsoldiers at an early hour. By 8 a.m. the brigade commanders reported that their troops were formed and anxiously awaiting the word to move against the foe. 11

Several hours earlier, Generals Hill and Hampton had had an important meeting at Monk's Neck Bridge. Hill told Hampton to divide his cavalry corps. The cavalry leader was to hit the Yankees east of the Weldon Railroad with his main force, while the remainder of his corps was to screen the advance

of Hill's infantry toward Reams' Station. Hampton made his plans accordingly. General Barringer with Colonel William H. Cheek's North Carolina Brigade was to advance up the Halifax road toward Malone's Crossing; Colonel J. Lucius Davis' brigade was to march via Malone's road. General Butler with two of his three brigades (Rosser's and Young's) was to follow Davis' brigade as it drove for Malone's Crossing. Dunovant's brigade would be left to protect the rear and flank of Hill's infantry. 12

Word that something big was in the mill leaked out. The camps occupied by Hampton's troopers were alive on the night of the 24th "with preparation for something lively in the near future." Rations and ammunition were issued. "Boots and Saddles" sounded about midnight. After the brigade commanders had mustered their units, the columns moved out. 13

An hour before daylight, Colonel White of the 35th Virginia Cavalry called to Captain Myers:

A. P. Hill was coming down during the day to drive the Yankees away from Reams'; that Hampton was going to draw their attention and amuse them until Hill could get his position; that the Colonel was going on a scout for Hampton, and would be gone all day, and that Myers was to take charge of the battalion.... 14

General Rosser soon rode up at the head of the Laurel Brigade. Spotting Captain Myers, Rosser told him that he wanted "his people" for duty as the advance guard.

Myers replied that he didn't "mind the hanging half as much as he did the being told of it so long beforehand."

Taking post at the head of the Laurel Brigade, the Comanches headed for the Malone's bridge rendezvous. 15

After seeing that all his men were in the saddle, Hampton at 5 a.m. said goodbye to General Hill. Hampton crossed the Rowanty at Malone's bridge with his advance brigade--Davis'. A short distance beyond the stream, troopers of the 9th Virginia Cavalry surprised two of Colonel Spear's bluecoated cavalymen "busily engaged in skinning a cow." Dropping their knives, the Yankees took to their heels. 16

Before they had gone another hundred yards, the Virginians encountered several of Spear's pickets. Scattered shots were exchanged; the Federals fell back on their supports. The Union officer in charge posted his men in

a strong position and sent a messenger racing to alert Colonel Spear. It was 8 o'clock when the courier reached Malone's Crossing. Mounting his horse, Spear headed for the point of danger. By the time the colonel had reached the roadblock, Davis' Virginians had arrived in force. 17

Impressed by the strength of the Union position, Colonel Davis dismounted a portion of his brigade. After a sharp fight, the Federals gave way, retiring up the road to Malone's Crossing. As soon as they had remounted, the Confederates pounded off after the Yanks. Spear's rear guard and the Rebel vanguard were in constant contact as the Northerners pulled back, leaving a number of dead and wounded sprawled in the road. 18

Meanwhile, Colonel Spear had sent one of his aides, Lieutenant John W. Ford, to warn General Hancock that Hampton's cavalry had crossed the Rowanty in force, and that his cavalymen were unable to check the Rebs' advance. 19

Upon receipt of this news, Hancock sent orders for General Gibbon to forget about wrecking the railroad and drive the Rebel horsemen back across Rowanty Creek. Relaying this information to army headquarters, Hancock observed that the Confederates "show a pretty strong front," but he felt it was "only cavalry." 20

The head of Gibbon's division had reached a point on the Halifax road about three-quarters of a mile south of Reams' Station, when a staff officer galloped up and told Gibbon that he was to march to Spear's assistance. Gibbon halted his troops while making necessary dispositions to carry out his new mission. General Smyth was directed to deploy one of his best regiments as skirmishers to the right of the railroad. The skirmishers were to be supported by a second regiment. Covered by this force, Smyth's brigade was to push forward to Malone's Crossing, drive back the Confederates, and procure the entrenching tools left there on the previous afternoon by Miles' bluecoats.

In compliance with Gibbon's instructions, Smyth threw the 1st Delaware forward as skirmishers. One hundred yards behind the Delaware regiment, also deployed as skirmishers, came the 12th New Jersey. Smyth's brigade, spearheaded by these two units, resumed its march down the Halifax road. Gibbon's other two brigades followed Smyth's column. 21

Colonel Spear, learning that Gibbon's division was en route to his assistance, urged his troopers to hold on. Upon falling back to Malone's Crossing, the Federal horsemen had dismounted and took position with their left resting on a railroad cut and their right on an old brick kiln. As the dismounted greyclads of the 9th Virginia Cavalry beat their way ahead, they discovered that the Yankess' left overlapped their right for a considerable distance. Colonel Richard L. T. Beale of the 9th called for his men to lie down, while Colonel Davis called up the 10th Virginia. 22

When Major Clemens of the 10th Virginia rode up, Colonel Davis told him to move his troopers along the base of a hill and form on the right of the 9th Virginia. Meanwhile, General Hampton had called for artillery. A section of guns manned by McGregor's Virginia Battery rumbled up the road from Malone's bridge. The cannoneers threw their pieces into battery. Almost as soon as the trails struck the ground, the horse artillerists had their pieces in action. A storm of shot and shell from the guns helped unnerve Spear's outnumbered command.

Troopers of the 9th Virginia were delighted to hear the cannons and see the reinforcements. Letting go a "Rebel Yell," they charged the Federals (men of the 1st District of Columbia Cavalry) holding the kiln. Not wanting to meet the butternuts in hand-to-hand combat, the 1st District of Columbia fled in "dismay," receiving as it did an enfilading fire from the left. Many of the bluecoats, finding that they were a hindrance, dropped "their fine rifles and ammunition in the road." Spear succeeded in rallying and re-forming his battered command on the high ground behind Smart's house. 23

Before pushing on, the Confederate officers mustered their units and learned that they had suffered about 15 casualties in the engagement. A short distance beyond the Crossing, the scouts sighted "a large body of cavalry and led-horses" in a field one-half mile to their front. Colonel Beale recalled, "The opportunity for a charge was the rarest we had seen, and Ball's squadron, which was kept always mounted, and which carried only pistols and sabres, was up and ready for the fray."

Hampton, who was with Colonel Davis, told his brigade commander to hold up, pending the arrival of one of Butler's regiments. Long before the reinforcing column arrived, Spear's bluecoated horsemen had disappeared into the woods. 24

Colonel Cheek's North Carolinians, in the meantime, had crossed Rowanty Creek and were advancing up the Halifax road. As he approached Malone's Crossing, General Barringer, who was riding with Cheek, saw that Davis' Virginians had already reached that point. Barringer accordingly had Cheek's troopers cross to the east of the railroad. 25

Davis' troopers hadn't advanced very far beyond Malone's Crossing, before the cry, "Yankee infantry!" rang out. A strong body of Union footsoldiers could be seen coming down the Halifax road on the double. These troops belonged to General Smyth's brigade.

General Smyth's infantry brigade on approaching Malone's Crossing found Spear's cavalry in full retreat. As the Union skirmishers closed in on Davis' greyclads, Smyth called for his skirmish line to make a left half-wheel. In the face of this Union threat, Hampton shouted for Davis to have his men dismount. There was a crackle of small-arms, as the men in blue and in grey blazed away. Smyth, seeing that both his flanks were exposed, sent two companies of the 12th New Jersey scampering to the left, while he called up the 108th New York. The New Yorkers were formed to the right, their battle line nearly perpendicular to the skirmish line. About this time, two of McGregor's guns began to hammer away at the Yanks. 26

Observing that Smyth was in contact with the Rebels, Colonel Rugg called a halt. Two regiments (the 7th Michigan and the 59th New York) were advanced to the left to feel for Confederates. Deployed as skirmishers, these two regiments kept pace with Smyth's troops west of the railroad. Rugg formed the remainder of his brigade into line of battle east of the railroad, but instead of advancing these troops held their ground. 27

When McGregor's gunners opened fire, several projectiles from their rifled pieces exploded in the Reams' Station earthworks. Captain Sleeper of the 10th Massachusetts Battery called for Lieutenant H. H. Granger. The lieutenant was told to take a section of the guns and report to General Gibbon. Orders were given for the right section to limber up its pieces. The artillerists drove their guns down the Halifax road about one mile. There, they were hailed by General Gibbon. The general told Granger to emplace his guns in a burned over field about 70 yards east of the railroad. Supported by Rugg's battle line, the Massachusetts cannoners

engaged McGregor's rifles. After expending 48 rounds of ammunition, Granger's men forced the greyclads to cease firing and shift their pieces. During the artillery duel, a fragment from a bursting Rebel shell cut the lieutenant's bridle reins. 28

During the cannonade, Generals Rosser and Butler had sat their horses near McGregor's guns. As the shells from the 10th Massachusetts Battery whistled low overhead, some of the men were seen to duck. General Butler remarked to Rosser, "They are disposed to be rather familiar this morning."

Rosser answered, "Yes, politeness is in order this morning, but don't bow too low boys, it isn't becoming."

One of the troopers in the 35th Virginia Cavalry Battalion, Henry Simpson, overheard the general and exclaimed, "Yes it is; it's becoming a little too damned hot here, if that's what you mean."

Most of the boys agreed with Simpson. 29

Smyth's skirmishers west of the railroad drove in the Rebel vedettes. After advancing about one-half mile, the blueclads were checked by stiffening resistance. To get his stalled attack moving, Smyth shouted for Lieutenant Colonel Richard S. Thompson of the 12th New Jersey to redeploy his right battalion in close support of the 1st Delaware's skirmishers and charge. A staff officer at the same time was sent to bring up the remainder of the brigade, which had halted when McGregor's guns had opened. As soon as the column filed into position behind the skirmish line, the skirmishers charged and drove Davis' dismounted Virginians through a cornfield, across an open field, and into the pines beyond.

Hampton, seeing that Davis' troopers were in trouble, called up two of Butler's brigades--Rosser's and Young's. Dismounting and deploying into line of battle on the run, the Rebs posted themselves behind a rail fence and anxiously awaited the Union advance.

Smyth's skirmishers, upon driving Davis' pickets through the woods, sighted a formidable battle line moving toward them. The bluecoats retreated to the crest of the rise occupied prior to their advance. Hampton's dismounted troopers followed the Yanks part way across the open field, and then retired into the pines out of which they had advanced. All the while, McGregor's cannoners continued to hammer the Federals. 30

General Smyth dispatched an aide to report what had happened to Gibbon. Within a few minutes, the staff officer returned and said that Gibbon wanted the brigade to press the foe, "and ascertain, if possible, his force and position." To discharge this mission, Smyth redeployed his brigade: the 7th West Virginia Battalion, the 4th Ohio Battalion, and the left battalion of the 14th Connecticut were called up and massed in double line of battle. The right battalion of the 12th New Jersey was posted en echelon to the left of the battle line, while the right battalion of the 14th Connecticut was deployed as skirmishers and positioned to the right and rear of the 7th West Virginia. The 69th and 106th Pennsylvania were to support the forced reconnaissance.

Smyth, as soon as his officers had completed their dispositions, waved his troops forward. Screened by the skirmishers of the 1st Delaware, the brigade advanced in line of battle parallel to, and, west of the railroad. Once again, Hampton's pickets gave way. Although the Yanks were exposed to artillery and small-arms fire, casualties were slight. After forging ahead about one-half mile, Smyth saw that a swamp lay across the line of march of his right wing. A number of Rebs could be seen filing into position on the opposite side of the morass. Confederate resistance at the same time stiffened all along the brigade front. Taking cognizance of the physical obstacle and the formidable force Hampton had massed to his front, Smyth called a halt. 31

Hampton's butternuts in opposing the thrust by Smyth's soldiers instinctively followed the directions General Butler had given to one of his colonels, who had requested reinforcements because he was being outflanked, "Well! Flank them back then!" 32

Hampton at the time of Smyth's initial thrust had notified General A. P. Hill that the bluecoats had rushed up their infantry and had recalled their cavalry. In reporting this information to Hill, Hampton suggested that since the Federals had sent a strong infantry column against his cavalymen, the Confederate footsoldiers should promptly attack Reams' Station.

Generals Hampton, Butler, and Rosser were sitting in the yard of a farm house, when a courier rode up with Hill's reply. Glancing at the scrap of paper handed him by the messenger, Hampton learned that Hill was

marshaling his troops, preparatory to attacking. Meanwhile, he wanted Hampton to draw the Unionists farther down the railroad, so the infantry could take them in the rear. 33

These were the tactics Hampton had employed in coping with Smyth's forced reconnaissance. After falling back about 400 yards, Hampton dispatched a strong column to bluff an assault on Smyth's right. Smyth spotted this force and decided it would be unwise to launch a frontal attack on Hampton's dismounted troopers. To meet the danger to his right, Smyth called up and deployed the battalion of the 10th New York. Bypassing the New Yorkers, the grayclads sought to reach the Halifax road. If successful, they would be able to isolate and perhaps smash Smyth's brigade. Smyth was alerted to this danger in the nick of time. Two regiments, the 108th New York and the 1st Delaware, came up on the double, took position to the left of the 10th New York, and succeeded in keeping the butternuts from sweeping around Smyth's right and gaining the Halifax road. 34

Meanwhile, Cheek's North Carolina Brigade charged the picket line held by the 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Union General Gregg had given the Pennsylvanians the task of watching the countryside between Reams' Station and the Jerusalem plank road. The Rebel horsemen broke through and reached Jones Hole Swamp, east of the railroad. Learning of this threat to his communications, General Hancock sent word for Miles to be on the lookout. Miles told Colonel Broady to rush the 116th and 145th Pennsylvania to the cavalry's assistance. Accompanied by the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry, the footsoldiers hastened eastward. Near Jones Hole Swamp, the bluecoats encountered Cheek and his North Carolinians. The Federals bested the Confederates, and the butternuts retired on Malone's Crossing.

Upon being advised that Cheek's men had run into difficulty, Hampton sent word for General Barringer, who had ridden with Cheek, to picket strongly the Emmon's Mill road. After establishing the roadblock, Barringer reported to Hampton at Malone's Crossing. Barringer and Cheek showed up at Hampton's command post just as Davis' and Butler's troopers were retiring in face of Smyth's advance. Hampton hailed Barringer and had him dismount one of Cheek's regiments--the 2d North Carolina Cavalry. This regiment double timed into position east of the railroad, ready to turn Smyth's left should the opportunity present itself. 35

General Hancock, satisfied that the slashing attacks mounted by the

Rebel cavalry spelled trouble, resolved to recall Gibbon's division. As soon as the aide with this message reached his command post, Gibbon issued orders for Rugg's and Murphy's brigades to retire into the Reams' Station entrenchments. Smyth's bluecoats for the time being were to hold their ground and keep the Confederate horsemen from harassing their comrades as they tramped northward. 36

Murphy's brigade took the lead as the division pulled back. Reaching Reams' Station, Murphy's bluecoats filed into the newly constructed "light" breastworks east of the railroad, facing southeast. The railroad dump separated Murphy's left from the right of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery. Rugg's soldiers, accompanied by Granger's guns, reached the Reams' Station perimeter hard on Murphy's heels. The 7th Michigan and the 59th New York, which had been deployed as skirmishers, had advanced in conjunction with Smyth's brigade and were in contact with dismounted troopers of the 2d North Carolina east of the railroad. The North Carolinians hounded the Union skirmishers as they retired.

Before reaching Reams' Station, Colonel Rugg sent orders for the 7th Michigan and the 59th New York not to enter the earthworks. They were to patrol the countryside from the railroad on the west to Tucker's house on the east. General Hancock had Rugg post the remainder of his troops on the left of the breastworks occupied by Murphy's brigade. Granger's gunners remounted their two 3-inch rifles in the emplacement from which they had been withdrawn earlier in the day. 37

While Gibbon's troops had been absent, Hancock had studied the rifle-pits covering the approaches to Reams' Station. The general decided that it would be wise to throw up a left "return." Working parties from Miles' division were turned to. "Soon," one of the Yanks reported, "the intrenchments were extended...across the Weldon and Halifax roads, then gradually bending still further to our rear, crossed the Dinwiddie [stage] road, and passing through an extensive cornfield of stunted growth, terminated at the edge of the woods not far in rear of the church, thus encompassing us on three sides." 38

The left "return" was almost parallel with the right "return." Moreover, as the fighting developed, the troops posted there would, to their horror, discover that they were within small-arms range of Confederate troops assailing the rifle-pits west of the railroad. It was into these works that

Gibbon's troops clambered.

About noon, Confederate troopers from Dunovant's brigade, who were covering Hill's advance, attacked the picket line manned by the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry on the Dinwiddie stage road. A sharp skirmish ensued. Gregg reinforced by the 16th Pennsylvania. The Confederates fell back.

General Miles, observing the firing to his front, recalled the two regiments that he had rushed to assist the cavalry in dealing with the Confederate thrust into the area between Reams' Station and the Jerusalem plank road. To prevent the greyclads from again penetrating this sector and getting possession of the roads linking Reams' Station with the plank road, Gregg reinforced the 13th Pennsylvania Cavalry with the 4th and 8th Pennsylvania. 39

Soon after Gregg had redeployed his horsemen, the Rebs again assailed the roadblock west of Reams' Station manned by the 16th Pennsylvania. This time, the attackers were hard-bitten infantrymen. Hill's footsoldiers quickly brushed aside the Union cavalry. The 16th Pennsylvania retired and took position on the left of Gibbon's division. 40

Previously, Gregg's chief surgeon, Elias J. Marsh, had established his field hospital at Emmons' house. Marsh, in making his selection, had been influenced by the shade trees, sodded ground, the ice-house, and good well, prerequisites for a field hospital. Within a short time, casualties began to arrive from the front. Surgeon Alexander N. Dougherty, General Hancock's medical director, on visiting the site liked it so well that he issued orders to set up the II Corps' field hospital alongside Marsh's. Before Dougherty's medics could do so, General Hancock vetoed the plan. Cheek's North Carolinians' thrust toward the Dinwiddie stage road had satisfied Hancock that the field hospitals, if allow to remain at Emmons', might be captured. The medical personnel accordingly moved back into Oak Grove Church. 41

General Hancock, learning that Gregg's cavalry was retiring before Confederate infantry, sent a staff officer galloping with orders for General Gibbon to reinforce Miles with one of his brigades. Since Rugg's 1st Brigade hadn't had time to take post on Murphy's left, Gibbon determined to rush it to Miles. Colonel Rugg led his men northward across the large cornfield on the double.

Prior to the arrival of Rugg's column, Miles had ridden along his front. He was disappointed to see that his right flank unit, Lynch's brigade, held such an extended front that the troops did not fill the works. The left and center were better off in regard to manpower. Colonel Broady on the left center had so many troops in relation to his front that he was able to hold one regiment, the 148th Pennsylvania, in reserve. Consequently, when Rugg reported, Miles instructed him to post his troops behind Lynch's brigade. To protect themselves from the fire of Rebel sharpshooters who had driven in the Union cavalry, Rugg's soldiers took cover "behind an embankment on the east side of the Weldon Railroad." 42

As soon as Confederate infantry was spotted, General Miles told Colonel Lynch to have the 140th Pennsylvania make a forced reconnaissance. The Pennsylvanians marched out the road leading by Emmons' house. After advancing three-quarters of a mile, and encountering no Johnnies, Captain Thomas Henry called a halt and established a roadblock. Skirmishers were deployed to the left and contact established with the right flank of Miles' picket line. 43

Miles' outposts were no more successful than Gregg's cavalry in stopping the advance of the Rebel skirmishers. About 1 p.m. Miles' pickets guarding the Dinwiddie stage road took to their heels and came tumbling over the breastworks. A number of bluecoats manning posts on the left of the picket line were engulfed by the Confederate tide. Since only a few shots had been heard, many men of Miles' division wondered what had occurred. Following the retreat of the outposts, Captain Nelson Penfield of the Consolidated Brigade called for 25 volunteers. These men were deployed in front of the breastworks held by the brigade and told to give "timely warning" of the approach of any Rebel battle lines.

Unknown to Captain Penfield, Colonel Broady of the 4th Brigade had taken charge of the left wing of the Consolidated Brigade. Broady called for Lieutenant George Mitchell to deploy and throw forward as skirmishers three regiments--the 111th, 125th, and 126th New York. Leaving the protection afforded by the rifle-pits, the New Yorkers advanced into the pines to their front. As they did, they drove back Confederate sharpshooters and established contact on the left with pickets from the 148th Pennsylvania, which had advanced at the same time, and on the right with soldiers manning Lynch's outposts. By

2 p.m. Miles' troops had plugged all the gaps in their picket line. 44

The historian of the 10th Massachusetts Battery chronicled these events:

About noon, as we were preparing dinner, a crash of small arms broke out in front, and directly our cavalry pickets (First Maine) came dashing furiously back over the Dinwiddie road into the line...riding as recklessly as if the whole Rebel army was at their heels. Nevertheless our skirmishers maintained their ground, and we sent a few shells down the road, after which affairs were quieter for a while. But we felt a crisis to be approaching. Our troops seemed to have been concentrated in a small space, and the enemy were drawing their lines closer about us. We spent a part of our leisure in anathematizing the powers that kept us here liable to be gobbled up, when the object of our coming was simply to take part in rendering the railroad still further useless, which object we understood had been accomplished. The idea generally obtained among the men that General Hancock remained of his own volition, expecting a triumph of his arms if attacked....

At the right of the Battery, where the road to Dinwiddie issued through the line, an opening had been left for the free passage of troops, but at the first hostile shot, a hasty barricade of logs and brush was thrown across it, and afterwards a thin line of infantry was deployed along the works. 45

In this skirmishing, the Yanks captured two greyclads. The Southerners, upon being questioned, claimed that "all of Hampton's cavalry and part of Hill's corps" had been sent against the II Corps. One of the butternuts admitted that he belonged to Heth's division. 46

When he relayed this information to General Meade, Hancock wrote, "The enemy have been feeling all around me and are now cheering in my front, advancing and driving in my skirmishers." Hancock felt that the Rebels would probably send a column sweeping across the railroad to interpose between his and Warren's corps. To carry out such a movement, Hancock believed, the Confederates would by maintaining heavy pressure to his front endeavor to keep his troops pinned in the Reams' Station breastworks. 47

* * *

Powell Hill had put his infantry columns in motion at 8 a.m. Screened by one of Danovant's cavalry regiments, the footsoldiers crossed the Rowanty at Monk's Neck Bridge. A halt was called. After resting for two hours,

Hill's command turned into the Dinwiddie stage road and headed for Reams' Station.

About noon, Hill again called a stop, and, after talking with his scouts, began deploying his brigades. Brigadier General Samuel McGowan's brigade was sent into the pines south of the stage road to establish contact with Hampton's cavalry. Three brigades (Scales', Lane's, and Anderson's) were marshaled in the woods north of the stage road, with a view to attacking the northwest angle of the Reams' Station perimeter. 48

While the brigades were forming, Brigadier General Alfred M. Scales sent his sharpshooters led by Major John D. Young forward. Young's greyclads had engaged the Union outposts by the time McGowan's sharpshooters headed by Major W. S. Dunlop moved out. Dunlop's was to "cover and support Young while he disposed of the Federal cavalry in his front."

Dunlop's battalion took post about 75 yards in rear of Young's line. As the Confederates worked their way cautiously ahead, Yanks were discovered in force. Their picket line overlapped Young's battalion for as far as the eye could see. Dunlop waved his sharpshooters into position on Young's right, and the two battalions advanced slowly through the pines. Letting go a yell, the Confederates charged. 49

Just as Dunlop's and Young's sharpshooters started forward, General McGowan rushed the 1st South Carolina Rifles and the 13th South Carolina to their support. 50

The Confederate sharpshooters clashed with Miles' pickets. Lieutenant Mitchell, sighting the oncoming greyclads, called for his New Yorkers to charge. With a shout, the men of the 111th, 125th, and 126th New York surged through the pines. At the same time, Dunlop's sharpshooters had established contact with the 148th Pennsylvania on the New Yorkers' left. The greyclads sent the Pennsylvanians fleeing back toward the rifle-pits. Moments later, Lynch's pickets, unknown to the New Yorkers, took to their heels. The three New York regiments held their ground in the pines in front of the right flank of the Consolidated Brigade, while Confederates advanced to their right and left.

To take advantage of the confusion engendered by the retreat of the Union pickets, Brigadier Generals George T. Anderson and Alfred Scales led their cheering battle lines forward. Anderson's Georgians on the Confederate right

advanced through "sparse woods." Scales' North Carolinians on the left were in a heavy growth of pine. Two regiments of Lane's brigade (At this stage of the conflict, Brigadier General James Conner was in charge of Lane's North Carolinians.) advanced en echelon on Scales' left.

As they emerged from the timber and entered the abatis, the Confederates sighted the breastworks to their front. At first, many of the blueclads of Broady's and the Consolidated brigades had to hold fire, because their retreating comrades were in the way. After what seemed ages, the last of the pickets came diving into the rifle-pits. With their front no longer obstructed, the Yanks blazed away. The butternuts pointed their main thrust at the works held by the right flank of Broady's command and the left of the Consolidated Brigade. Although subjected to a galling fire, the butternuts came on. Before being checked and hurled back, some of the rugged North Carolinians and Georgians had penetrated to within 30 yards of the breastworks. 51

During this attack, General Hill, who had not been feeling well, found that the heat of the day was aggravating his condition. He dismounted and lay down on the ground in front of the Union entrenchments, turning over tactical command of the troops to General Wilcox. 52

Within the hour, Wilcox had re-formed his command. While Wilcox was preparing for a new onslaught, the sharpshooters of Young's and Dunlop's battalions took cover behind a rise, about 400 yards west of the breastworks. Major Dunlop recalled:

Our line lay just back of the crest, from which we delivered our fire, and which offered us fair protection from their guns. The line of battle [Wilcox's] lay some 600 yards behind us in the wood. Here, deliberately, but without malice, planning the destruction of their enemies, the sharpshooters carefully estimated the distance between the lines, the depression of the ground where the enemy lay, the course the ball would take in its trajectory flight, and the exact point where it would cut the line of fire; then adjusting their sights accordingly, they entered upon the work in hand.

At the command the entire battalion stepped forward to the crest and delivered a volley, then dropped back to load. The enemy responded from the length of their line with musket and gun in full chorus, fairly raking the crest of the ridge with shot and shell and the deadly minnie [sic]. 53

Satisfied that his sharpshooters had softened up the Union line, Wilcox told his brigade commanders to send their men forward. Once again, the Confederates in double line of battle swept forward. Covered by a strong

skirmish line, Wilcox's sturdy fighters debouched from the timber. The Rebels this time aimed their blow a little farther to the right and against the rifle-pits held by Broady's soldiers. Through the abatis the butternuts surged. As if the frontal fire delivered by Broady's bluecoats weren't bad enough, the Southerners found themselves exposed to an oblique fire from the rifle-pits defended by the 4th New York Heavy Artillery to their left and the Consolidated Brigade to their right. Several of the Johnnies drove to within three yards of the breastworks before being cut down. Repulsed, the butternuts fell back into the pines flanking the Dinwiddie stage road. 54

While Wilcox's attack was at its apogee, sharpshooters from McCowan's brigade posted themselves in the edge of the dense pine woods to the right of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, and in the cornfield and buildings south of the Dinwiddie stage road. Banging away, the snipers concentrated on the teams used to pull the limbers. Within a few minutes, every horse in two teams had been hit, some as many as five or six times. Captain Sleeper, as he was riding slowly along in rear of the guns, was shot in the arm. At first, the captain refused to leave the field, but after about 30 minutes the pain became so acute that he had to be assisted to the hospital. Lieutenant Oranger took charge of the battery. 55

Battery historian John D. Billings recorded:

Then Private John T. Goodwin, a driver on the First piece, falls, shot through the shoulder. He calls loudly for help, and being assisted to arise makes rapidly to the rear. Charles A. Mason, a driver belonging to the Fourth gun, is shot in the top of the head as he lies flat on his face by the side of his horses. For a time he does not move and all think him dead; but afterwards, at intervals, he utters most pitiful wails of agony. Finding life still persisting tenaciously, two of the gun's crew bring him under cover of the works out of further danger. William Foster, driver on the First piece, also receives a wound in the head, the bullet ploughing a perfect furrow from front to rear of the scalp.

Words fail to convey an adequate idea of the fortitude displayed by our horses. Standing out in bold relief above the slight earthwork, in teams of six, they were naturally a prominent target for Rebel bullets, and the peculiar dull thud of these, at short intervals, told either that another animal had fallen a victim to the enemy's fire, or, what was frequently the case, that one already hit was further wounded. Some of the horses would fall when struck by the first bullet, lie quiet awhile, then struggle to their feet again to receive

additional injuries. Frequently a ball would enter a horse's neck, with the effect only of causing him to shake his head a few times, as if pestered by a fly, after which he would stand as quietly as if nothing had happened. I remember seeing one pole-horse shot in the leg--the bone evidently fractured--and go down in a heap, then, all cumbered as he was with harness and limber, he scrambled up and stood on three legs. It was a sad sight to see a single horse left standing, with his five associates lying dead or dying around him.... 56

The 10th Massachusetts Battery in its turn shelled the woods, cornfield, and buildings which sheltered the tormentors. 57

Following the repulse of Wilcox's second assault, General Miles responded to Lieutenant Granger's call for help. Skirmishers were thrown out to drive back the sharpshooters, to watch the Confederates' movements, and pick up prisoners. Several Georgians identifying themselves as members of General Anderson's brigade were disarmed and brought in. 58

Union officers on the skirmish line reported the Rebels emplacing a battery and massing troops in the pines. Miles sent instructions for Lieutenant Dauchy of the 12th New York Battery to turn his 3-inch rifles on the woods west of the railroad. The cannoneers searched the woods with solid shot and shell. 59

Meanwhile, word had filtered into Miles' command post that the three New York regiments still held the line of outposts in front of the Consolidated Brigade. A staff officer, Captain John B. Noyes, was sent "to ascertain how far in the woods in front was the skirmish line, and whether it covered the whole front of the brigade." He soon returned and reported that the left of the Consolidated Brigade was unprotected by pickets, but that its right was covered. Colonel Broady thereupon told Captain Noyes to have the three New York regiments, in concert with Lynch's pickets on their right, execute a left half-wheel and pinpoint the Confederates. It was only then that the people at Miles' command post learned that there was no connection between the outposts manned by the New Yorkers and Lynch's brigade.

When Miles investigated, he learned the withdrawal of the three New York regiments had seriously weakened the Consolidated Brigade. The breastworks currently held by the Consolidated Brigade were defended "by only a single line of men, in some places at the interval of a pace apart." To correct

this situation partially, Colonel Broady rushed the 148th Pennsylvania to assist the Consolidated Brigade. The Pennsylvanians took position to the left and rear of the brigade. 60

General Smyth at 2 p.m. received orders to recall his brigade and rejoin Gibbon's division behind the Reams' Station earthworks. Although his troops were shelled by McGregor's Battery, Smyth succeeded in disengaging them "in good order and without loss." The column reached Reams' Station a few minutes after Miles' troops west of the railroad had hurled back Wilcox's second assault. Marching via the Halifax road and then through the woods, the brigade, in compliance with Gibbon's instructions, filed into position on the left of the rifle-pits held by Murphy's brigade. Smyth's main line of resistance passed along the crest of a hill and through a cornfield. The brigade's left rested near Jones Hole Swamp, while the 4th Ohio Battalion was deployed and manned a picket line beyond the Stage road. As soon as Smyth had marked out the line to be defended by his command, the troops were put to work erecting breastworks. 61

When the Confederates made their first attack on Miles' division, General Gregg dismounted two (the 1st Maine and the 1st District of Columbia) of his three regiments posted in Jones Hole Swamp. Troopers of the 1st Maine were stationed in the swamp; the 16th Pennsylvania on the Maine men's right sat their horses. The 1st District of Columbia took position behind a hastily constructed work on a hillock, somewhat advanced and to the left of the ground subsequently occupied by Smyth's footsoldiers. A squadron of the 11th Pennsylvania was advanced as vedettes in front of this work. In case the Rebels debouched from the woods southeast of Reams' Station, the pickets were to alert Gregg to the danger. 62

* * *

Shortly before Wilcox's second attack, Captain William W. Sanders reached Hancock's headquarters with a message General Meade had posted at 1 o'clock. Unfolding and reading the dispatch, Hancock learned that his army commander had been notified by Warren of the thrust by Cheek's North Carolina horsemen which had broken through Gregg's cavalry screen east of Reams' Station. In

view of this development, Meade had ordered Brigadier General Gresham Mott to rush all his available troops to his corps commander's assistance. Mott's column was to move via the Jerusalem plank road to the Dinwiddie stage road.

All information reaching Meade's headquarters seemed to indicate that the Rebels were seizing the initiative, and would either assail Hancock or "interpose" between the II and V Corps. Under these circumstances, Meade was satisfied that it would be impossible for the Federals to "do much more damage to the railroad." Hancock was to use his own judgment about withdrawing his command and resuming his former position on the left and rear of the V Corps. ⁶³

Before returning, Captain Sanders asked Hancock if the Halifax road north to Globe Tavern was open. Hancock assured him that it was. When he left Hancock's command post, Sanders took that road. ⁶⁴

Strange as it seems, although the field telegraph had been in operation between army headquarters and Reams' Station since 11:45, General Meade, till 7:30 p.m., continued to send all his messages by staff officers. ⁶⁵

At 2:45 Hancock telegraphed Meade. Since the Confederates seemed determined to prevent further destruction of the Weldon Railroad, Hancock was satisfied there was no necessity for his corps to remain at Reams' Station, and that it was important that he rejoin Warren. But with his troops "closely engaged," Hancock didn't feel he could "withdraw safely at this time." It was his opinion that his troops should be pulled out of the Reams' Station earthworks as soon as it was dark, provided they weren't driven out before.

At the moment, Hancock assured Meade, everything looked promising, except that having placed his corps in "an inclosed position," the Confederates were "liable" to push a column through the gap separating the II and V Corps. Consequently, Warren had best be on the lookout to his left and rear till such time as the II Corps had made "a practicable connection with him." Meanwhile, Hancock promised to utilize his cavalry to keep the Rebels off the Jerusalem plank road. A copy of this dispatch was forwarded to Warren. ⁶⁶

Hancock at 3:30, following the repulse of Wilcox's second thrust, notified Meade that so far prisoners had been taken belonging to Wilcox's division and Hampton's Cavalry Corps. One of the Johnnies had told his interrogators that A. P. Hill was on the field. Except for shots exchanged

by opposing pickets, the fighting for the moment had died down. 67

Ten minutes later, Hancock communicated to Meade details of Willcox's second thrust. According to officers at the front, the greyclads had advanced without firing a shot; prisoners had been taken within 15 paces of the breastworks. 68

A few minutes after 4 o'clock, Captain Frederick Rosencrantz reached Reams' Station with a letter General Meade had drafted 75 minutes before. Meade wanted Hancock to know that he had just issued orders for Brigadier General Orlando B. Willcox's division of the IX Corps to march to Reams' Station. Like Mott's blueclads, Willcox's were to follow the Jerusalem plank road. Willcox was to be accompanied by some artillery. It was hoped at army headquarters that Hancock would give the Rebs a good thrashing.

General Meade observed that the only thing he feared was that the foe might interpose between the II Corps and Warren. Some of Warren's troops were being held in reserve to guard against this contingency. It was this apprehension that had induced Meade to send Mott and Willcox by the plank road instead of down the Halifax road. 69 But via the plank road, Willcox's line of march was 12 miles, whereas had he gone by the Halifax road, which remained unblocked and open till 5 p.m., the IX Corps division would have had not more than five miles to travel. This would have enabled Willcox's column to reach Reams' Station by half-past four or five. By managing his movements skillfully, Willcox might have been able to fall upon the Confederates' left flank or rear. 70

Hancock at 4:15 acknowledged the message he had just received from Meade. On doing so, the II Corps commander warned that he feared it would be too late when Willcox arrived for his IX Corps troops to serve any practical purpose. Nevertheless, he had determined to call up Willcox's division. Hancock in closing wrote, "I desire to know as soon as possible whether you wish me to retire from this station to-night in case we get through safe." 71

Fifteen minutes later, Hancock telegraphed Meade than an examination of the area satisfied him that the Rebels could not turn his right without making a sweeping detour via Vaughan road. Because of the late hour, Hancock believed this would be impossible to undertake in the time remaining before darkness blanketed the area. The right of his defense line, Hancock informed his superior, extended nearly to Jones Hole Swamp, which was impassable to

to troops advancing in line of battle. Hancock at the same time was "more apprehensive" about his left. As it was late, however, the Southerners would have to make "vigorous use" of the hours left, if they hoped to gain an advantage in that sector. 72

Hancock at 4:45 reported to Meade that according to his scouts, the Rebs had established a line from the left of the Reams' Station perimeter, covering the railroad and the roads to Dinwiddie and Stony Creek. Hancock could hear chopping, and he reasoned that the butternuts must be strengthening their position by felling timber. His pickets, however, reported the Confederates moving artillery into position; a certain indication that another attack was about to begin. 73

As soon as he learned that Willcox's division had been ordered down the Jerusalem plank road, Hancock sent one of his staff officers, Captain John McEntee, "to conduct it up." About 5 o'clock Major John Willian rode up and told Hancock that Mott's "flying column," 1,700 strong, had reached the place where the Dinwiddie stage road branched off from the Jerusalem plank road. 74

* * *

Chief of Staff Humphreys, upon learning that Rebel cavalry had broken through Gregg's picket line east of the Weldon Railroad, telegraphed General Mott at 12:45: Mott was to alert the troops of his division "in the large redoubt and along the intrenchments to the Strong house" to get under arms. These men were to be ready to move in any direction. 75

Fifty minutes later, Meade issued instructions for Mott to rush all his available troops down the plank road to its intersection with the Dinwiddie stage road. The "flying column" would be joined by one of the XI Corps batteries parked at Williams' house. As soon as the "flying column" reached the designated intersection, the officer in charge was to communicate with General Hancock. 76

General Mott promptly placed Colonel Robert McAllister in charge of the "flying column," which consisted of the 3d Brigade and part of the 2d Brigade of the Third Division. As directed, these men were pulled out of big redoubt (Fort Davis) and rifle-pits west of the plank road. Notifying General Humphreys

of what he had done, Mott announced that he planned to redeploy men from his 1st Brigade to hold Fort Davis, and use the engineers to hold the entrenchments connecting with the IX Corps at the Strong house. 77

By 2 p.m. McAllister had massed his column near Jones' house. After being joined by a 40-man detachment from the 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry, McAllister put his command in motion. The troops, as directed, proceeded down the Jerusalem plank road to the intersection with the Dinwiddie stage road. On his arrival at the junction, McAllister massed his soldiers to the right and left of the plank road, while he sent Major Willian to report his position to General Hancock. 78

Before Major Willian returned, General Meade, accompanied by a large cavalcade of staff officers, rode up. Meade told McAllister "to take a good position" and deploy his command across the plank road. After reconnoitering the area, McAllister found ground to his liking about a mile south of the intersection. When he deployed his troops, McAllister threw a cavalry screen out toward the Blackwater. 79

Meanwhile, Hancock had been questioning Major Willian. The aide told Hancock that by the time he reported back to Colonel McAllister, Willcox's division would have passed through the intersection and have turned into the Dinwiddie stage road. Hancock directed Willian to rejoin McAllister, and tell him to post his troops "well down the plank road" in case Confederate cavalry turned the II Corps' left. McAllister was to have his people arrest all stragglers and organize them into regiments. 80

General Humphreys at 12:45 had cautioned General Parke to get his men "under arms." 81 Forty-five minutes later, General Meade, who at that time was visiting Warren's headquarters at Globe Tavern, got in touch with Parke. The IX Corps commander was informed that Mott had been directed to rush a "flying column" down the plank road. Mott's troops were to protect Hancock's flank and rear from the Rebel cavalry. Besides advising Parke that one of the IX Corps batteries would accompany Mott, Meade told Parke to get two of his divisions--White's and Willcox's ready to march. 82

At 2:30 Meade telegraphed Parke to start Willcox's division down the plank road. Willcox's bluecoats were to take position on the plank road at Shay's Tavern. Upon reaching the tavern, Willcox was to contact Hancock.

The Third Division on taking the field would be accompanied by three batteries. 83

Since his division was being held in reserve, Willcox encountered no trouble in getting his men ready to march. The column started promptly and passed Gurley's house at 3:30. Moving for the most part cross-country, Willcox's division, after a five mile tramp, came out on the plank road. Soon after the vanguard came out on the plank road, Captain McEntee hailed Willcox and handed him a note signed by Hancock. Looking at the message, Willcox learned that he was to march his division "rapidly" to Reams' Station. Willcox questioned McEntee and found that he was five miles from his goal. 84

As Willcox neared Shay's Tavern, he encountered the aide entrusted with the instructions for McAllister to employ his soldiers to arrest II Corps stragglers. The staff officer was somewhat confused and handed the message to Willcox. The IX Corps general, not seeing that the note was addressed to McAllister, deployed his leading regiment as skirmishers. Colonel William Humphrey's 2d Brigade was formed into battle line across the Dinwiddie stage road. Hardly had Willcox made these dispositions, before a large number of panic-stricken bluecoats, including a number of officers, were sighted bearing down on the IX Corps straggler line. Within a few moments, the road leading westward to Reams' Station was filled with soldiers, wagons, and ambulances. 85

* * *

General Miles, following the repulse of the second Rebel attack on his front, was satisfied by what he heard and the reports brought in by his scouts that the foe was shifting toward his right. So far, the Union picket line in that sector had not been disturbed. Beyond Miles' right flank, Lynch's pickets were in touch with the line of outposts held by Stedman's cavalry brigade.

About this time, Colonel Rugg, whose brigade earlier in the afternoon had been rushed to bolster the Union right, was redeployed. Rugg with five of his regiments (the 20th Massachusetts, the 1st Minnesota, the 152d New York, the 124th Pennsylvania, and the 36th Wisconsin) reported to General Miles; the 19th Maine and the 19th Massachusetts joined Colonel Murphy. Murphy utilized these two units to hold some "slight" rifle-pits on a rise

between the left of his brigade and Smyth's right.

Rugg's numerically strongest regiment (the 152d New York) was given a special assignment by Miles. Accompanied by Miles' inspector general, Captain Marlin, the New Yorkers marched up the railroad dump. A short distance beyond the breastworks, they took position near a white house. In case the Johnnies sought to turn the Union right, Marlin was to deploy the men behind the railroad embankment and delay their advance. If, however, the next Confederate blow fell on the angle held by the Consolidated Brigade, the 152d New York was to wheel to the left, and reinforced by Lynch's skirmishers, fall upon the attackers' flank and rear. 86

So certain was Miles that the Southerners would attack the angle that he called on Lieutenant Dauchy of the 12th New York Battery to send him one of his 12-pounder guns. The Napoleon was emplaced to bear on the point where the railroad and Halifax road passed out of the works at the northwest angle. Dauchy sent Lieutenant Henry D. Brower, a brave and capable artilleryman, with the gun. As his comrades recalled, Brower seemed to have a premonition that he would not return. As he was riding away, he took out his watch and handed it to the carrier of the guidon, "a fine young soldier and protégé of his, and then, thinking apparently that such an act savored of weakness, replaced it in his pocket."

A little later, Captain Sleeper of the 10th Massachusetts Battery rode by. Holding his wounded arm, the captain called "gaily" as he passed, "Thirty days leave." 87

Because of the precautions he had taken, the concentration of a strong reserve (Rugg and his four regiments) behind the Consolidated Brigade, the position occupied by Marlin's combat team, and Brower's Napoleon, Miles felt confident of holding his position.

General Heth had now reached the field with Cooke's and MacRae's North Carolina brigades. Mahone's command (Weisiger's and King's brigades) were still on the road. With Heth came 12 of Colonel Pegram's guns. Hill still was indisposed, so Heth "assumed the arrangements for the final attack which it was resolved should be made, to turn the Confederate repulse into victory."

Like Wilcox, Heth selected the northwest angle of the Reams' Station perimeter as the spot to be assailed.

After Pegram had reconnoitered the area, his cannoneers unlimbered their 12 guns. The artillerists, screened by the configuration of the terrain, manhandled their pieces across a bog to within 300 yards of the western face of the Reams' Station perimeter.

While the cannoneers were emplacing and masking their guns, in a lot covered with second growth pines, Heth redeployed his infantry. Three of McGowan's regiments (the 1st, 12th, and 14th South Carolina) were recalled from south of the Dinwiddie stage road. Heth's column of attack would consist of three North Carolina brigades--Lane's, Cooke's, and MacRae's. The North Carolinians were to be supported by Anderson's Georgians and the 1st, 12th, and 14th South Carolina of McGowan's brigade. McGowan's two other regiments, the 1st Rifles and the 13th South Carolina, were to assist Hampton's cavalry in an assault on the left "return."

In front of Lane's brigade on the left and Cooke's in the center was the Federal abatis. MacRae's North Carolinians on the right would be called on to cross an open field. As Brigadier General William MacRae formed his battle line in the edge of the pines, he walked in front and told his soldiers that "he knew they would go over the works, and that he wished them to do so without firing a gun."

"All right, General, we will go there," was the reply.

A participant recalled that the men were "in high spirits, jesting and laughing, and ready to move on an instant's notice." 88

General MacRae's sharpshooters under Lieutenant Kyle were advanced and took position alongside Dunlop's and Young's marksmen. The Rebel snipers focused their attention on the Federal batteries. 89

By 5 o'clock the Confederates had completed their preparations. When General Heth gave the word, a signal gun was discharged. Within a few moments, all of Pegram's guns were in action. Although the bombardment did little physical damage to the breastworks and inflicted few casualties, it had serious repercussions among the troops of Gibbon's division posted east of the railroad. Because of the faulty location of the works in this sector, the Rebel cannoneers were able to rake the men as they crouched behind their light breastworks of rails and earth with a reverse fire. To escape the "terrific shower of shell and solid shot," Gibbon's soldiers hugged the ground and mumbled their prayers. 90

Several Union artillerymen tracked the Confederate projectiles and correctly deduced that the butternuts were employing 12 guns in an effort to soften up the Reams' Station perimeter. At the time that the shelling commenced, the gunners of the 3d New Jersey Battery had emplaced their four pieces in a twenty acre cornfield behind the station site. Two Confederate batteries concentrated on knocking out the New Jersey battery. Captain Woerner had his men return the Rebels' fire with what he called "good effect, silencing several of their pieces." 91

It was reported to Hancock that the Johnnies were massing a heavy column of infantry in the pines 600 yards west of the railroad. Hancock sent word for Lieutenant Dauchy to employ three of his Napoleons in an attempt to disperse this force. The New Yorkers hammered the target area with shot and shell. 92

Two of the four Union batteries, the 10th Massachusetts and the Consolidated Rhode Island unit, remained silent during the cannonade. The Rhode Islanders had to take cover, because the Confederates were able to enfilade their position. 93

At the end of 15 minutes, Pegram's guns fell silent.

General Heth walked out in front of his line and ordered Lieutenant D. C. Waddell of the 11th North Carolina "to send back to the main line and bring a regimental flag." Waddell returned with the color-bearer—Thomas Minton—of the 26th North Carolina of Lane's brigade. Heth demanded the flag.

Minton refused to hand it over, saying, "General, tell me where you want the flag to go and I will take it. I won't surrender up my colors."

Heth repeated his demand, and was again refused.

Taking Minton by the arm, the general said, "Come on then, we will carry the colors together."

Heth then gave the signal to charge by waving the flag to the right and left. At this, the entire line let go a yell and started for the breastworks.

Lane's and Cooke's brigades moved off first and were "received by a heavy fire of both musketry and artillery." As the shooting increased in intensity, General MacRae, realizing that the crisis was at hand, called to his Adjutant-General, Captain Louis G. Young, "I shall wait no longer for orders...." Seeing that Lane's and Cooke's troops were drawing the entire fire of the foe; MacRae gave the order "to advance at once."

Heretofore MacRae's North Carolinians had received but slight attention from the Yanks. Forewarned by the loud cheers of MacRae's troops, as they emerged from the pines and advanced to the assault, the bluecoats "opened a tremendous fire of small-arms, with a converging fire of artillery" along MacRae's front. 94

Out on the picket line in front of the Consolidated Brigade, the outposts spotted a powerful battle line beating its way toward them. While the pickets blazed away, several officers raced for the rifle-pits to sound the alarm. Three North Carolina brigades (Lane's, Cocke's, and MacRae's) pressed on. Although shot at, the battle-hardened North Carolinians held their fire. This was too much for the Union pickets; they took to their heels. 95

The soldiers of Miles' division, as they crouched behind the breastworks, had been alerted by the scattered shots and shouts. Looking up, the bluecoats of the Consolidated and Broady's brigades saw their comrades racing wildly toward them. Close behind the fleeing pickets came the Confederate battle line. Snatching up their rifle-muskets, the Yanks blazed away. Undaunted, the butternuts drove through the abatis, which was thirty yards across. Lynch's left flank units and men on the right flank of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery joined in the fight and delivered an oblique fire against the flanks of the onrushing column of attack.

Here and there, the Rebel assault formation was thrown into disorder as large numbers of men were cut down and the faint hearted dropped out and slipped to the rear. General Miles and his officers called encouragement to their men. If they could just hold on a few more minutes, the onslaught would be smashed. Suddenly, three regiments (the 7th, 39th, and 52d New York) on the left of the Consolidated Brigade panicked. A cheering grey-clad tide poured over the breastworks. Moments later, another breakthrough occurred on the right of the Consolidated Brigade--as the 125th and 126th New York melted away. Troops holding the rifle-pits between the points of penetration had now seen enough. It was "root hog or die" as they bolted for the rear. One of the burly North Carolinians wrested a prized trophy away from a color-sergeant--the standard of the 111th New York. General Miles at the time of the breakthrough was standing on the bank of the railroad cut. He saw a North Carolina color-bearer spring over

the breastworks and land in the cut almost at his feet. 96

General Heth and his "co-color-bearer" planted the flag of the 26th North Carolina on the works. Captain G. C. Holland of the 28th North Carolina, Lane's brigade, was one of the first greyclads to reach the entrenchments. As he "stood on the works and saw them well manned on one side, and only a few Rebs on the other," he yelled, "Yanks if you know what is best for you, you had better make a blue streak towards [sic] sunset." The Federals made "the desired blue streak and Holland added greatly to his already enviable reputation for coolness and bravery." 97

Among the first to fall when the Southerners came surging toward the works was Lieutenant Brower. The lieutenant was shot through the head while directing the fire of his Napoleon. Corporal Abram S. Liddle took charge of the piece. He pointed the gun at the oncoming greyclads and blasted them with double-charges of canister as they stormed over the works. Liddle kept his men at the Napoleon, although the supporting infantry had fled. Seeing that his detachment was about to be surrounded, the corporal bellowed for his cannoneers to limber up the piece. Before the team had drawn the gun more than a few feet, a Reb sharpshooter killed one of the wheelhorses. At this, the artillerists cut the other horses loose and escaped, leaving their gun to fall into the Confederates' hands. 98

Miles, observing that only a small force of Confederates had as yet entered the works, determined to counterattack and attempt to seal the breach. The general shouted for Colonel Rugg. The leader of the strategic reserve was nowhere in sight. Whereupon, Miles directed Rugg's brigade "to rush into the gap and commence firing." Instead of doing as Miles ordered, the soldiers of the four regiments (the 20th Massachusetts, the 1st Minnesota, the 184th Pennsylvania, and the 36th Wisconsin) either continued to hug the ground, or if they got up they "ran to the rear."

Colonel Rugg writing after the battle defended his men. He reported that they could do nothing, as the panic-stricken soldiers of the Consolidated Brigade ran over them and made it impossible to shoot at the oncoming Johnnies without hitting their friends. The panic, Rugg admitted, soon spread to his men, and, except for the majority of the 20th Massachusetts and the 36th Wisconsin, they fled the field. A large number of soldiers from the Massachusetts and the Wisconsin units were quickly encircled and compelled to ground arms. 99

Captain Marlin, who was with the 152d New York at the white house, was dismayed to see the Rebels sweeping over the works to his left. Recalling his instructions, Marlin told Captain William S. Burt of the New York regiment to change front to the left and assail the Confederates in the flank and rear. The New Yorkers promptly carried out the desired movement, and took position to enfilade the section of the rifle-pits carried by the North Carolinians. Before Captain Burt could bellow, "Fire!" the New Yorkers were terrified, when a strong Rebel force veered to the left and started sweeping along the breastworks toward their left and rear. Without having fired a single volley, the men, fearing that they would be cut off, "broke from the ranks and fled in a disgraceful manner, only two men in the regiment discharging their pieces." 100

Disgusted by the conduct of the Consolidated and Rugg's brigades, Miles rode down behind the line of the 4th Brigade which still held its ground. Miles saw Colonel Broady and shouted for him to shift his men "toward the right and hold the rifle-pit." Suddenly some of the rugged North Carolinians mounted the breastworks defended by the 148th Pennsylvania. A bitter hand-to-hand struggle ensued. The bayonet, the buttstock of the rifle-musket, the knife, and the fist were used freely. 101

After a catastrophe so sudden and terrible, it might have been expected that the "flushed and victorious" Confederates, enjoying the superiority they did in numbers, would sweep down the entrenchments to the right and left, double up the remainder of Miles' line, and then turn on and take in reverse Gibbon's line. Such a movement would have found Gibbon caught between the Rebel infantry and Hampton's cavalry. But Meth and his generals had yet "to reckon with a few indomitable spirits." Had "it been a common man, the average division commander, who ordered the First Division of the Second Corps on that day, had the corps commander been one of a shade less intrepid or brilliant in his bearing, nothing but a complete rout could have ensued, owing to the altogether vicious formation of our line."

It is difficult to say just how much fight the Rebs had left at this moment. If the brigades which had rolled over the Union works at the angle were "worthy of Lee's army, flushed with success as they were, there is no other conclusion than that the personal bearing of several men" saved two divisions of the II Corps from being annihilated. Corps Historian Francis

A. Walker, who was captured in the fighting, recalled that on the following morning General Wilcox asked him, who was the Union officer "who showed such splendid conduct in rallying and bringing forward our troops upon the right, after the line had been broken."

Walker answered proudly, "General Nelson A. Miles." 102

Miles, observing that the Rebels had gained the angle and would be able to enfilade the rifle-pits defended by the brigades to the left and right of the breakthrough, galloped for the guns of the 12th New York Battery. Hailing Lieutenant Dauchy, the general shouted for him to turn his guns on the gap in the Union lines through which the Rebels were flooding.

Up to this time, the cannoneers had been raking the Southern battle line with canister. After breaking through, the Rebs had formed a column of assault near Oak Grove Church. At a word from their officers, the column moved off, advancing up the Halifax road which lay to the rear of the breastworks. A second Confederate force swung to the left and swept the ground in front of the works. It was apparent to Miles and Dauchy that the foe planned to exploit their success by rolling up the right flank of the First Division.

To cope with this thrust, Dauchy had his artillerists pull the left Napoleon out of the works and point it down the Halifax road; the two other guns were sighted to command the terrain in front of, and, the exterior slope of the works to the left. As soon as the last of the bluecoated infantry had retreated out of his field of fire, Dauchy had his cannoneers blast the oncoming Johnnies with double-charges of canister. A strong Confederate force, however, beat its way through the woods to the rear of the emplacement occupied by the battery. Spotting the butternuts, Dauchy shouted for his men to "limber to the rear!" The drivers started the teams forward to hitch to the guns. In crossing the road, the right wheelhorse to each limber was gunned down by Confederate sharpshooters. Two of the horses fell; the third struggled on. The cannoneers succeeded in limbering up only one of the three Napoleons. After going a short distance, the wounded wheelhorse collapsed.

When the teams were being taken across the Halifax road to limber up, Lieutenant Dauchy had stepped into the woods to secure his horse. As he turned his mount and prepared to lead off the battery, the lieutenant saw the Confederates swarm over the guns. Wheeling his horse about, Dauchy

touched his spurs to its flanks and galloped to safety. Discovering that the Napoleons hadn't been spiked, several butternuts manned one of the pieces and raked the fleeing Yanks. 103

As they drove for the guns of the 12th New York Battery, the Southerners had dislodged five regiments of Lynch's brigade occupying the breastworks to the right of the breakthrough. These troops gave way before the grim North Carolinians in "considerable confusion."

Miles glancing about saw his old regiment, the 61st New York, change direction. The New Yorkers took position with their right anchored on the earthworks and were "contesting every foot of ground gained by the enemy." Rallying a number of men from other units of Lynch's brigade, Miles formed them on the 61st New York and perpendicular to the rifle-pits.

The right flank of Miles' reorganized main line of resistance extended about 100 yards in front of the fortifications. Because of the thick smoke that enveloped the area, the Johnnies failed to see this new line of battle to their left front. Miles called for the men to cease fire and prepare to charge. Letting go a shout for the Union, the bluecoats counterattacked. 104

Only a few score of men--perhaps 200 in all--stood by Miles. With these, the general fought his way forward step by step until he and his hardcore soldiers had retaken the guns of the 12th New York Battery, recaptured a section of the breastworks, and had compelled a number of the Johnnies to take cover in the railroad cut.

Miles had transferred the fighting to the outside of the entrenchments on the Union right. If possible, Miles hoped to attack in the flank and rear the butternuts who had leaped the line at the northwest angle, or were still coming up. As fast as Miles' small party was dissipated, it was reinforced by handfuls of men personally collected by his own staff and by the appeals and exertions of General Hancock, "who, galloping to the front, exposed himself far more conspicuously than any private soldier, in his efforts to restore the fortunes of the day." Hancock's horse was shot in the neck; the beast dropped as if dead. Within a few minutes, the horse struggled to its feet, and the general remounted. Next, a ball cut his bridle rein in two. The corps flag, which always followed Hancock, was pierced by five balls, another splintered the flagstaff. Commissary of Musters Edward P. Brownson fell, mortally wounded.

At times, the troops whom Miles and Hancock were leading scarcely equalled a company. But few as they were, "their desperate push and stubborn gallantry when thus inspired not only checked the progress of the Confederates, but carried the scanty column forward until hands were laid on the Napoleon by the side of which Brower lay dead." 105

Lieutenant Dauchy and Sergeant George Outwater reached three of the guns shortly after Miles' infantry. Dauchy and the sergeant sought to put the Napoleons back in action, but were unable to do so, as they had no lanyards. The lieutenant sent Outwater to locate the rest of the cannoniers. On going to the rear to look for the gunners, Outwater was intercepted by the provost guard. Although he explained the situation to the provost people, they refused to believe the sergeant. He was not allowed to return to the front, consequently, Dauchy was unable to put his guns back in action. 106

Meanwhile, other Confederate units had swung to the right. Supported by the 1st, 12th, and 14th South Carolina, MacRae's North Carolinians dislodged Broady's brigade and moved against the rifle-pits defended by the 4th New York Heavy Artillery. After being routed from the breastworks, many of Broady's soldiers took cover behind the railroad embankment. Outflanked, they retired beyond Oak Grove Church, where the officers succeeded in halting and re-forming their units. 107

* * *

The cannoniers of the 10th Massachusetts and Batteries A and B, 1st Rhode Island were undisposed with the character of their supporting regiment--the 4th New York Heavy Artillery. During Wilcox's attacks, the historian of the 10th Massachusetts Battery chronicled, the artillerists turned infantrymen:

scarcely show signs of life, much less of an active interest, as they lie crouched low in the works. Once in a while one does venture a shot, but elevates his basket over the works, pointing it skyward, as if he saw the enemy approaching from that direction. Said an ex-Confederate, who participated in the fight, "Your support didn't kill any of our men. We never saw such queer shooting. They all pointed their guns up into the air and shot far above us." 108

At the time of Heth's assault, one of the New Yorkers, who chanced to be looking over the works, shouted, "Look up there on the right!" One of the cannoneers of the 10th Massachusetts Battery remembered:

There, sure enough, emerging from the woods beyond the Dinwiddie [stage] road into the opening that stretched before the intrenchments...are charging lines of Confederates. They come at the double-quick, with flashing bayonets, and ringing out their familar yell. On the instant we turn our muzzles to the right and give them canister. Some of our support [the 4th New York Heavy Artillery] run to the rear, many lie inert in the ditch, and a few join in repelling the enemy's assault. But even then it is a warm reception, and ere the hostile line have fairly reached the works they break, reel, and surge to the rear in confusion, seeking the woods again, and leaving the ground thickly sprinkled with their slain. We set up a shout at their discomfiture, but feel that the worst is not yet over. 109

Upon the retreat of Broady's troops, the commander of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery called for his men to retire behind the railroad embankment. Because of the din of battle, the soldiers of the 1st Battalion, who occupied the rifle-pits on the left of the regiment, did not hear the order. The cannoneers were already disenchanted with the New Yorkers' conduct. "At this critical juncture," one of them recalled:

our heavy artillerymen, unable to honor the draft the situation made on their courage and manhood, started for the rear in large numbers. In our exasperation we call them cowards, with all the choice adjectives prefixed that we can summon from our vocabulary on demand, and this plan not succeeding to our satisfaction, we threaten to turn our guns upon them unless they remain. This stayed the tide, and many who had gone but a few rods came back. 110

The retreat of the infantry left the two batteries in this sector--the 10th Massachusetts and the consolidated Rhode Island unit--in an embarrassing situation. At first, the cannoneers gave better than they received. Employing case-shot fused to explode in $1\frac{1}{2}$ seconds and then canister, the artillerists and their supporting infantry again tipped the scales against the butternuts. The Rebels recoiled and retired into a belt of pines 400 yards to the front. Whereupon, the gun captains called for their men to switch to case-shot.

Colonel Pegram had watched the repulse of the Rebel infantry that had advanced against the works south of the Dinwiddie stage road. Calling to his battery commanders, Pegram had them put their guns back into action.

When they did, the Southerners concentrated on the Union guns. "The air seemed filled with shrieking shells, with the flash, smoke, and crash of their explosion, and the harsh hurtling of their fragments."

A cannoneer in the 10th Massachusetts reported that it was "unquestionably the heaviest artillery fire we...ever endured at close range, but alas! we cannot help ourselves. Fortunately for us, most of their shooting is a little too high, and damages left-rear of the line more than it does us." 111

Simultaneously, Confederate sharpshooters posted in the woods and the cornfield to the left began to peck away. Large numbers of horses were killed. As soon as they were satisfied that their artillery had softened up the Union position, the Rebel leaders waved their men forward. Having expended all their canister, the Rhode Islanders used solid and case-shot in their pieces. This time, the Johnnies weren't to be denied; they came pouring over the works held by Broady's troops.

When General MacRae's brigade crossed the parapet, the 10th Massachusetts Battery, which was on the Confederates' right front, opened with "canister at close quarters." MacRae shouted instructions for his North Carolinians "to take the battery!" Swinging to the right, the butternuts stormed down the works toward the four 3-inch rifles manned by the 10th Massachusetts. Charge after charge of canister was poured into the approaching greyclad column. It was like trying to sweep back the tide with a broom. The Rebels swarmed over the right piece, the cannoneers falling back to the next rifle. That gun was fired in a similar manner. So falling back from piece to piece, firing each in succession, the Massachusetts boys continued to fight until their fourth and last 3-inch rifle was overrun. The survivors took to their heels. 112

"Our minds are instantly made up," the battery historian reported:

for against the horrors of Rebel prisons on the one hand we have only to balance the chances of being shot while retreating on the other; and although the men that are falling as we pause, demonstrate most forcibly how poor those chances are, we hesitate but for an instant ere choosing the latter alternative, and take our departure, amid the hissing of bullets and the touching invitation of the "Johnnies," who tell us to "come in," or they'll shoot us. But we are not quite ready to respond to their appeal for our society, even when coupled with such a compulsory proposition, and make for the bushes in rear

of... [the consolidated New Jersey Battery], our nearest cover, where we separate, each taking the course that seemed best to him.... 113

When the left battalion of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery gave way, the Rebels began leaping over the breastworks. Several Rhode Islanders were yanked over the parapet as they stood to their guns. Abandoning their four Napoleons, the men of the consolidated battery broke for the rear. A detachment from Company C, 4th New York Heavy Artillery reached one of the guns ahead of the butternuts and turned it on them. The New Yorkers were able to delay but not stop the Confederates. MacRae's North Carolinians closed in, the New Yorkers sought to spike the piece, but unable to find any tools to answer the purpose, they took to their heels.

One of MacRae's North Carolinians reported:

Although entirely abandoned by its infantry support, ... [the consolidated New Jersey battery] continued a rapid fire upon the attacking column until the guns were reached. Some of the gunners even refused to surrender and were taken by sheer physical force. They were animated in their gallant conduct by the example of their commanding officer [Lieutenant Perrin]. On horse-back, he was a conspicuous target, and his voice could be distinctly heard encouraging the men. Struck with admiration by his bravery, every effort was made by General MacRae [sic], Captain W. Oldham..., Captain Robert Bingham, and one or two others who were among the first to reach the guns to save the life of this manly opponent. Unfortunately he was struck by a ball which came from the extreme flank, as all the firing had ceased in front of him and he fell from his horse mortally wounded, not more lamented by his own men than by those who combatted him. This battery, when captured, was at once turned upon the retreating columns of the enemy. It was manned by a few of MacRae's [sic] sharp-shooters, all of whom were trained in artillery practise. 114

General Hancock in an attempt to check the surging Confederate tide called for General Gibbon's division to retake the lost guns and works. Following the breakthrough, Confederate snipers started to pepper away at Gibbon's troops, who crouched behind the breastworks to their front. To protect themselves from these marksmen, Gibbon's bluecoats vaulted the works and took cover behind the opposite side of the parapet. As the troops were bracing themselves to withstand an onslaught, Gibbon ordered Smyth to counterattack. He was to try to recover the works

from which Miles' division had been dislodged. 115

Smyth lost no time in redeploying his brigade. At the same time, he called on Colonel Murphy for assistance. Following the Rebel success, Murphy had dispatched two regiments (the 155th and 170th New York) to reoccupy the works abandoned by the 4th New York Heavy Artillery. As they pushed ahead, the New Yorkers ran into a galling fire.

Murphy, on receipt of Smyth's call, pulled the 64th New York Infantry and 8th New York Heavy Artillery out of the rifle-pits. These two regiments, along with the 19th Maine and the 19th Massachusetts of Rugg's brigade, joined Smyth's attacking force. Led by Gibbon and Smyth, the troops advanced on the double across the cornfield toward the works. Although the fire encountered was not as hot as that to which they had been subjected on many previous occasions, most of the bluecoats faltered before coming to grips with the Rebs. Within a matter of moments, large numbers of officers and men turned their backs to the foe. 116

Suddenly, the soldiers of the 19th Massachusetts found themselves terribly alone. The regiments on their right and left had abandoned the charge. Lieutenant Colonel Edmund Rice therefore halted and re-formed his troops behind several houses. After the men had been mustered, the regiment returned and "formed line upon the front of the works facing the enemy." Three of Smyth's regiments (the 14th Connecticut, the 12th New Jersey, and an undesignated unit, however, pushed on and joined Miles' troops shortly after they had recaptured the three Napoleons of the 12th New York Battery. 117

* * *

General Hampton had been listening when Pegram's artillery roared into action. No time was wasted as the cavalry leader sent aides galloping with orders for his command to get ready to advance. Prior to the receipt of this dispatch, the brigade commanders had formed their units to the left and right of the Weldon Railroad. Butler's division would advance west of the railroad and Barringer's east of the right of way. Colonel William D. Roberts' 2d North Carolina and a squadron of the 9th Virginia screened the advance of Barringer's dismounted troopers. As the Confederates drove northward from Malone's Crossing, they crossed several fields.

About a mile beyond Malone's, Roberts' command encountered a line of "low" breastworks defended by the 7th Michigan. Putting their horses to the gallop, Roberts' troopers jumped them over the barricade, scattering the blueclad infantry. While waiting for the dismounted cavalymen to catch up, Roberts put his men to work mopping up the area. By the time Hampton was ready to push on, Roberts' men had rounded up from 60 to 75 prisoners.

While his officers re-formed their lines, Hampton called up his artillery. The cannoners of Hart's South Carolina and McGregor's Virginia Batteries unlimbered their eight guns. All the while the roar of battle to the cavalry corps' front was increasing in violence. The advance was now resumed. East of the railroad, Barringer's division entered the woods, "where an occasional shot was fired by a retiring" Yankee vedette. A second line of rifle-pits was encountered by Davis' Virginians. The 50 defenders laid down their arms almost without firing a shot. A detachment from the 13th Virginia Cavalry was given the task of escorting these Yanks to the rear. 118

As Hampton's troopers were closing in on the Reams' Station perimeter from the south, the Rebel infantry stormed the breastworks held by Miles' division. Whereupon, Hampton withdrew his men from west of the Halifax road. Hampton inside of a few minutes redeployed his command--Davis' brigade to the left, Cheek's in the center, and Young's to the right. Rosser's Virginians were posted in support. Dumovant's regiments remained in the saddle in case cavalry should be needed. The line being formed, the brigade commanders were instructed to keep the left flank (Davis' unit) anchored on the railroad. Advancing slowly, the right wing (Brigadier General Pierce B. Young's brigade) was to wheel to the right so as "to strike the rear of the enemy, who were in position behind the railroad bank, and in a work which ran east perpendicularly to the railroad for some distance."

At a word from Hampton, the dismounted troopers took up the advance. The ground over which they moved "was very difficult," and it had been made more so by felled timber. 119

Colonel Beale of the 9th Virginia recalled:

We now came into woods where the bushes had been chopped off, and the trees felled, and where marching was very difficult. But we pressed on, and got through it. A gentle slope was seen to lead up from the edge of

the wood to a heavy line of breastworks extending from the railroad for a quarter of a mile along the crest of the hill. The woods to our right receded from these formidable works, and a tremendous volley issued from the enemy occupying them against that part of our line, now on open ground and fully exposed. Nothing could stand against such fire. The men were ordered to lie down. 120

Gibbon's troops, who held the rifle-pits against which Hampton's dismounted cavalry drove, were placed in a quandary. To escape the fire of the Rebel infantry, they had taken cover in front of the works. Now with the approach of Hampton's battle line, they had to make an unpleasant choice. Soldiers began shifting back to the inside of the parapet.

As if the fire of the dismounted troopers, which General Gibbon described as "very feeble," weren't bad enough, the Yanks were subjected to a blistering bombardment and a galling small-arms fire from their right. The Confederates had quickly turned the captured field pieces on the bluecoats. Colonel Murphy recalled that his men to escape the Confederates' fire were compelled to cross the rifle-pits as many as four times. Even so, the Federals momentarily checked Hampton's push.

Unfortunately for the Northerners, the soldiers posted in the works opposite Davis' brigade were compelled to abandon their position to escape the onrushing Confederate infantry. Seeing this, Davis waved his Virginians forward. Letting go a blood-curdling "Rebel Yell," the greyclads dashed toward the rifle-pits. Two regiments from Rugg's brigade (the 19th Maine and the 19th Massachusetts) and the right flank units of Smyth's command gave way first. Confederates flooded over the works. Their right flank turned, Smyth's bluecoats retired into the woods east of Oak Grove Church. Here Smyth re-formed his brigade, sending the 69th and 106th Pennsylvania to establish contact with his three regiments holding the breastworks, where the three guns of the 12th New York Battery had been retaken. 121

The breakthrough by Hampton's dismounted troopers all but isolated Murphy's brigade. For a few minutes it looked as if the entire brigade would be captured. In fighting its way out of the trap, one of Murphy's regiments, the 8th New York Heavy Artillery, engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with some of Hampton's troopers. Before reaching the woods where they regrouped, two of Murphy's regiments, the 164th New York Infantry and

the 8th New York Heavy Artillery, lost their colors. 122

Unable to leap his horse over the fortifications, Colonel Beale of the 9th Virginia rode to the left and entered the earthworks via the Halifax road. As he was galloping forward to join his dismounted troopers inside the works, the colonel encountered Captain Charles Robinson of Company C with several of his men escorting 200 or more prisoners to the rear.

At this time, Colonel Beale recalled:

The firing had commenced again. Discovering how few of our men were in the works, many of the Yankees who were about surrendering, ran into a growth of sugar-cane, or sorghum, back of the line, and fired. Several heavy volleys came also from a body of woods near by. As the enemy ran back from the breastworks the right and center of our line [Cheek's and Young's brigades], which were rapidly advancing directed a steady fire upon them. The enemy had several guns [of the 3d New Jersey] in position on the edge of the woods opposite the railroad, and these were actively engaged for several minutes with a battery [McGregor's] on our side. 123

Several of the dismounted troopers had "much sport" with a little "Dutchman." As one of the Confederates observed:

This fellow was as fat as a beer-barrel, not much over five feet in height, with very short legs and pudgy body, and could hardly run, in spite of his best efforts, faster than a jog-trot. Each time, as he would be flushed out of a place with his comrades, he would work his little legs as best he could, moving his arms grotesquely like a windmill, blowing like a porpoise and perspiring in streams, but quite unable to keep up with his better conditioned companions. It was such a laughable sight that the men good-naturedly refrained from shooting him, but every time he was jumped would chaff him with jokes, and "Go it, Dutchy." Probably he was one of the "cheap substitutes" of which Grant was about that time complaining to [Secretary of War Edwin M.] Stanton as sent him by the "loyal" of the North; often becoming "too willing prisoners," he said. 124

Elated by the easy success scored at the expense of Gibbon's division, Hampton's cheering grayclads pushed on. To their right were the light field works defended by Gregg's cavalry. Earlier in the afternoon, Captain Woerner of the 3d New Jersey Battery had reported to Gibbon with a section of his guns. Gibbon in turn sent Woerner and his gunners to bolster Gregg. The cannoners had thrown their two pieces into battery on the hillock defended by the 1st District of Columbia Cavalry. From this commanding

elevation, the artillerists had hammered the Rebel infantry with shot and shell as it charged across the breastworks held by Miles' bluecoats. Supported by dismounted troopers of the 1st District of Columbia and about 100 infantry from various regiments, the cannoneers held their ground until Hampton's troopers hurled Gibbon's soldiers from their rifle-pits.

Gregg's dismounted cavalymen with several well-aimed volleys checked Hampton's initial effort to exploit the situation. Valuable time was lost as Confederate officers regrouped their units and wheeled them to the right. Gregg, realizing that he was badly outnumbered, ordered the knoll abandoned. Accompanied by Woerner's guns, the dismounted troopers withdrew north of a branch of Jones Hole Swamp, where they took position on the left of Gibbon's reorganized main line of resistance. 125

Meanwhile, Colonel Lynch had assembled a striking force of about 200 men representing almost every Union regiment on the field. Learning of this, General Miles sent word for Lynch to take these men, advance across the railroad, and assail the Confederates' left. Led by Lynch, the bluecoats crossed the railroad and took position at the Gamley house. Here, they were about 200 yards from, and partially to the rear of the Rebels' left. The Federals opened fire and with a shout drove forward, apparently taking the butternuts by surprise. The Rebs retired a few steps and braced themselves. Lynch's counterthrust soon bogged down, as the troops found themselves exposed to a galling fire from both friend and foe. Moreover, the officers were for the most part strangers to the men they were leading. 126

The stand made on the right by Miles' troops, supported by the fire of a section of the 3d New Jersey Battery, enabled the Federals to retain control of the country road leading eastward across Jones Hole Swamp to the Jerusalem plank road. Undaunted by the collapse of Lynch's thrust, Miles established a picket line along the Halifax road. When he inspected his outposts, the general heard Confederate officers and color bearers calling out their units. This led Miles to believe that the Rebels must be as disorganized by their success as the Federals were by their setback. Miles was in a combative mood; he felt certain that if reinforced he could recapture the rest of the rifle-pits from which his division had been hurled. He sent one of his aides (Major William R. Driver) to carry this information to General Hancock. 127

About the same time, Hancock was told by General Gregg that his cavalymen were prepared to co-operate in an effort to recover the breastworks. Before committing himself, Hancock discussed the situation with the commander of his Second Division, General Gibbon. Sadly shaking his head, Gibbon stated that his troops were in no condition to participate in a counterattack. Since it was necessary to retake the lost works to protect the country road linking Beams' Station with the Jerusalem plank road, Hancock had but one alternative--to withdraw. 128

It was 8 o'clock when Captain Joseph S. Conrad reached Miles' command post and told the general of Hancock's decision. As soon as it was dark, Miles was to disengage his troops and march to Williams' house on the Jerusalem plank road. Miles' division was to cover the corps' rear as it moved eastward away from the Rebels. 129

About dusk, the Confederates sent a strong column against Lynch's combat patrol then threatening their left. The Rebels, after a brisk struggle, compelled the bluecoats to withdraw and take cover inside the breastworks east of the railroad.

As soon as the fighting in this sector waned, Captain Woerner's gun captains reported they were out of ammunition. Woerner directed his section chiefs to limber up their pieces. The battery halted alongside the country road about one-third mile east of Oak Grove Church. Here, the teams were unhitched and sent to assist in bringing off the three Napoleons of the 12th New York Battery and such limbers and caissons as could be saved. Even after the teams arrived, valuable time was squandered as the officers sought to get men to manhandle the guns off the line and down into a ravine where the teams could be hitched up. Chief of Artillery A. Judson Clark was told that it would be impossible to reach the New Yorkers' fourth gun which had been abandoned at the angle. Undaunted, Clark told Lieutenant Dauchy to try to save the piece.

Dauchy started up the road which led by the church. After proceeding a short distance, he encountered Colonel Lynch. The colonel told Dauchy that the gun was outside the Union lines and couldn't be reached. In addition, Lynch continued, the infantry was "being withdrawn pursuant to orders."

Just then a column of footsoldiers came tramping up the road. Dauchy now turned his attention to getting his limbers and caissons off the field. Assisted by a detail from the 61st New York, the lieutenant was able to save three limbers. He, however, could obtain no help in drawing off the two caissons parked in the pines. As the lieutenant was about to abandon hope, Lieutenant Peter H. Sweeney of Miles' provost guard appeared with several men. Sweeney volunteered to assist in rescuing the caissons. Aided by the provost people, Dauchy was able to manhandle the heavy caissons down the country road. By the time the last caisson was wheeled off the field, all the troops of Hancock's command, except the pickets, had pulled out of the area. 130

One of Dauchy's gunners had been wounded in the bowels, but managed to take cover behind a large tree. Calling to the lieutenant, the wounded man handed him a large sum of money, from \$150 to \$175 (The battery had been paid several days before.), together with his watch and other valuables, with a request to send them to his family. When the last of the caissons was being withdrawn, Dauchy had the wounded gunner placed on the caisson. "But," Dauchy recalled, "the jolting along the rough road, through the woods, over stumps, and through ruts, caused him so much suffering that he begged me to lay him down by the side of the road and let him die." The lieutenant refused to listen to such a plea. The march was continued. When the battery finally halted, the cannoneer died and was "buried in a lonely field." 131

When the Federals abandoned their Reams' Station position at dark and retreated eastward, Gibbon's shattered division took the lead. Prior to drawing off his division, Miles instructed Colonel Lynch to post a picket line covering the left and front of the brigade. Lynch gave this task to the 61st New York. The New Yorkers were deployed as skirmishers along the Halifax road, their right resting on the rifle-pits. Detachments from other regiments of the 1st Brigade were advanced and stationed on the right of the 61st New York.

At 9 o'clock Miles notified Lynch that the other units had cleared the area. Upon receipt of this message, Lynch recalled his men. As soon as the units had been formed and mustered, the march for the Jerusalem plank road was commenced. 132

It was 7 o'clock when one of Hancock's aides galloped up to General Willcox's command post with an urgent message. Willcox had formed his division across the country road to Reams' Station and was halting and reorganizing the refugees from Hancock's command. The staff officer told Willcox that if he "could get up one or two brigades in time, the day might yet be saved."

Willcox called for his men to shuck their knapsacks. As soon as the units could be formed, the division moved out on the double. Willcox's panting IX Corps footsoldiers were within one and one-half miles of Reams' Station, when Colonel Morgan hailed their general. Morgan carried an order from Hancock for Willcox to take position to cover the retreat of the II Corps. Willcox was to hold his ground till Miles' division had passed, then he was to recall his soldiers and follow as a rear guard. Gregg's cavalry was to screen Willcox's bluecoats as they pulled back to the Jerusalem plank road. Willcox promptly posted his division to the left and the right of the road. 133

The soldiers of the IX Corps held fast as Hancock's troops passed through their lines. 134

Hancock kept his exhausted bluecoats on the road until they reached the fields near Williams' house. It was after midnight when the order to halt was given, and the men allowed to camp. 135

The most humiliating day the veteran II Corps was to experience during the war was over. General Hancock had been deeply stirred by the day's events, for the first time he had felt the bitterness of defeat. He had seen his troops fail in efforts to carry Confederate entrenchments, but never before had he experienced the mortification of watching his troops as they were driven from breastworks and their guns taken. In the disaster of June 22, Hancock had not been in charge, and during the indifferent behavior of the troops at Deep Bottom, the operations had been concealed from his view by dense forests. Never before had Hancock seen his men fail to respond to the utmost when he had called on them personally for a supreme effort; nor had he ever before ridden toward the foe followed by a "beggary array of a few hundred stragglers." He could no longer hide from himself that his once mighty corps retained but the shadow of its former strength and vigor.

Riding up to Colonel Morgan, covered with dust and begrimed with powder and smoke, Hancock placed his hand upon the staff officer's shoulder and said, "Colonel, I do not care to die, but I pray to God I may never leave this field." 13

Colonel McAllister, whose troops were digging in a mile south of the junction at Shay's Tavern, was notified by General Hancock at 1 a.m. on the 26th to hold his ground until Willecox's column had turned into the Jerusalem plank road. He would then recall his troops and return to the Jones' house sector of the investment line. 137

The reason behind these movements was a 7:30 message from Chief of Staff Humphreys. At that time Meade had determined to recall the II Corps and have it take "post in the vicinity of the Williams' house, or some point covering the plank road and looking toward Warren's left." Gregg's horsemen were to be directed to watch the countryside between Warren's left and the Jerusalem plank road. McAllister's footsoldiers were to be returned "to their former position in the intrenchments." 138

The telegrapher at army headquarters reported that the operator at the other end of the line had acknowledged receipt of the dispatch. A little before 10:30, Captain McIntee of Hancock's staff showed up at headquarters and told Humphreys that at 7:30 Hancock's telegraph station had been in the hands of the Rebels, who had undoubtedly intercepted the message. Humphreys therefore addressed a second communication, directing Hancock to withdraw his troops and have them take position near Williams' house. At the same time, Humphreys notified Hancock that Meade had ordered two more divisions, Crawford's and White's, to his assistance. 139

Thirty minutes later, General Meade, having learned of Hancock's misfortune, addressed a message to his corps commander. Meade explained that at the time he had spoken with McIntee, the II Corps had been holding its own, and this had caused him to defer his scheduled visit to Reams' Station. If he had had any doubt of the II Corps' ability to hold its ground, Meade observed, he would have dispatched Willecox and McAllister down the railroad. But, the general continued, his anxiety had been for Hancock's rear, or that the Southerners would penetrate the country between Warren's left and the Reams' Station perimeter. To guard against these contingencies he had rushed Willecox down the Jerusalem plank road, while holding Crawford and White "ready to move and attack." Furthermore, Meade

was afraid that the Confederates, after failing to drive Hancock, would turn on Warren. Consequently, he hadn't wanted to commit all of his reserves.

Meade assured Hancock:

I am satisfied you and your command have done all in your power, and though you have met with a reverse, the honor and escutcheons of the old Second are as bright as ever, and will on some future occasion prove it is only when enormous odds are brought against them that they can be moved. Don't let this matter worry you because you have given me every satisfaction. 140

Chief of Staff Humphreys at 11:25 p.m. wrote Hancock. He wanted the II Corps commander to know reinforcements were en route to cover his withdrawal from Reams' Station. Should Hancock not require these troops (Crawford's and White's divisions), he was to order them back to their commands. 141

Meanwhile, Humphreys had contacted Generals Warren and Parke. At 9:50 Humphreys had notified Warren that he was to dispatch a member of his staff to communicate with Hancock and see if he required reinforcements. If so, Warren was to rush Brigadier General Samuel W. Crawford's division to Reams' Station. General Parke at the same time was alerted to hold Brigadier General Julius White's division ready to march to the aid of the II Corps. Warren and Parke were advised that Hancock had been ordered to fall back to Williams' house. 142

At 10:15 the telegrapher at army headquarters tapped out urgent messages for Warren and Parke. Crawford and White were to put their troops into motion immediately. Crawford was to command the reinforcing column. 143

Five minutes later, Chief of Staff Humphreys relayed additional information to Warren. Crawford, besides his own and White's division, was to take charge of McAllister's troops currently posted near Shay's Tavern. According to the latest news from the point of danger, the Rebels had broken through Hancock's right. It was feared at headquarters that Willcox's IX Corps division might not be able to stem the tide. 144

Before issuing marching orders to Crawford, Warren wanted additional information. He wished to know the route to be taken by the relief column. 145

At 10:30 he had his answer. Humphreys expected Crawford to take the Jerusalem plank road, because the Weldon Railroad north of Reams' Station was in Confederate hands. 146

Upon receipt of this message, Warren got in touch with General Crawford. Earlier in the day, Crawford's division had been ordered to change camp. While doing so, instructions were received to prepare for action. As soon as the men had been formed, mustered, and inspected, the brigade commanders assembled their units at Globe Tavern. It was there that Crawford received directions to march eastward to Temple's house. The column would then proceed to Reams' Station via the Jerusalem plank and Dinwiddie stage roads. 147

When Crawford gave the word, his division, accompanied by the 9th Battery, Massachusetts Light Artillery, moved out.

Soon after Crawford's column had taken up the march, Warren at 11:30 received another telegram from army headquarters. According to the latest information from the front, Humphreys observed, it looked as if Hancock would be able to disengage without requiring any additional reinforcements. General Meade therefore wanted Warren to halt Crawford's column. A staff officer would be sent to ascertain if Hancock desired any troops to cover his retreat. If he didn't, Crawford was to be recalled. 148

Crawford's bluecoats had tramped about a mile, when the order to halt was received. Soon thereafter, Crawford learned that Hancock didn't require his assistance. Crawford accordingly countermarched his column, the brigades returning to their camps in the Globe Tavern area. 149

* * *

Willcox's IX Corps soldiers held their roadblock east of Jones Hole Swamp until the last of Hancock's battle-weary troops had passed. Leaving Gregg's horsemen to watch the eastern approaches to Reams' Station, Willcox recalled his brigades and fell in behind the II Corps. Willcox turned his column into the Jerusalem plank road. Although progress was retarded by Hancock's troops, Willcox's bluecoats by 6:30 a.m. on August 26, were back in their camp, near Parke's Aiken house headquarters. 150

McAllister assembled his reinforced brigade on Jerusalem plank road, as soon as Willcox's division was out of the way. Putting his troops into motion, McAllister had them back in their old position near Jones' house at 5 a.m. Except for one man, who while reconnoitering had run afoul of a Rebel patrol and had been captured, McAllister listed no casualties. 151

Before retiring for the night, General Hancock had written Meade from Williams' house. Hancock informed his chief that his men were now massing nearby, but it would be "a long time before the stragglers are up," and he could reorganize his corps "as to be serviceable." The general described the fighting at Reams' Station as "one of the severest and most obstinate battles the corps had ever fought."

After tersely describing the action, Hancock acknowledged the loss of several guns. He attributed this to the fact that nearly all the artillery horses had been slain before the final assault. The enemy, Hancock wrote, must have "suffered heavily." So far, the disorganized condition of his command had prevented Hancock from determining his casualties. But as his men had been sheltered by breastworks, he didn't feel his losses in killed and wounded would be as severe as that of the Rebels. Even so, Hancock observed, his corps would "not be available to-day for any serious work." 152

The next morning, Hancock forwarded to Meade's headquarters a more detailed account of the battle. The general was only able to "surmise" his losses, which he didn't think would exceed 1,200 to 1,500. All the soldiers he had spoken with were of the opinion that the battle was "one of the most determined and desperate fights of the war, resembling Spotsylvania in its character, though the number of engaged gives it less importance." A few more troops, in Hancock's opinion, would have given the Federals "a victory of considerable importance." 153

It was several days before the commanders of all Union units engaged at Reams' Station filed their returns. When the adjutant general totaled the casualties he found that the troops under Hancock had suffered 2,742 casualties: 130 killed, 529 wounded, and 2,073 missing. The proportion of officers lost was unusually large. In addition to the nine guns left on the field, Hancock's artillerists listed the loss of 134 horses, eight caissons, and eight limbers. 154

* * *

General Hill decided against pursuing Hancock's shattered corps. Orders were issued for the infantry commanders to collect their commands. Hampton

was directed to have his dismounted troopers occupy the abandoned rifle-pits. After detailing men to roundup and disarm the hundreds of Federals wandering about the area, Hill had his infantry formations move to the west. Along toward dark, a halt was called, and the soldiers, except for the large number ticketed for outpost duty, were allowed to bivouac. 155

At dark, General Rosser directed Captain Emanuel Sipe of the 12th Virginia Cavalry and Captain Myers of the 35th Virginia Battalion to report to General Hampton. The cavalry leader told Sipe and Myers to relieve the infantry posted in the fortifications. Soon after the troopers moved into the earthworks, a "terrible storm of rain, thunder and lightning" began. One of the cavalymen recalled:

The vivid streams, not flashes, of lightning danced and glanced along the Rail Road track and over the captured guns, which still stood there, while every moment the crashing thunder just overhead pealed out as if the inky sky was being torn to splinters, and in sheets and torrents the floods of rain poured down, while through the thick blackness of the storm and night could be heard all around the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying Federals, who, totally unable to help themselves, were gasping out their lives in agony, without one friend to shelter them from the raging of the fierce tempest or stop the ebbing life-tide that poured from their mangled bodies, and in the morning light there lay many corpses along the ground at Reams' whose souls had gone up to the judgment-throne amid the bursting storm and thunder of that horrible night. 156

Seven of Hampton's regiments remained at Reams' Station till the morning of the 26th. At that time Hampton, after detaching Butler's division to remove the wounded and police the battlefield, recalled his troopers. On checking with his division commanders, Hampton learned that in the previous day's fighting his corps had lost: 16 killed, 75 wounded, and 3 missing. 157

Hill's infantry columns started for Petersburg early on the 26th. As he rode back up the Squirrel Level road, Hill checked the reports submitted by his subordinates. On doing so, he found that his command had captured 12 stand of colors, 9 pieces of artillery, 10 caissons, 2,150 prisoners, 3,100 stand of arms, and 32 horses. All this had been accomplished at a relatively small cost--720 killed, wounded, and missing. 158

Union signal officers late in the afternoon observed the victorious Confederates as they returned from Reams' Station. At 4:40 a squadron of cavalry and a brigade of infantry were sighted as they marched up the Squirrel Level road. This column halted near the "lead-works." 159 Turning his glasses

on this force, the Federal observer saw that the Rebe were brandishing five of the 12 colors captured from Hancock's people. Shortly thereafter, another infantry column, which the signal corps people estimated to number at least a division (accompanied by 18 guns, several wagons, and a number of pack mules), passed up the Squirrel Level road and disappeared into the Rebel works. 160

Butler's division remained on picket duty for several days at Reams' Station. Only about 300 yards separated the outposts in grey from those in blue. There was no shooting, however, as both Reb and Yank "agreed to the childish proposition of 'I'll let you alone if you'll let me alone.'" 161

A number of the butternuts watched as a Union burial party came out under a flag of truce to inter their dead. This task was done in haste; the Federals returned to their lines, leaving a few dead bluecoats for the Johnnies to lay to rest. 162

* * *

General Gregg's Union cavalry, when the Confederates declined to pursue Hancock's troops, was able to hold its ground on the evening of August 25. It was midnight before Gregg saw fit to recall the 1st Maine and the 16th Pennsylvania from their positions covering the crossings of Jones Hole Swamp.

The next morning, Gregg posted Smith's brigade at Temple's and on the Jerusalem plank road. Checkpoints were established on that road and the roads leading westward to Reams' Station. Stedman's brigade maintained its position on the Dinwiddie stage road till 10 a.m. Before withdrawing and rejoining Gregg, Stedman's troopers were shelled by Hart's four-gun South Carolina Battery. 163 Spear's brigade, which had retired to the Jerusalem plank road the previous evening, was directed to report to its parent unit--Kautz's division. 164

Although the Confederates had severely punished the II Corps, they had failed to shake the Federals' grip on the Weldon Railroad. But in the long run, the heavy casualties suffered by Hancock's people might have had important repercussions. Along with the battle of the Weldon Railroad, fought the previous week, the engagement at Reams' Station could be expected to have a depressing effect on morale in the North. With an election approaching, the peace party

in the North would draw strength from the ever lengthening casualty lists. Several more successes of the Confederates'---such as Reams' Station might just cause Abraham Lincoln to lose the election.

When he wrote of the battle, General A. P. Hill reported, "The sabre and the bayonet have shaken hands on the enemy's captured breastworks." 165

Once again, as many times in the past, the North Carolina infantry brigades at Reams' Station had covered themselves with glory. General Robert E. Lee on August 29 wrote Governor Zebulon B. Vance of North Carolina:

I have frequently been called upon to mention the services of the North Carolina soldiers in this army, but their gallantry and conduct were never more deserving of admiration than in the engagement at Reams' Station, on the 25th instant.

The brigades of Generals Cooke, MacRae and Lane, the last under the command of General Conner, advanced through a thick abatis of felled trees, under a heavy fire of musketry and artillery, and carried the enemy's works with a steady courage that elicited the warm commendation of their corps and division commanders, and the admiration of the army.

On the same occasion the brigade of General Barringer bore a conspicuous part in the operations of the cavalry, which were no less distinguished for boldness and efficiency than those of the infantry.

If the men who remain in North Carolina share the spirit of those they have sent to the field, as I doubt not they do, her defense may be securely entrusted in their hands. 166

THE BATTLE OF REAMS' STATION

Chapter II

The Confederates Drive the II Corps from Reams' Station

Notes

- 1 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 223. Seven hundred men from Miles' division were used to man the line of outposts.
- 2 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 497.
- 3 Ibid., 481.
- 4 Ibid.; C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 223.
- 5 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 302, 308, 317, 323, 328, 337.
During the night, troops from Miles' division had relieved the 1st Delaware and the battalion from the 2d Delaware on the picket line. The 69th and 106th Pennsylvania of Smyth's brigade didn't rejoin the unit until after the brigade had reached the sorghum field.
- 6 Ibid., 216. From left to right Lynch's brigade was posted: the 81st Pennsylvania, the 28th Massachusetts, the 28th Michigan, the 5th New Hampshire, the 183d Pennsylvania, the 120th New York, the 2d New York Heavy Artillery, the 61st New York, and the 140th Pennsylvania.
- 7 Ibid., 288.
- 8 Ibid., 270. Three companies of the 4th New York Heavy Artillery were assigned to picket duty--Companies I and K watched the division right and Company K the left.
- 9 Ibid., 250.
- 10 Ibid., 834, 835.
- 11 Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 180; Dunlop, Lee's Sharpshooters, 190.
- 12 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 942-943. With Barringer in command of Rooney Lee's division, Colonel Cheek led Barringer's brigade.
- 13 U. B. Brooks, Butler and His Cavalry in the War of Secession 1861-1865 (Columbia, 1909), 303.
- 14 Myers, The Comanches, 324-325.
- 15 Ibid., 325.
- 16 Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 142; C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 834, 835, 943.

- 17 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 834, 835, 943.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., 835.
- 20 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 482.
- 21 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 323, 328, 332.
- 22 Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 142.
- 23 Ibid.; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 223, 245, 835, 943.
- 24 Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 142-143.
- 25 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 223, 943; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 482.
- 26 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 323, 943; Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 143.
- 27 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 302, 311. The 59th New York was deployed to the right and the 7th Michigan to the left.
- 28 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 313; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 407, 414.
- 29 Myers, The Comanches, 325-326.
- 30 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 323, 332, 943.
- 31 Ibid., 323, 328, 332.
- 32 Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 279.
- 33 Brooks, Butler and his Cavalry, 303; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 943.
- 34 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 324, 328, 332.
- 35 Ibid., 223, 251, 607, 943.
- 36 Ibid., 224, 293.
- 37 Ibid., 302, 306, 308, 311, 317, 407, 414; Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 313.
- 38 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 312.
- 39 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 251, 607.
- 40 Ibid., 607.
- 41 Ibid., 618.
- 42 Ibid., 251, 302, 308, 312, 313.
- 43 Ibid., 262.
- 44 Ibid., 252, 270, 288. Company E, 148th Pennsylvania was posted as sharpshooters in a house near the picket line. When the picket line fell back, Company E was compelled to evacuate their strongpoint and

- retire rapidly to escape being cut off. Ibid., 287.
- 45 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 313-314.
- 46 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 483.
- 47 Ibid., 482-483. By 12 o'clock signal corps personnel had succeeded in stringing a telegraph line to within one-half mile of Hancock's command post. Hereafter, throughout the day all of Hancock's messages to army headquarters were sent by telegraph. O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 224.
- 48 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 279, 280; Charles H. Stedman, "Battle at Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 114.
- 49 Dunlop, Lee's Sharpshooters, 191-192.
- 50 Humphreys, Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65, 280; Freeman, R. E. Lee, III, 489; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 180-181.
- 51 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 224, 245, 252, 287, 288; Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 280; Stedman, "Battle at Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 114.
- 52 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 280-281.
- 53 Dunlop, Lee's Sharpshooters, 192-193.
- 54 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 224, 245, 252, 278, 280, 282, 288-289.
- 55 Ibid., 407, 414-415.
- 56 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 314, 315-316.
- 57 Ibid., 314-315; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 414-415.
- 58 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 252; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 484.
- 59 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 252; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLMUS-Illinois, III, 131.
- 60 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 289.
- 61 Ibid., 324, 328, 332.
- 62 Ibid., 87, 607.
- 63 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 482. The Third Division, II Army Corps, General Mott commanding, had remained in the Petersburg investment lines,

when Hancock had moved his other two divisions to Reams' Station. Mott's relief column was to be accompanied by one of Parke's batteries, which was camped at Williams' house.

64 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 224.

65 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 276.

66 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 483.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 484.

69 Ibid., 483; Humphreys, Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65, 280.

70 Humphreys, Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65, 280.

71 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 225.

72 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 484.

73 Ibid.

74 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 225.

75 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 487.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid., 488. General Humphreys, on learning what Mott had done, decided that he had "stripped the left too much." The Chief of Staff telegraphed Mott to use his reserves to fill up the entrenchments. He was to have McAllister leave some of his men in the large redoubt, until the relieving force from the 1st Brigade arrived. Humphreys promised to send Mott some of the troops detailed to guard headquarters to hold part of his second line. Ibid. Mott replied, informing Humphreys that he had pulled 250 men out of the entrenchments east of the plank road to hold the redoubt. With the engineers, Mott believed, he would have enough soldiers to hold the rifle-pits from the redoubt to Strong's house. Ibid.

78 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 391.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid., 226.

81 C. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 494. This message was sent at the same time as the one alerting Mott to hold a strong force ready to march to Hancock's assistance.

82 Ibid.

- 83 Ibid., 495.
- 84 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 591.
- 85 Ibid., 226, 591.
- 86 Ibid., 252, 302, 306, 308, 313, 421.
- 87 Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 131-132.
- 88 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 283-284, 286, 287; Stedman, "Battle at Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 115.
- 89 Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 135; Dunlop, Lee's Sharpshooters, 195.
- 90 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 226, 293, 306, 308, 318, 328, 332.
- 91 Ibid., 408, 417, 418. Two of Captain Woerner's guns were placed on a knoll near the rear line, while the other section was immediately in the rear of the church.
- 92 Ibid., 245, 421; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 131.
- 93 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 414, 423.
- 94 George C. Underwood, History of the Twenty-Sixth Regiment of the North Carolina Troops, in the Great War 1861-1865 (Goldsboro, _____), 86-87; Stedman, "Battle at Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 115-116.
- 95 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 289; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 181; Humphreys, Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65, 280-281.
- 96 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 253, 289. Recruits and substitutes in large composed the 7th, 39th, and 52d New York. The 7th New York was entirely new, the companies being organized in New York and sent to join the army before Petersburg. According to General Hancock, some of the officers were unable to speak English. Ibid., 227.
- 97 Underwood, History of the 26th North Carolina, 87; James H. Lane, "Recollections" (unpublished manuscript, North Carolina Dept. of Archives and History).
- 98 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 408, 421.
- 99 Ibid., 226, 245, 253, 302.
- 100 Ibid., 253, 314.
- 101 Ibid., 253, 280, 287. The left flank of the attacking battle line

- extended to a point opposite the 66th New York of Broady's brigade.
- 102 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 287-290.
 - 103 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 226, 253, 408, 421; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 136-137.
 - 104 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 226, 246, 253, 262, 421.
 - 105 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 291-292.
 - 106 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 421; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 137.
 - 107 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 278, 280, 282, 284, 286; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 181.
 - 108 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 317.
 - 109 Ibid., 318.
 - 110 Ibid., 319; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 270.
 - 111 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 319-320; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 270, 408, 415, 423; Stedman, "Battle at Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 117-118.
 - 112 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 320-321; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 135-136; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 270, 408, 415, 423.
 - 113 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 321-322.
 - 114 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 270, 408, 415, 423. The Rhode Islanders saved one limber and seven horses; Stedman, "Battle of Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 116-117.
 - 115 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 226, 293.
 - 116 Ibid., 293, 306, 308, 318, 324. When he filed his "After Action Report," General Gibbon observed, "In the attempt to obey this order, that portion of the division with me did not sustain its previous reputation, and, demoralized, partly by the shelling and musketry firing in its rear, partly by the refugees from other parts of the line, retired after a very feeble effort and under a very slight fire in great confusion, every effort of myself and staff failing to arrest the rout until the breast-work was reached." Ibid., 293.

- 117 Ibid., 306, 308, 324, 329, 332.
- 118 Ibid., 311, 943; Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 143; Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 280; Brooks, Butler and His Cavalry, 304.
- 119 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 311, 943.
- 120 Beale, History of the 9th Virginia, 143-144.
- 121 Ibid., 144; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 294, 306, 318, 324, 329, 332, 943-944.
- 122 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 318.
- 123 Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 144.
- 124 Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 281-282.
- 125 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 227, 418, 607; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 137.
- 126 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 253-254, 262.
- 127 Ibid., 227, 254.
- 128 Ibid., 227.
- 129 Ibid., 227, 254.
- 130 Ibid., 262, 408-409, 421-422; Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 138-139.
- 131 Dauchy, "Battle of Ream's [sic] Station," MOLLUS-Illinois, III, 138-139.
- 132 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 227, 262.
- 133 Ibid., 227, 591.
- 134 Ibid., 591.
- 135 Ibid., 227, 246, 254, 262, 278, 283, 290, 302, 318, 332. Teams from one of the batteries, parked near the Southall house, were sent as soon as possible to relieve the infantrymen who had drawn off the three limbers and two caissons of the 12th New York Battery, and the caissons of the 3d New Jersey Battery, the horses from which had been appropriated to pull the New Yorkers' guns. Ibid., 409.
- 136 Walker, "Reams' Station," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, V, 294-295.
- 137 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 391.
- 138 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 485.
- 139 Ibid.
- 140 Ibid., 486.
- 141 Ibid.

- 142 Ibid., 489, 495.
- 143 Ibid., 490, 495.
- 144 Ibid., 490.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 505; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 493.
- 148 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 490-491.
- 149 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 505.
- 150 Ibid., 591; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 533.
- 151 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 391.
- 152 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 524.
- 153 Ibid., 525-526.
- 154 C. N., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 131, 409-410. The guns abandoned on the field were: five 12-pounder Napoleons and four 3-inch Ordnance Rifles.
- 155 Ibid., 944; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 181. General Mahone reached the field with Weisiger's and King's brigades in time to assist in the mopping up operations. A soldier in the 12th Virginia noted in his diary, "Loss very slight. The expedition was altogether quite a sweep. A large number of prisoners & 16 [sic] guns were taken besides quantities of small arms &c." Diary Sale, 12th Virginia (Virginia State Library).
- 156 Myer, The Comanches, 327-328.
- 157 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 944. Hampton reported that his troopers buried 143 Federals and captured 781 bluecoats, including 25 officers.
- 158 Ibid., 940; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 181.
- 159 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. II, 523, 527.
- 160 Ibid.
- 161 Myers, The Comanches, 328.
- 162 Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 145.
- 163 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLII, pt. I, 525, 608.
- 164 Ibid., 835.
- 165 Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry, 283.
- 166 Underwood, The 26th Regiment North Carolina Troops, 86; Steedman, "Battle of Reams' Station," Southern Historical Society Papers, XIX, 119-120.