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IN STORAGE

THE BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN, FEBRUARY 5-7, 1865

Chapter I

Meade and His Generals Prepare to Strike

Reports reached Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's City Point, Virginia, headquarters at the beginning of February, 1865, that the Confederates were employing huge wagon trains to haul supplies into Petersburg for consumption by the Army of Northern Virginia. Rations stockpiled at depots in North Carolina, it was said, were being shipped as far as Hicksford, 40 miles below Petersburg, over the Petersburg & Weldon Railroad. At Hicksford, the commissary supplies were removed from the cars and loaded onto wagons. Upon leaving the temporary railhead, the wagon trains rolled up the Meherrin River valley to the Boydton Plank Road, then along that road through Dinwiddie Courthouse and on to Petersburg. [1]

General Grant, hoping to intercept these trains and break up this supply route, drafted a memorandum on February 4, addressed to the commander of his Army of the Potomac, Major General George G. Meade.

To take advantage of the dry, spring-like weather of the past few days which had dried the area's roads, Grant wanted "to destroy or capture as much as possibly" of the quartermaster trains being used to "partially supply" General Robert E. Lee's troops in and about Petersburg. Meade, to do this, was to get his cavalry ready to take the field as soon as possible, and in no case later than the 6th. When the troopers rode out they were to travel light, taking "no wagons and but few ambulances."

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The II Corps was to march at the same time, but independent of the cavalry, "as far south as Stony Creek Station." There the footsoldiers were to stay till the cavalry had done the foe all the harm it could and had returned to its base. When it took the field, the infantry was to take along four days' rations in haversacks and one and one-half days' forage for the cavalry in wagons. A limited amount of artillery was to accompany the II Corps.

The V Corps was to be held ready to go to the assistance of the II Corps, should the Confederates march out of the Petersburg perimeter to attack. It might be wise, Grant observed, for Meade to send out the V Corps at the same time as the II, marching "it by a road west of the one taken by the latter, and to go but about half way to Stony Creek, unless required to do so to meet movements of the enemy." [2]

Grant entrusted his letter, which was marked confidential, to a trusted staff-officer for delivery to General Meade. After studying the memorandum, Meade concluded that chances for the operation's success would be enhanced, if several changes were made. As one of the II Corps' divisions was in the rifle-pits, valuable time would be squandered and there would be a risk of attracting the Confederates' attention should this unit be withdrawn. Meade accordingly thought it would be better if he sent the V Corps to Stony Creek, and two divisions of the II Corps to Reams' Station. There the II Corps' people would be in position to support the V Corps "or return to our left flank if threatened."

Meade at 1:45 p.m. telegraphed Grant for permission to make these changes in his master plan. [3]

Grant went along with Meade's suggestions. On doing so, he pointed

out that he had merely mentioned the II Corps for the longer march, because the V Corps had undertaken the last expedition. [4]

While awaiting Grant's reply, Meade had been discussing the situation with his staff. One of the officers volunteered that the Confederate trains moving along the Boydton Plank Road had been crossing the Nottoway at Birchett's Bridge. If Grant would give him the go ahead, Meade would send the V Corps to the crossing of Stony Creek via Vaughan road, while the II Corps followed the same road as far as Rowanty Creek. Thus the infantry would be advanced to within supporting distance of Dinwiddie Courthouse, where the cavalry was to strike the Boydton Plank Road. Meade was of the opinion that his horsesoldiers had as good a chance of intercepting the trains near Dinwiddie as at Belfield, while his infantry columns at the same time would not have so far to march. Should the Rebels choose to come out and fight, the II and V Corps would be "in good position to invite them."

When he forwarded this information to Grant, Meade inquired, "Are the objects to be attained commensurate with the disappointment which the public are sure to entertain if you make any movement and return without some striking result?" [5]

Replying at 6:45, Grant assured Meade, "Your arrangements are satisfactory," and the "objects to be attained are of importance." [6]

Grant had inquired as to when the troops would march, so Meade at 7:45 wired, "the cavalry will move out at 3 a.m. and the infantry at 7 a.m." Since his last telegram, several "contrabands" had entered the Union lines. When questioned, they reported that Major General Matthew C. Butler's Confederate cavalry division had left the Petersburg area the previous week for North Carolina. With Butler gone,

Lee would have only one mounted division, Major General W. H. F. "Rooney" Lee's, to oppose the Federal horsesoldiers.[7]

News of the probable departure of Butler's division caused Grant to again contact Meade. If the Union cavalry could possibly go to Belfield, it was to do so, because there was said to be a large quantity of stores stockpiled there.[8]

Meade and his staff in the meantime had prepared a "circular" for the guidance of the corps commanders and Brigadier General David McM. Gregg, the leader of the Army of the Potomac's cavalry. Gregg was to have his division on the road at 3 a.m. to-morrow, to proceed via Reams' Station to the Boydton Plank Road, for the purpose of intercepting and capturing Rebel wagon trains carrying supplies from Belfield. Should an opportunity occur to inflict "injury on the enemy," Gregg was to avail himself to it. The cavalryman was to leave with the V Corps one of his cavalry regiments and a supply train, loaded with "one and a half day's forage" and his reserve ammunition. The troopers were to be rationed for "four days from to-morrow morning." Gregg was to keep the leader of the V Corps posted, and in event of an engagement he was to look to him for orders.[9]

Major General Gouverneur K. Warren was to march his V Corps at 7 a.m. to J. Hargrave's house, on the road leading from Rowanty Postoffice to Dinwiddie Courthouse. There he was to take post in support of Gregg's cavalry. When it took the field, the V Corps was to be accompanied by "two batteries, one rifled and one smooth-bore, and the usual amount of ammunition in limbers and caissons." Like the troopers, the footsoldiers were to carry along four days' rations. Ninety rounds of ammunition would be allocated by the corps' ordnance officer for each man taken

along on the expedition, 50 rounds in cartridge-boxes and the rest in reserve. "One-half the usual allowance of ambulances, with one hospital and one medicine wagon to each brigade, together with one-half the intrenching tools, besides the pioneer tools," would be taken by the corps. Should Warren need reinforcements, he was to look to the II Corps.[10]

Major General Andrew A. Humphreys was to move out at 7 o'clock with his two II Corps divisions "not on the line to the crossing of the Vaughan road over Hatcher's [sic] Run and to Armstrong's Mills." He would "hold these two points and the communications with General Warren" to his front and to the VI Corps in his rear. The II Corps was to march with two batteries, while the allowance as to rations, ammunition, tools, and medical supplies would be identical to that of Warren's people.[11]

As a situation could develop where the entire Army of the Potomac might be called on to take the field, Major General John G. Parke of the IX Corps and Brigadier General George W. Getty of the VI Corps, along with the leader of Humphreys' First Division (Brigadier General Nelson A. Miles), were alerted to hold their commands ready to march on short notice. They were to be prepared to withdraw "all the troops except the minimum number necessary to maintain the picket-line and the garrisons of the works." Meade's staff was put on call to be ready to accompany their general, when he took the field at 8 a.m.[12]

General Gregg by 8:50 p.m., February 4, had prepared and distributed to his brigade commanders their final instructions. When the division took the field at 3 a.m., the march order would be: "First, Second Brigade; second, Third Brigade; third, one-half the ambulances of the division; fourth, First Brigade." After leaving camp, the horsesoldiers

were to proceed down the Jerusalem Plank Road to Gary's Church, then to Reams' Station, where the commander of the advance brigade, Colonel J. Irwin Gregg, was to receive additional instructions. No batteries would be taken along on the expedition, while the leader of the 3d Brigade was to designate one of his regiments to report to General Warren.[13]

Meanwhile, General Warren had announced the order in which his V Corps was to move out. Realizing that there would be delays, Warren wanted his division commanders to have their people formed and ready to march by 6:30 a.m. Brigadier General Romeyn B. Ayres' Second Division was to have the lead, followed by Brigadier General Charles Griffin's First Division, the artillery, Brigadier General Samuel W. Crawford's Third Division, the ambulances, and finally the reserve ordnance wagons. The usual number of spring wagons would be allowed to accompany the "several headquarters." At 6:30 in the morning, all the corps' pioneers were to assemble at Dr. Gurley's house. A three days' supply of beef cattle on the hoof were to be driven along on the expedition. Guards were to be detailed to protect the camps during the corps' absence.[14]

V Corps troops currently on the picket line were to be left, when the long blue columns moved out. Rations to subsist the 1,400 pickets were to be issued by the corps' chief of commissary.[15]

General Humphreys, having served for months as Meade's chief of staff, was more security conscious than Warren and Gregg. Like General Grant, he labeled the circular prepared for the guidance of his division commanders, "confidential." Brigadier General Thomas A. Smyth was to march his Second Division at 7 a.m. down Vaughan road, past Cummings' house, and via a crossroad to the vicinity of Armstrong's Mill. There he was to post his troops and hold the Hatcher Run crossing. Other units

of Smyth's command were to guard the crossroad over which the Second Division had marched from Vaughan road and "look up the Duncan road toward the Watkins house." Smyth's column was to be preceded by 350 horsesoldiers, who were to drive the Rebel vedettes beyond Hatcher Run. The troopers were then to cross the stream, pushing on to Dabney's Mill.

The Third Division, Brigadier General Gershom Mott commanding, was to follow Smyth. One brigade was to cross Hatcher Run, and hold the roads beyond leading to Armstrong's and Dabney's mills. A second brigade was to be posted at the crossing of Hatcher Run, while a third was to be positioned at the point where the crossroad to Armstrong's Mill leaves Vaughan road.

During the advance, Smyth's people were to look out for their right and front, and, in conjunction with Mott's division, "establish a line connecting with the corps picket-line near the Tucker house...." [16]

To insure that Smyth and Mott took the field with as many effectives as possible, Humphreys issued instructions that during the night the 355 men from Smyth's division currently on picket were to be relieved by soldiers from General Miles' First Division. Mott's pickets would not be relieved, but would be withdrawn when the division moved out, "excepting a sufficient force to protect the camps in their rear against guerrillas." Miles, at 8 a.m. on the 5th, was to send garrisons to Forts Emory and Siebert. [17]

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Chapter I

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Notes

1 Andrew A. Humphreys, The Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65 (New York, 1882), 312.

2 The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 367.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. The V Corps, reinforced by the Third Division of the II Corps and Brigadier General David McM. Gregg's cavalry, in December had destroyed the Weldon Railroad, as far as the Meherrin River. Humphreys, The Virginia Campaign of '64 and '65, 310.

5 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 367-368.

6 Ibid., 368. In early January, the Confederate leaders had decided to send General Butler with two (Rutledge's and Young's) of his three brigades to South Carolina to check the advance of Major General William T. Sherman's powerful "Army Group." On January 19 an order to this effect was issued. Major General Wade Hampton about the same time was directed to proceed to South Carolina. Edward L. Wells, Hampton and His Cavalry in '64 (Richmond, 1899), 389.

7 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 368, 370.

8 Ibid., 368.

9 Ibid., 370, 380-381.

10 Ibid., 370, 377-378. A telegraph line was to be run from army headquarters to the II Corps' command post on Hatcher Run.

11 Ibid., 370, 372. General Miles' division, which was posted in the earthworks, was to report during the corps' absence to army headquarters.

12 Ibid., 370-371.

13 Ibid., 382. Colonel Gregg of the 2d Brigade was to recall two-thirds of the force that he had on picket at dusk. The troopers remaining on picket were to maintain their present line, with such modifications as Colonel Gregg might direct. Ibid.

14 Ibid., 379.

15 Ibid., 378, 379.

16 Ibid., 373-374. General Miles was to hold his division, "including the garrison of the rear works, ready to move, excepting the force heretofore specified for garrisons, pickets, as the picket-line south of the road running west from Fort Cummings will require to be changed quickly by orders from the commanding general." Ibid.

17 Ibid., 374, 375. Heretofore, Smyth's division had garrisoned Forts Emory and Siebert.

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Chapter II

The Confederates Come Out To Fight

Reveille sounded at 2 o'clock on February 5, 1865, in the encampments occupied by General Gregg's fast-moving cavalry division. Before an hour had passed, the troopers had wolfed down a hurried breakfast, squared away their gear, and saddled their horses. The three brigades had been formed, mustered, and inspected by 3 a.m. General Gregg now gave the word, and the division moved out. The 2d Brigade, Colonel J. Irwin Gregg commanding, took the lead as the long column rode through the darkness down the Jerusalem Plank Road.[1]

At Gary's Church, the lead regiment, the 13th Pennsylvania, turned off the plank road and into a road leading westward. The early risers were getting up, as the column passed Wood's Shop. Daylight found the horsesoldiers at Reams' Station, where General Gregg directed the advance into the Halifax road. Veterans pointed out to replacements sites associated with previous encounters with the Rebels in and about Reams' Station. At Malone's Crossing, the cavalry entered the Malone's Bridge Road.

About a mile from Malone's Bridge, men of the 13th Pennsylvania sighted Rebel pickets. Captain Nathaniel S. Sneyd ordered the gait quickened. The Confederates were seen to swing into their saddles and retire rapidly down the road. Troopers of the 13th Pennsylvania pounded along close on their heels.

Crossing Rowanty Creek, the greyclads sounded the alarm and took cover in a line of rifle-pits. Alerted by shouts and shots, the reserve had already filed into the earthworks. As soon as the last of the pickets

had crossed and moments before the Federals came into sight, the Confederates removed a number of planks, which they had previously loosened from the bridge.

General Gregg, who rode with the vanguard, saw the fortifications and called for the commander of the 13th Pennsylvania to form his troopers for battle. As soon as the cavalrymen had dismounted and horse-holders had been detailed, the Pennsylvanians deployed as skirmishers to the left and right of the road, "with orders to advance and drive the enemy from his position...."

The troopers fought their way, "Indian-fashion," toward the edge of the stream. Within a few minutes, the bluecoats had gained the upper hand and were able to keep the Rebels pinned down. Covered by the fire of these sharpshooters, volunteers dashed forward and repaired the bridge. Colonel Gregg now called up the 2d Pennsylvania. Putting the spurs to their horses, the 2d Pennsylvania Cavalry clattered across the bridge, scattering the Confederates, who had abandoned their position and were racing for their mounts, in all directions. An officer and 15 men, less fleet than their comrades, were overtaken by the Federals. [2]

When the march was renewed, the 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry of Gregg's brigade took the lead, as the division pounded westward toward Dinwiddie Courthouse by way of the military and Vaughan roads. No further opposition was encountered, as the Yankee horsesoldiers pounded ahead. The Confederates, whom they had bested in the engagement at Malone's Bridge, had retired toward Stony Creek. Galloping into Dinwiddie Courthouse at noon, troopers of the 8th Pennsylvania surprised and captured a small train of nine wagons.

While the division rested, Colonel Gregg organized and sent out three

combat patrols. The 8th Pennsylvania Cavalry rode down the Boydton Plank Road toward Belfield, while the 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry headed up the plank road in the direction of Petersburg. A detachment from the 2d Pennsylvania Cavalry headed out the Flat Foot road.

Lieutenant Colonel William A. Corrie and his horsesoldiers of the 8th Pennsylvania drove down the plank road to a point beyond the crossing of Butterwood Creek, without intercepting any more wagons. Spearheaded by Captain McDowell's squadron (Companies A and D), the 16th Pennsylvania rode up the plank road about five miles, overtaking 12 wagons and an ambulance, and capturing three officers and a dozen enlisted Confederates. The 16th Pennsylvania, not having fired a shot, then retraced its steps. Of the three patrols ordered out, only the 2d Pennsylvania exchanged shots with the Rebels. As they advanced down Flat Foot road, the horsesoldiers of the 2d Pennsylvania clashed with a small mounted detachment. [3]

General Gregg, after questioning the prisoners and the residents of the village, concluded that information indicating the Rebels were moving large quantities of supplies into Petersburg by way of the Boydton Plank Road was false. During the past ten days, he wrote Chief of Staff Alexander S. Webb there had been very little wagon traffic along that road. Although he had driven his men hard, only 18 wagons had been captured.

Important information regarding Confederate troop movements, however, had been secured. One of General Robert E. Lee's infantry divisions had camped on the night of the 4th, four miles northeast of Dinwiddie Courthouse. This force had broken camp at dawn and had marched up the Boydton Plank Road, rejoining the Army of Northern Virginia inside the Petersburg

perimeter.

According to the prisoners, Colonel B. Huger Rutledge's South Carolina Cavalry Brigade had gone south. The remainder of Lee's cavalry, currently operating on the Southside, was said to be "about Belfield and north toward Jarratt's." Because of the destruction of the railroad bridge across the Meherrin River, there was reportedly only a small quantity of supplies at Belfield, consequently, Gregg decided the risk of leading his division to that point wasn't worth the risk.[4]

Satisfied that he had inflicted all damage he could to the Confederate military in the Dinwiddie Courthouse area, Gregg started his division back for the Nowanty. As his vanguard was turning into the military road at Kidd's, General Gregg sent a patrol down Vaughan road to relay to General Warren the information that the horsesoldiers had collected regarding Rebel activities in the area. The cavalry division was back at Malone's Bridge at 10 p.m. On the return march, a half dozen mounted butternuts harassed Gregg's rear guard, Captain Oliphant's squadron (Companies G and H), 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry.[5]

* * *

General Humphreys and his staff were up and about long before daybreak on February 5. Checking his order of battle at 5:25, Humphreys was disturbed to learn that the cavalry officer (who was to have reported with his detachment at 1 a.m.) had not shown up. When he investigated, Humphreys discovered that there had been a mistake: the cavalry was to report at 6 o'clock. At the designated hour, Major Frank W. Hess with 220 officers and men of the 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry showed up at Humphreys' headquarters.[6]

Communicating with General Smyth, Humphreys was delighted to learn that the Second Division's picket line had been relieved by troops from Miles' command.[7] Smyth assured his corps commander that at this hour his troops were massed at McDougall's house and were ready and eager to take the field.[8]

At 7 o'clock Smyth's division, preceded by Major Hess and his troopers, took up the march. Immediately behind the cavalry, as the Second Division turned into Vaughan road, came Colonel William A. Olmsted's 1st Brigade, followed by Colonel Mathew Murphy's 2d Brigade, the 10th Massachusetts Battery, and Lieutenant Colonel Francis E. Pierce's 3d Brigade. Before the column had hiked very far down Vaughan road, Colonel Olmsted, in compliance with instructions from General Smyth, sent the 19th Massachusetts forward to support Hess' cavalry.[9]

General Mott had turned his division out at daybreak. Forty minutes before the Third Division was slated to move out, Lieutenant John W. Roder reported to Mott with his unit--Battery K, 4th U. S. Light Artillery, reinforced by a section of Battery B, 1st Rhode Island Light Artillery. Mott at 7 a.m. put his division in motion. The Third Division, with Brigadier General Regis De Trobriand's 1st Brigade in the lead, followed Smyth's column down Vaughan road. Near McDowell's house, one of Humphreys' staff-officers hailed General Mott. Humphreys wanted Mott to send forward the brigade that was to force a crossing of Hatcher Run. Mott told De Trobriand to accompany the aide. Instructions at the same time were issued halting Smyth's division.

The 1st Brigade and one section of Battery K followed De Trobriand as he rode through the picket line. De Trobriand's mission was twofold. Besides forcing a crossing of Hatcher Run at Vaughan road, he was to

"make disposition to hold the roads leading to Armstrong's and Dabney's Mills." Screened by Hess and his horsesoldiers, De Trobriand's blue-coats swung rapidly along.[10]

Shots were exchanged near Cummings' house, as Hess' cavalrymen charged and drove Confederate vedettes down the road toward the ford. Approaching Hatcher Run, Major Hess and his scouts saw that there was a small detachment of Rebels posted in rifle-pits on the opposite bank to guard the Vaughan road crossing. A hurried reconnaissance satisfied Hess that his troopers would be unable to force a "passage" as planned, because the crossing had been obstructed with felled timber.

Upon receiving this news from Hess, De Trobriand prepared to employ his infantry to establish the bridgehead. Soldiers of the 2d U. S. Sharpshooters were called up and deployed as skirmishers to the front and right of the Rebels' breastworks. While the sharpshooters engaged the Johnnies, the 99th and 110th Pennsylvania worked their way through the woods south of Vaughan road. Colonel Edwin R. Biles of the 99th was to take advantage of the diversion effected by the regulars to force a passage of Hatcher Run at the broken dam, 200 yards below the crossing.

After waiting about 15 minutes and hearing nothing further from Colonel Biles, General De Trobriand rode to the left to ascertain the cause of the delay. As his horse trotted into the woods, De Trobriand was shaken to see the two Pennsylvania regiments lying down among the trees. He was boiling, when he confronted Biles and demanded an explanation. Biles answered, "The cavalrymen told me the run was impassable for footsoldiers," while "he supposed that he was to regulate his movements" on the sharpshooters.

"You are mistaken!" De Trobriand exclaimed, and he repeated his orders.

The misunderstanding resolved, the 99th Pennsylvania, supported by the 110th, moved out of the woods and charged across a small, open field to the bank of the run. Without waiting for the bluecoats to attempt a crossing, the butternuts abandoned their earthworks and disappeared into the timber beyond. Even with no opposition, the Yanks experienced considerable difficulty in reaching the right bank of Hatcher Run. The water was deep and cold, the men had to jump, one after the other, from log to log. General De Trobriand was compelled to dismount and pass the stream in similar fashion.[11]

Having gained the west bank of the run by 9:30, General De Trobriand had the mission of posting his men to cover the bridgehead and watch the roads leading to Armstrong's and Dabney's mills. An arc-shaped line was laid out, crossing the two roads, the right resting on the run and the left on a swamp.' As the regiments of the 1st Brigade slowly worked their way across Hatcher Run, the units filed into position. Outposts were pushed out, connecting on the left with the captured rifle-pits in which De Trobriand posted two companies. The brigade's numerically strongest regiment, the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery, was held in reserve, ready to move on the double to any point on the perimeter where its services were required. Observing that Rebel skirmishers occupied the woods to their center and right, the Yanks dug in.[12]

Meanwhile, the division pioneers had been called up and put to work bridging the run. One bridge was thrown across the stream at the Vaughan road crossing and a second at the broken dam. The latter bridge was completed first. As soon as the bridge was declared ready for traffic, Major Hess and his horsesoldiers crossed and reported to De Trobriand.[13]

General Smyth, as soon as De Trobriand's rear guard had passed,

told Colonel Olmsted to resume the march. The leader of the II Corps, General Humphreys, wanted Smyth to secure a crossing of Hatcher Run at Armstrong's Mill. After covering the bridgehead, Smyth was to extend to the right beyond R. Armstrong's house, anchoring his right on Rocky Branch. Preceded by a company of the 3d Pennsylvania Cavalry, the Second Division followed De Trobriand's column to within one-half mile of the Vaughan road crossing of Hatcher Run. Here it turned into a cart road leading westward through the woods to Armstrong's Mill. As the horsesoldiers approached Rocky Branch, they were fired on by Confederate outposts. Supported by the 19th Massachusetts Infantry, the Pennsylvanians charged, driving the Rebels across the stream. A short distance beyond, the butternuts rallied and checked the Union cavalry. Three companies of the 19th Massachusetts, deployed as skirmishers, now took the lead. Smashing the Confederate roadblock, the infantry chased the Johnnies across Hatcher Run. Here their advance was stopped by the fire of sharpshooters posted in rifle-pits on the opposite bank. The officer in charge of the skirmishers shouted, "Take cover!" [14]

General Smyth, hearing shots in the woods off to his left, called on Colonel Olmsted for another regiment. The brigade commander sent the 19th Maine. The general told Lieutenant Colonel Joseph W. Spaulding of the Maine regiment to move his people "in line of battle off to the left." Covered by two companies, deployed as skirmishers, the 19th Maine worked its way through woods and dense undergrowth. The Mainemen reached Hatcher Run and saw Rebel infantry picketing the opposite bank. Several shots sent the greyclads diving into their rifle-pits, which paralleled the bank at a distance of about ten rods.

Capitalizing on the failure of the foe to clear fields of fire,

Spaulding's skirmishers crossed the run, one at a time on a fallen tree, and took cover in a defiladed area between the water and top of the bank. Although it was slow going, the rest of the regiment followed, utilizing the route pioneered by the skirmishers. All his men across, Spaulding advanced his skirmishers. As soon as they showed themselves, there was a sharp outburst of firing. Within 15 minutes, the soldiers of the 19th Maine had gained the upper hand, and the Rebels took to their heels. Spaulding's skirmishers lost no time in taking possession of the abandoned breastworks. Reinforced by two additional companies, the skirmishers extended to the right. Visual contact was soon established with the picket line of the 19th Massachusetts on the north side of Hatcher Run.[15]

While the 19th Maine was carving out a bridgehead, General Smyth proceeded to deploy his division, keeping in mind General Humphreys' instructions to extend to the right. The troops were marched up the road leading to Armstrong's house and placed in line of battle. Colonel Olmsted's brigade was posted with its left flank (the 19th Massachusetts) resting on Hatcher Run, and in contact with the 19th Maine on the south bank. The ground occupied by much of the 1st Brigade was in a field, facing the woods. Skirmishers advanced into the pines, while the rest of the troops were put to work erecting breastworks. As the 7th Michigan and the 1st Minnesota advanced into the timber to the left and front, they drove in Confederate pickets, capturing two.[16]

Colonel Mathew Murphy's 2d Brigade was posted on the right of Olmsted's, its right resting on Rocky Branch. The line along which Murphy's troops entrenched "was in advance of the Armstrong house and in rear of the Armstrong, jr. house." One regiment, the 164th New York,

was advanced as pickets.

Shortly before noon, a unit from the 3d Brigade, the 1st Delaware, reported to Colonel Murphy. The Delaware people were posted on the right, "refusing their right wing, with their two right companies thrown perpendicularly to the rear." About 100 yards in front of his right, across the intervening cleared ground, Murphy could see the profile of a Rebel redoubt, with "connecting curtains." While the soldiers were digging in, a gun emplaced in this work sent an occasional round screaming overhead, but beyond shaking up the recruits doing no damage.[17]

The 3d Brigade was to constitute Smyth's ready reserve, consequently, it was massed "under cover of a slight ridge," near Armstrong's. Colonel Pierce by noon had been called upon for four units, besides the 1st Delaware. At 11 a.m. the 7th West Virginia Battalion was ordered to report to Colonel Olmsted. Led by a staff-officer, the West Virginians crossed Hatcher Run on a dam, under a galling small-arms' fire, and took position alongside the 19th Maine. The 14th Connecticut was rushed up from the reserve to be posted in support of two sections of the 10th Massachusetts Battery. The left section, Lieutenant Milbrey Green commanding, had emplaced its 10-pounder Parrotts near young Armstrong's house, commanding Duncan road and covering the front and right of the Second Division; the center section had unlimbered its rifled Parrotts to command the ford across Hatcher Run and Smyth's left flank.

Lieutenant Colonel George F. Hopper advanced with his battalion of the 10th New York to reinforce Olmsted's skirmish line, while at 2 p.m. the 12th New Jersey was organized into fatigue parties and detailed to construct a corduroy road.[18]

General Mott's 2d and 3d Brigades had trailed Smyth's division down

Vaughan road to Cummings' house. Here Mott called a brief halt. In pursuance with Meade's master plan, Mott sent Colonel Robert McAllister's 3d Brigade down a wood road toward Tucker's. McAllister was to place his organization in "line of battle near the Tucker house, across the road leading past it, and to throw out pickets well to the front, connecting them with the Second Division pickets on.../ the / left; also, to guard well.../ his / right." Colonel George S. West's 2d Brigade was to push on down Vaughan road to Hatcher Run.[19]

Within a short time, McAllister's infantry had filed into position in the woods at Tucker's. A line of outposts was established and manned by the 120th New York and the 11th New Jersey, and a connection made with Murphy's Second Division pickets along a cart road. McAllister spent most of the forenoon exploring the woods in front of the sector occupied by his brigade, familiarizing himself with the topography.[20]

At 12:30 orders were received from General Humphreys to build breastworks. McAllister's people went to work with a will. McAllister feared that a Rebel column might infiltrate the ground between his right and a branch of Arthur Swamp, so he had his soldiers extend their rifle-pits in that direction.[21]

General Humphreys had been studying his maps. On doing so, he concluded that, if past experiences were a guide, the Confederates would soon leave the protection of their fortifications, and launch a vigorous counter-attack. Humphreys felt that the Rebels would aim their initial blow at the area between Hatcher Run and the headwaters of Arthur Swamp, where Smyth's and McAllister's men were entrenching. Consequently, Humphreys rode to his right to examine Smyth's and McAllister's positions. The corps commander

saw that McAllister's brigade, although it was stretched to the breaking point, was unable to cover the wide expanse of front between Rocky Branch and Arthur Swamp.

After checking with General Meade, Humphreys at 2 p.m. telegraphed General Miles to dispatch "a strong brigade to relieve...McAllister in the position now occupied by him near the Tucker house."[22]

An able and vigorous officer, Miles did not quibble. Contacting the leader of his 4th Brigade, Colonel John Ramsey, the general told him to move out with all of his "disposable force." As soon as the soldiers could be turned out under arms and in light marching order, Colonel Ramsey put his column in motion down Vaughan road.[23]

Miles, after he saw Ramsey's troops hit the road, wired Humphreys that they were en route to Tucker's. If all went according to schedule, the brigade should be there by 3:45.[24]

Ramsey's people marched more rapidly than anticipated. At 3:30 a member of Ramsey's staff rode up to McAllister's command post, and handed the leader of the 3d Brigade a copy of General Humphreys' 2 o'clock telegram. By this hour, McAllister's bluecoats had nearly completed the line of works on which they had been working. Before McAllister could recover from the effect of this bombshell, Colonel Ramsey rode up at the head of his brigade.

Inside of 30 minutes, Ramsey's soldiers had replaced McAllister's in the rifle-pits and along the picket line. After being relieved, McAllister massed his regiments in a field 200 yards behind the fortifications, while he sent his adjutant-general, Captain John P. Finkelmeier, to division headquarters for fresh instructions. Needless to say, McAllister's soldiers did a lot of complaining about having the fruits of their labor enjoyed by troops from another division. At 4 p.m. orders were received for

McAllister to redeploy his brigade on Ramsey's left.

Ramsey's regimental commanders, after posting their units, deployed and advanced some of their men as pickets. The rest of the soldiers stacked arms and were turned to strengthening the barricades.[25]

Meanwhile, accompanied by General Mott, West's brigade had reached Hatcher Run to find De Trobriand's bluecoats in possession of the opposite bank and the pioneers bridging the stream. Mott told West to form his brigade into battle line across Vaughan road.

While West's infantry was taking position, Generals Humphreys and Mott crossed Hatcher Run to inspect the bridgehead. Before returning to the east bank, Humphreys outlined to General De Trobriand and Major Hess what their next moves should be. De Trobriand was to push out along Vaughan road, "so as to take possession of the Dabney's Mill road at F. B. Keys' house." Hess and his horsesoldiers were to open communications with the 19th Maine at Armstrong's Ford. A 30-man outpost was to be established by the major at Dabney's Mill.[26]

Hess, having the smaller command, moved first. On the road to Armstrong's Ford, one-fourth mile beyond the perimeter held by De Trobriand's infantry, Hess' cavalry encountered Rebel pickets. The grey-clads were formed along the edge of a wood and posted behind a rail fence. Company A, Captain Louis R. Stillé commanding, was dismounted and ordered to drive in the Rebels, but they were too strong. Major Hess called for Company E to charge, mounted, on Company A's left, while Company M advanced on Stillé's right. Sweeping forward, the Yanks routed the butternuts from behind the fence, capturing five. As they felt their way through the pines beyond, the Pennsylvania cavalrymen encountered the Confederates in "considerable force." Hess was satisfied that he could

not dislodge these rugged footsoldiers, unless he was reinforced.

When notified of this, General Humphreys directed Hess to return to Vaughan road, and open communications with the V Corps at J. Hargraves'. After a two-mile ride toward Hargraves', Hess' vanguard was fired on by snipers posted in the pines east of Vaughan road.[27]

Colonel West at 1 p.m. had crossed Hatcher Run with his brigade. On doing so, he had formed line of battle with his right resting on Vaughan road and his left, which was refused, anchored on the run. De Trobriand was now free to take possession of the Dabney's Mill road. Three regiments, two from his brigade (the 40th New York and the 110th Pennsylvania) and one from West's (the 105th Pennsylvania) were entrusted with this mission. As they pressed forward, the Yankee footsoldiers swept back the Rebel pickets, and soon gained their goal.

When Hess' cavalry battalion was fired on,as it felt its way along Vaughan road, the 105th Pennsylvania was ordered to horsesoldiers' assistance. Supported by the infantry, the troopers charged and smashed the Rebel roadblock. The advance along Vaughan road was continued till contact was established with the V Corps. After reporting to General Warren, the column retraced its steps, and Major Hess notified General Humphreys that the road was open.[28]

From atop the signal tower behind Fort Fisher, signal corps personnel kept the Rebel lines in their front under observation. At 3:15 p.m. these people warned Miles that the Rebels were "moving a very heavy column to their right." Miles telegraphed this important information to his superior, General Humphreys. Orders were issued alerting the division commanders to be on the guard against a counterattack.[29]

* * *

Past experiences, many of them bitter, enabled veteran officers and men of the Army of the Potomac to know about what General Robert E. Lee and his people's response to their surge toward the Boydton Plank Road would be. Indeed, they were able to calculate just about the length of time it would take Lee and his generals to ready a powerful counter blow.

Lee was attending church in Petersburg, when an aide entered, and, in a hushed voice, told his general that Union infantry had forced a passage of Hatcher Run at the Vaughan road crossing. Lee waited quietly until communion then, contrary to his custom, went with the first group to the chancel. He received the communion and, taking up his hat and gloves from the pew, left immediately. [30]

Before riding for the point of danger, Lee stopped in at his headquarters for a few minutes. A telegram was dispatched at 2:45, relaying news of the Union advance to the War Department, and announcing that the general was preparing to meet the foe. [31] At the same time, Chief of Artillery William N. Pendleton was notified, "The enemy are advancing on the Vaughan road, cavalry and infantry crossing at Hatcher's [sic] Run. This may be a strong movement. Have the artillery on the whole line on the alert and in readiness for any emergency." [32]

In the past, the Federals had always made a thrust north of the James toward Richmond, in conjunction with attempts to extend their left, so Lieutenant General James Longstreet was contacted. Longstreet in turn alerted his subordinates charged with guarding the approaches to Richmond that General Lee "anticipates a simultaneous move on our left." [33]

To cope with this new Union offensive, General Lee had available a

ready reserve of four infantry divisions and one division of cavalry. Major General John B. Gordon had reached Petersburg from the Valley with two badly battered divisions of the old II Corps (Pegram's and Evans') on December 8, 1864. A month later, Grimes' division of the II Corps had detrained at Dunlop's Station and had gone into camp on Swift Creek, three and one-half miles north of Petersburg.[34]

General Gordon in the meantime had camped the division commanded by Brigadier General Clement A. Evans on the Boydton Plank Road, about one mile northeast of Burgess' Mill. Brigadier General John Pegram's division had established winter quarters on White Oak road, one mile west of Burgess' Mill. These two divisions took turns furnishing the 800 men detailed to picket Hatcher Run, from where the fortifications held by Major General Henry Heth's right flank brigade anchored on the stream to a point beyond the Vaughan road crossing. Horsesoldiers from General Rooney Lee's cavalry division were charged with covering the crossings of the Rowanty. On February 5 soldiers from Pegram's division were manning the picket line.[35]

Up till now Gordon's corps had seen no action since returning from the Valley, where it had suffered disasters of which the veterans didn't like to talk. Major Randolph Barton, a staff-officer in the Stonewall Brigade, preferred to recall:

> the superb picture of Mrs. Pegram, formerly the lovely Hetty Cary, of Baltimore, and a bride of about two weeks, handsomely mounted, and General Lee, on foot, with his hand resting on her horse's neck, engaged in conversation while awaiting the coming of the division to be reviewed by General Lee. You can imagine the splendor of the group: a beautiful woman, a noble man in appearance and every other respect, and a handsome horse.[36]

In addition to Evans' and Pegram's infantry divisions, Major General William Mahone's, which was camped one and one-half mile west of Battery

No. 45, would be available for the counterattack Lee was planning.[37]

Rooney Lee's cavalry division, except for squadrons out on picket, was in "comfortable winter quarters" near Belfield. This was almost 40 miles away, a long day's march for men riding horses and mules that had been on short forage for months.[38]

As they had since early October, units from Major Generals Henry Heth's and Cadmus M. Wilcox's divisions occupied the line of earthworks extending from Battery No. 45 on the left to Hatcher Run on the right. Heth's division was on the right and Wilcox's on the left, the prong of Arthur Swamp heading several hundred yards northwest of Boisseau's house separated Heth's left from Wilcox's right. From right to left Heth's brigades were posted: Brigadier General John R. Cooke's, Colonel William McComb's, Brigadier General Joseph R. Davis', and Brigadier General William R. MacRae's. Three of Wilcox's four brigades were in the works--McGowan's on the right, Lane's in the center, and Scales' on the left. Wilcox's other brigade, Thomas', was north of the Appomattox and had been stationed there since July 4.[39]

Accompanied by his staff, General Lee at 3 o'clock rode out of Petersburg, taking the Boydton Plank Road. Already, a number of Lee's generals, in accordance with his instructions, had put their columns in motion.

General Mahone was sick, so Brigadier General Joseph Finegan, as senior officer present, turned out the division. As soon as the brigade commanders had formed, mustered, and inspected their men, the units marched from their camps. Time being all important, Finegan permitted each brigade to start for Hatcher Run, as soon as the officer in charge reported that it was ready. In marching to the southwest, several of Finegan's brigades

took Cox road, while others followed the Boydton Plank road. Union signal personnel stationed in the tower behind Fort Fisher kept sections of these roads under observation. It was 3 p.m. before the men in the tower caught their first glimpse of one of Finegan's brigades, "going at quick time to our left on the Cox road." [40]

An hour earlier, General Wilcox had contacted Brigadier General Samuel McGowan. The leader of the South Carolina Brigade was told by his superior to prepare his men to take the field. The order to move out came within the hour. Upon leaving his camp at Boisseau's, McGowan had his lead regiment, the 1st South Carolina, fall in behind MacRae's North Carolinians. The South Carolina Brigade followed MacRae's troops down the works toward Hatcher Run. Near the center of Heth's camps, McGowan called a halt. Taking position behind the breastworks, the South Carolinians nervously fingered their rifle-muskets, as they listened to the rattle of musketry and the roar of cannon in the woods to their front. Questioning several soldiers who were guarding the huts, the South Carolinians learned that the troops formerly holding this sector, Davis' Mississippians, had been ordered out to attack Union troops feeling their way up Duncan road. [41]

General Gordon, learning of the Union advance, had ordered out Evans' and Pegram's divisions. North of Hatcher Run, Evans had marched his three brigades from their camps to Burgess' Mill, then down the north bank of the run to the line of works in front of General Cooke's winter quarters. The division then moved to the left along the works, about one mile. After a brief halt, Evans' greyclads at 4 p.m. crossed the fortifications.

Before entering the woods and underbrush skirting Rocky Branch, Evans formed his division into battle line, Brigadier General William Terry's Virginia Brigade on the left, Colonel William R. Peck's Louisiana Brigade in the center, and Colonel John H. Lowe's Georgia Brigade on the right. After the brigade commanders reported that they had completed their dispositions, General Evans told them that they were to guide on Terry. He then waved his battle line forward. The division advanced to where the artillerists had unlimbered their guns and halted. Skirmishers were pushed out, as the batteries shelled the woods to the front.

Heth had massed his division on the left of Evans' troops. When he advanced, Heth would do so on a two-brigade front. Cooke's and McComb's brigades, supported by Davis' and MacRae's, would spearhead the counterattack. General Lee reached the field about the time that Heth and Evans were completing their preparations. Since the hour was late, Lee decided to send Heth's troops forward, although Finegan's division was not yet up.[42]

South of Hatcher Run, General Pegram prepared to resist the Union column that had established a bridgehead on the west side of Hatcher Run.

* * *

About 3 o'clock Heth's Confederates began probing the sector held by Smyth's left flank brigade, Olmsted's. A thrust against the picket line on the left of R. Armstrong's house was repulsed. Shortly thereafter, Pegram's greyclads advanced toward the bridgehead held by the 19th Maine and the 7th West Virginia Battalion. Colonel Spaulding reinforced the people posted in the rifle-pits with two fresh companies, and the Rebels pulled back. It appeared to General Smyth that these were feints to cover

an all-out assault on his left, so he had Colonel Olmsted deploy the 20th Massachusetts as skirmishers to plug a gap that had opened between Murphy's right and McAllister's left. [43]

Two Rebel batteries at 4 o'clock began shelling Murphy's breastworks. While one battery hammered the brigade's left, the guns emplaced in a redoubt pounded his front. Satisfied that the Confederates were endeavoring to soften up his position preparatory to attacking, Murphy asked the cannoneers of the 10th Massachusetts Battery to hold their fire, while sending word for his pickets to keep their eyes open. [44]

McAllister in the meantime had moved to carry out his instructions to post his brigade on Ramsey's left. His right regiments were just filing into position, when Heth struck. Advancing in double line of battle, covered by a strong skirmish line, Heth's division pressed forward on the left and right of Rocky Branch. Yankee pickets fired a few scattered shots and fled. Colonel McAllister bellowed, "Double-Quick!" and his troops quickly completed their deployment.

Lieutenant Colonel John Willian of Humphreys' staff galloped up at this moment, shouting that a gap had opened on the right, where Ramsey's brigade had closed to the right. To cope with this situation, the rear regiment (the 11th New Jersey) was diverted from the left. As men of the 11th New Jersey scrambled into position behind the breastworks, frightened pickets, many of them belonging to the Second Division, ran toward them. A Rebel battery, emplaced to the left and rear of Thompson's house, shelled the bluecoats, hurring them along. Moments after the 11th New Jersey had occupied the works, Heth's skirmishers sheltered in the pines and ravine to the left opened fire.

On the left of McAllister's line the barricades faded out. The left

battalion of the 8th New Jersey found itself with no protection, except trees and underbrush. Following hard on the heels of the retreating pickets, Heth's battle lines appeared in front of the sector defended by the 8th New Jersey. The New Jersey regiment greeted the butternuts with a terrific volley, causing them to fall back in confusion. Again, they advanced in strong force, seemingly unmindful of the Yanks' fire, and took cover behind stumps and felled timber east of Rocky Branch. Thus sheltered, the Johnnies punished the exposed wing of the 8th New Jersey.

From left to right, the 120th New York, the 7th New Jersey, and the 11th Massachusetts held the brigade front to the left of the 8th New Jersey. Heth's battle lines came on "with a yell known to...all." Volley after volley ripped into the oncoming Confederates, cutting down officers and men, and compelling them to recoil.[45]

West of Rocky Branch, Evans' skirmishers assailed the right of Murphy's picket line defended by the 182d New York. The New Yorkers and butternuts engaged in a spirited fire-fight. After about 15 minutes, the Johnnies pulled back. The Rebel artillery now resumed its bombardment of Murphy's main line of resistance. While the Yanks were exchanging mutual congratulations at having beaten off the Southerners, Evans' greyclads came on a second time, but again they were repulsed by Murphy's skirmishers. Colonel Murphy at this time was disabled, a minié ball striking him in the knee. After turning command of the brigade over to the senior regimental commander, Colonel James P. McIvor of the 170th New York, Murphy was carried to a field hospital.[46]

General Smyth, learning that his pickets east of Rocky Branch were retreating before Heth's Confederates, called up the 108th New York and

a battalion of the 4th Ohio from his reserve brigade.

Simultaneously, orders were given for the 14th Connecticut to change front to the right and take position covering Rocky Branch. Although they had to cross an area swept by artillery, the Connecticut regiment "changed front forward on first company, bringing.../ its / line at a right angle with the line attacked." The 12th New Jersey had returned from its road building assignment just as Smyth was preparing to move out with the 4th Ohio and the 108th New York. A change in plans was made. Since he believed that two regiments would be sufficient for the mission, Smyth crossed the branch at the head of the 4th Ohio and the 12th New Jersey to discover McAllister's men "filing in to occupy that ground that.../ he /, intended to occupy...." Smyth accordingly ordered the Ohio battalion to report back to Colonel Pierce, while the 12th New Jersey was posted in support of McAllister's brigade. The 108th New York in the meantime had been employed to bolster Olmsted's picket line. [47]

Two sections of the 10th Massachusetts Battery were emplaced west of Rocky Branch at the hour of Heth's advance. General Smyth, seeing that the butternuts were driving toward the 300-yard gap separating his right from McAllister's left, sent word for Lieutenant J. Webb Adams to wheel his guns about. Since being unlimbered, Adams' and Green's sections had been only slightly engaged, having fired an occasional round at the cannons to their front which were harassing Murphy's infantry. Green, whose section was in battery near young Armstrong's, found that on reversing his 10-pounder Parrotts that he was able to enfilade the advancing Rebel lines, 300 yards to his front. Adams' pieces from near the ford delivered "an oblique fire on the center and left" of Heth's battle lines.

"Never did shells do more effective work," bragged the battery's historian:

> than did those fired by these two sections. Their opportunity was a rare one, and most rarely did they improve it. The Rebel advance first appeared in view in a somewhat scattered tract of woods, mainly pines and oaks, and amid these the havoc was greatest. Five men were afterwards found lying dead near a tree, killed by a shell which, singularly enough, first passed completely through the trunk of the tree, exploding on the further side. [48]

As soon as Heth's attack began, General Mott, who was at the Vaughan road crossing, sent an aide to see how Colonel McAllister was doing. The staff-officer returned with news that McAllister "was most gallantly encouraging his command," and that he had sent "word that he was fighting with and without breast-works; also, that he could whip the rebels away." Although Mott liked McAllister's spirit, he determined to rush him some assistance. At 5 p.m. orders were issued for Colonel West to pull two regiments out of the bridgehead and march them to the point of danger.

In obedience with these instructions, West directed the 141st Pennsylvania and the 1st Massachusetts Heavy Artillery to recross Hatcher Run and to report to Colonel McAllister near Tucker's. Shortly after these two units had moved out, West was instructed by Mott to hasten to McAllister's assistance with all his brigade, except the 105th Pennsylvania which was on patrol. [49]

All told, General Heth launched three attacks against the sector defended by McAllister's reinforced brigade. Colonel McAllister recalled that not long after the initial repulse:

> the well-known Rebel yell rolled out on the evening breeze, and on rushed their massed columns. My line now opened a most destructive fire,...again the enemy were repulsed. The fire slackening some, I rode along the lines encouraging the men to stand firm and the day would be ours. They all struck up the song "Rally around the Flag, Boys." The Rebels replied,

"We will rally around your flag, boys!" The heavy firing had now ceased for the time being, but the pause was of short duration. The Rebel.../ Heth / with his famous fighting division made a rush for the gap in our lines,... but our boys were ready for them, and as the darkness of the night had closed in upon us, the discharge of musketry and burning, flashing powder, illuminating the battle-scene,... and the loud thundering of the artillery, made the scene one of more than ordinary grandeur. We then rolled back the Rebel columns for the last time. [50]

Before Heth's third attack, the 141st Pennsylvania and the 1st Massachusetts Heavy Artillery reinforced McAllister. The Pennsylvanians took the lead as the two regiments filed into position in a field in support of McAllister's battle line. Here the newcomers were exposed to a severe small-arms' fire.

Colonel West arrived with the head of his column at a most opportune moment for the Army of the Potomac. A strong force of Heth's greyclads, advancing down the east bank of Rocky Branch, was threatening to turn McAllister's left. West's lead regiment, the 57th Pennsylvania, deployed into battle line on the double. Charging into the bottom, the Pennsylvanians checked the Confederates' surge. Following close on the heels of the 57th, soldiers of the 5th Michigan formed on the Pennsylvanians' left. In pressing forward, the Michiganders passed a number of Second Division soldiers, who had been routed from the picket line, huddled behind trees. Not long after West and his men had taken position, night closed in, and, the fighting ceased. [51]

Along the front held by Ramsey's brigade, there was action on the picket line in front of the two left flank regiments--the 64th New York and the 53d Pennsylvania. To assist McAllister's hard-pressed troops on their left, the colonels of these two regiments had their men "fire to the left and front..., thus subjecting the enemy to a cross-fire." [52]

During the night, patrols were thrown out and reoccupied the picket line from which the Second Division had been dislodged. A score or more Confederates were encountered wandering about the woods, and, after being disarmed, they were forwarded to the provost-marshal for interrogation. Large numbers of men were turned to by their officers erecting breastworks and felling timber on either side of Rocky Branch. Troops not assigned to fatigue parties and outpost duty were permitted to rest on their arms. [53]

Checking with his division commanders, General Humphreys learned that the men who wore the "Clover Leaf" had suffered 125 casualties in the engagement, while Rebel losses were "comparatively severe and must have been six or seven times greater than ours." [54]

At 5:30, while Heth's attack was at its height, General Miles was directed by his corps commander to have a second brigade report to Colonel Ramsey. Miles designated the brigade led by Colonel George von Schack, who marched to Tucker's house with four of his regiments (the 7th, 52d, 39th, and 111th New York Volunteers). When Von Schack reported, Ramsey had him form his troops on the right of his brigade. At the time of the newcomers' arrival, the firing to the left had nearly ceased. After remaining in line about three hours, during which time his troops were engaged in throwing up earthworks, Ramsey told Von Schack that the crisis having passed, he was to return to his camp. [55]

General Finegan had reached the scene of the fighting with his division about the time that Heth was mounting his third assault. Taking cognizance of the lateness of the hour, it was already starting to get dark, and the fact that the Federals had entrenched, General Lee decided against continuing the action. Orders were issued for Heth to recall his

troops. Covered by Evans' skirmishers, Heth pulled back. Despite the darkness and the woods, there was little confusion as the Confederates broke contact with the Federals and withdrew behind into their fortifications.

Evans' troops, in accordance with instructions, marched back to their quarters, while Finegan's division bivouacked for the night in rear of Heth's camps. McGowan's South Carolinians were alerted when Davis' Mississippians returned from the fight. The next morning, McGowan's brigade returned to its sector. [56]

* * *

General Warren's V Corps had marched from its camps at 7 a.m., February 5, turning into Halifax road at Globe Tavern. Three squadrons of the 6th Ohio Cavalry, which had reported to Warren, had the lead, followed by Ayres' Second Division, Griffin's First Division, and Crawford's Third Division. Behind Griffin's bluecoats, and in front of Crawford's, were 12 field guns, with eight horses hitched to each piece and caisson. The trains brought up the rear. [57]

At Rowanty Postoffice, the column left Halifax road, taking the "right-hand road to Rowanty Creek." Captain Emmor B. Cope of Warren's staff rode with the cavalry. It was hoped that the horsesoldiers by a vigorous dash might seize Monk's Neck Bridge, before the Confederates could destroy the structure. The area between Halifax road and Rowanty Creek was "fairly open for that region. What timber there was...skirted one side of the road at a time." Even so, the Rebels had obstructed the

road, so the cavalry's march was slowed.

It was 10 a.m. before the 6th Ohio Cavalry reached the Rowanty, where the troopers found the bridge destroyed, and the stream deep and unfordable. As if this weren't bad enough, there were rifle-pits on the opposite side. Behind these breastworks, a small but determined band of Rebels had taken cover, prepared to dispute the crossing. Captain John Saxon of the 6th Ohio dismounted one of his squadrons, deploying the troopers as skirmishers. Posted behind recently erected barricades, the Johnnies more than held their own against the Yankee cavalry.

Generals Warren and Ayres now rode up, accompanied by Ayres' lead brigade, Colonel James Gwyn's. After conversing hurriedly with Captain Cope, Warren told Ayres to have Gwyn and his infantry establish a bridgehead.

Gwyn moved promptly. The 190th and 191st Pennsylvania were advanced as skirmishers, supported by the 4th Delaware. While soldiers of the 4th Delaware kept the Rebels pinned down by pouring volley after volley into the breastworks, the Pennsylvanians worked their way down to the water's edge. The stream was 60 feet wide at this point, and where there was slack water there was ice. Overcoming these difficulties, the foot-soldiers effected a crossing by swimming and wading, and a few on the ice. Gaining the west bank, the Pennsylvanians routed the Rebels from their rifle-pits, capturing 23.[58]

Trees were now felled by the pioneers to facilitate the crossing of the remainder of Gwyn's brigade. The brigade then pushed out about one-half mile, halted, and took position covering the bridgehead.

General Warren took personal command of the pioneers and fatigue parties

given the task of bridging the Rowanty. A bridge for the passage of the cavalry had been completed by 1 p.m., but it was 3:45 before "a bridge practicable for the artillery and trains" was declared open for traffic.[59]

At 11:30 o'clock Warren had forwarded a message to Meade's headquarters, reporting that his troops had forced their way across the Rowanty. As yet, he had heard nothing from Gregg and the cavalry.[60]

Chief of Staff Webb at the same hour wrote Warren that Humphreys' troops had forced a crossing of Hatcher Run. The telegraph had been extended to the Vaughan road crossing, where for the time being General Meade had established his command post.[61]

The corps, as rapidly as it crossed the Rowanty, moved out the Monk's Neck road to its intersection with Vaughan road. Captain Cope took the 6th Ohio Cavalry and pushed on ahead, proceeding down Vaughan road to Little Cattail Creek. Here Cope met Major Henry E. Tremain of General Gregg's staff, who tersely explained that the cavalry division, having been at Dinwiddie Courthouse several hours before, was currently en route back to Malone's Bridge, where it was to bivouac for the night. Contact was also made at this time with the patrol (Major Hess') sent down Vaughan road by General Humphreys.[62]

Immediately after Cope's and Tremain's conversation, a mounted Rebel patrol led by General Rooney Lee came pounding up Vaughan road from Dinwiddie Courthouse. According to General Warren, "the meeting was quite unexpected to them from the way they scampered off, and to me, as I had supposed General Gregg would send information to me as soon as he uncovered the road leading to my position. The enemy's cavalry thus picked up one or two stragglers and caught sight of our infantry...."[63]

His troops having reached J. Hargrave's, Warren saw that the divisions took their assigned positions. General Ayres' troops covered the Quaker and other roads leading north; General Griffin's were posted on Oliver Chappell's farm, watching Vaughan road and the roads to the west; Crawford's people were positioned in a field east of Vaughan road, the artillery and trains parked nearby.[64]

While the men who wore the Maltese cross on their caps were gathered around their campfires brewing coffee and discussing the day's events, they were startled to hear heavy firing off to the northeast. "The Johnnies have found the II Corps," they told one another.[65]

At 5 o'clock, while the fighting along McAllister's front was raging, General Meade issued orders for Gregg to report immediately to Warren, with his cavalry division. A covering letter was addressed to Warren, apprising him of this development. When Gregg showed up, Meade wanted Warren to place the cavalrymen on the left of his infantry. Army headquarters also wished Warren to know that the Rebels had assailed Humphreys' right, but they had been repulsed. It might become necessary, however, to march the V Corps up Vaughan road to support Humphreys.[66]

Heth's attack on the II Corps' right made it vital that the Army of the Potomac maintain its grip on the section of Vaughan road between De Trobriand's bridgehead and Warren's corps. Instructions were issued for Warren to hold with his command "a point in the vicinity of Mr. Hargrave's and Mrs. Davis' instead of the point designated as J. Hargrave's" in his instructions.[67]

The courier with this order reached Warren's command post at 6:45. From him, Warren learned that it had become necessary to recall part of Hoke's division (West's brigade) to assist the soldiers struggling to

contain the Confederate counterattack east of Hatcher Run. Checking his field maps on which he had plotted his troop positions, Warren saw that to comply with Meade's latest instructions (for the V Corps to be in force at the junction of the Monk's Neck and Vaughan roads) he would have to recall Crawford's division. When this was done, Griffin would have to "make arrangements to hold the road to Dinwiddie Court-House...."[68]

Crawford's troops were collecting wood and building fires, "the night being very cold and the men weary after the long march of the day," when orders were barked to fall in. The division then returned to the junction of the Monk's Neck and Vaughan roads.[69]

Meanwhile, the intelligence people at Meade's headquarters had been questioning deserters, who told them Lieutenant General Ambrose P. Hill's entire corps, reinforced by other divisions, was massing to assail the II Corps. Consequently, it might become necessary to recall the V Corps to bolster Humphreys. If this occurred, Warren was to move his troops along Vaughan road, bringing with him only his "reserve ammunition, sending everything else, artillery, ambulances, and wagons, back with General Gregg." This dispatch was in Warren's hands at 8 p.m.[70]

Meade by 9 o'clock had made his decision. Warren was to march his corps via Vaughan road to Hatcher Run, and cross one division to the east side. The other two were to hold a line from Armstrong's Mill to De Trobriand's bridgehead, whose troops the V Corps was to relieve. Warren was to bring with him all of Gregg's cavalry, except those horsesoldiers detailed to escort the trains.[71]

It took the staff-officer, entrusted with this communication, 30 minutes to ride from army headquarters to Warren's command post. Warren could move rapidly when he wanted. Griffin, whose division was to take

the lead, was to march as soon as he could recall his pickets. On reaching Hatcher Run, unless instructed differently by General Meade, Griffin was to relieve De Trobriand. The wagon train was to follow Griffin, and the commander of the First Division was to see that it parked as near the crossing as feasible.[72]

So much time was lost relieving the pickets that it was nearly midnight before Griffin's bluecoats were "fairly on the road."[73] The trains followed Griffin, then Ayres' division, and the artillery.[74] Crawford's division brought up the rear.[75]

It was 11 p.m. before Gregg learned that he was to join General Warren. Gregg let his men and horses get another hour's rest, before he had his brigade commanders arouse their units. At 1 a.m., February 6, the cavalry division broke camp. Marching via the Stage and Monk's Neck roads, Gregg at 4 o'clock, near the Vaughan road crossing of Gravelly Run, reported to General Warren. Warren gave Gregg his first mission: he and his troopers were to cover the corps' movement to Hatcher Run.

While waiting for Crawford's footsoldiers to cross Gravelly Run, Gregg posted Brigadier General Henry E. Davies' 1st Brigade to cover the approaches to the stream. Troopers of the 2d and 3d Brigades took advantage of this respite to dismount, build fires, and prepare coffee. Both the infantry and the cavalry had had but little rest. The night was very cold--the roads were frozen hard before morning.[76]

By 6 a.m. all the V Corps' people had reached the left bank of Gravelly Run.

* * *

General Robert E. Lee's lightning-like response to the Union thrusts

across Hatcher Run and the Rowanty had caused the Federal leaders first to commit additional troops and then change their plans. General Meade at 2:30 p.m. had telegraphed General Grant's City Point headquarters that bridgeheads had been established by the II and V Corps. In forcing a crossing of Hatcher Run, the II Corps had captured nine prisoners, all from General Pegram's infantry division. So far, nothing had been heard of Gregg and his cavalry. Information wrung from the prisoners led Meade and his staff to believe that General Lee might "attempt to interpose between Warren and Humphreys." To cope with this possibility, it was decided to call up General Parke's reserve division.[77]

At the time this decision was made, Parke's IX Corps held the front from the Appomattox to Battery No. XXIV with its First and Second Divisions. Brigadier General John F. Hartranft's Third Division was in reserve. Parke in accordance with Meade's "circular" had alerted Hartranft to hold his troops ready to march from their camps at a moment's notice. The message for Parke to "send General Hartranft's division, without artillery, promptly and rapidly down the Vaughan road, to report to" General Humphreys at Hatcher Run was received at 1:45.[78]

To augment the IX Corps, should the Rebels take advantage of the withdrawal of Hartranft's people to launch an attack on the IX Corps' sector, orders were issued by Meade for the Engineer Brigade to march from City Point to the Meade's Station area. There the leader of the brigade, Colonel Wesley Brainerd, was to report to Parke.[79]

Hartranft's troops moved out of their camps in light marching order. By 4 p.m. the division, which had been massed near Fort Blaisdell, had pushed on, taking the road that led westward and crossed the Weldon Railroad at Globe Tavern. Four hours later, at a point on Vaughan road two

miles beyond Fort Siebert, Hartranft reported to General Humphreys. The II Corps' leader was delighted to see that the reinforcing column was well closed up. Few, if any, men had straggled.

Humphreys positioned Hartranft on Ramsey's right, with orders to have his men entrench immediately. After his troops had been posted, Hartranft found that his left rested "on a wide, impenetrable swamp," and his right a few rods in front of Claypool's house. The general direction of his line was north and south. By daylight the division "had a good line of works 1,000 yards in length...."[80]

Heth's assaults on Humphreys' right had caused Meade a few anxious moments. At 5:30 p.m. Brigadier General George W. Getty of the VI Corps was telegraphed to "withdraw from your line that portion of one division not on picket and in the works, and hold it in readiness to move at a moment's notice." The division recalled was to be concentrated on "Vaughan road just outside the works."[81]

Getty, to comply with Meade's orders, would have to redeploy his troops. He decided to hold the First Division, Brigadier General Frank Wheaton commanding, ready to march to Humphreys' assistance. But to do so, Getty would have to "distribute" two of his divisions to hold with them what had formerly been occupied by three. Troops of the Third Division were directed to extend on the right, and take position on the line between Fort Wadsworth and Battery No. XXIV, currently defended by Wheaton's bluecoats.[82] These changes took time.

At 6:30 Chief of Staff Webb telegraphed Getty that as soon as Hartranft's column passed, he was to put Wheaton's division in motion. When the Rebels hurled a third attack against Humphreys' lines, Webb messaged, "Should your division be ready to move before General Hartranft

arrives let it move at once...." [83]

Getty, on checking found that Hartranft's column was passing, so he ordered Wheaton to follow as soon as the road was clear. [84]

General Wheaton checked his watch when his division moved out: it was 8 p.m. Near Fort Siebert, one of Humphreys' staff-officers hailed Wheaton, telling him that he was "to form on and covering the Squirrel Level road," to the right of Hartranft's IX Corps division. Soon after Wheaton's lead brigade marched up, the right of the IX Corps was established, and Wheaton formed his line--the 3d Brigade on the left; the 1st Brigade on the right; the 2d Brigade in reserve, in rear of the left of the line which rested near Claypool's house. The right of Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Campbell's 1st Brigade reached nearly to the abatis fronting Fort Cummings. All of Wheaton's troops were in position by 11:30, and within two hours "an excellent rifle-pit had been constructed all along our front and slashings made across the two swamps through which our line ran." [85]

Meade at 6:45 p.m. had telegraphed Grant that Humphreys' troops, up to that hour, had repulsed all Confederate attacks. Even so, orders had been issued calling up a VI Corps division. At this time, Meade continued, the V Corps was in position at Hargrave's, about three and one-half miles southwest of the Vaughan road crossing of Hatcher Run. Gregg had been to Dinwiddie Courthouse, but as there was little military traffic on the Boydton Plank Road, he had returned to Malone's Bridge. Orders had gone out for Gregg to join Warren.

Evaluating the Confederates' actions, Meade was of the opinion that General Lee planned "to turn Humphreys' right and cut our communications with our line of works." Besides Pegram's and Evans' II Corps divisions,

deserters had reported the presence of units from Heth's and Mahone's commands. Unless there were new developments, Meade informed Grant, he proposed to "leave Humphreys and Warren in their present positions, with directions to support each other."[86]

Grant, a firm believer in the power of the offensive, saw the situation in a different light than did the conservative Meade. Replying to his army commander's telegram, Grant at 7:15 directed Meade to recall Warren and the cavalry. Upon their arrival at the Vaughan road crossing, Meade was to recover the initiative, follow up the Confederate repulse, and push for the South Side Railroad.[87]

At 8:22 Meade notified Grant that orders had been issued withdrawing Warren and the cavalry. Humphreys at the same time had been directed "to await developments, and to attack, if advantageous, and drive the enemy into their works." Patrols had reported that the foe had a strong line of works passing through the Clements' house. Unless his soldiers could crack this line, Meade felt they could "hardly reach the Boydton plank road or South Side Railroad without a flank movement considerably to the left."[88]

Meade, before retiring, forwarded to Grant a summary of the day's activities. If, in the morning, he found the Rebels that had assailed Humphreys' right still outside the works, he would "attack and drive him into them, taking advantage of anything disclosed by the operation."[89]

THE BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN, FEBRUARY 5-7, 1865

Chapter II

The Confederates Come Out To Fight

Notes

1 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 113, 365-366, 367, 371. The 6th Ohio Cavalry, in accordance with instructions, was detached and ordered to report to General Warren. The 1st Brigade was camped at Westbrook's house, one mile west of McCann's Station, on the Norfolk & Petersburg Railroad.

2 Ibid., 115, 366, 367-368, 370. In this clash, the 2d Pennsylvania lost 1 killed, 2 wounded, and 1 missing.

3 Ibid., 115, 117, 368, 369, 370. In addition to the wagons, the 8th Pennsylvania captured 50 mules and ten men.

4 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 409-410.

5 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 116, 366, 368, 370, 371.

6 Ibid., 191; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 396.

7 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 195. At 8 a.m. the 39th New York was placed in garrison at Fort Emory, while the 125th New York occupied Fort Siebert.

8 Ibid., 212.

9 Ibid., 212, 214, 215. At this stage of the conflict, Smyth's division numbered 4,607 effectives. Ibid., 191.

10 Ibid., 191, 224. The cavalry had a twofold mission, besides driving in the Rebel pickets, it was to secure the crossing, "so as to conceal temporarily the fact from the enemy that the movement was made by an infantry force."

11 Ibid., 164, 224, 226-227; Francis A. Walker, History of the Second Army Corps in the Army of the Potomac (New York, 1886), 647.

12 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 227.

13 Ibid., 164, 224, 227.

14 Ibid., 192, 212, 215-216.

15 Ibid., 212, 214, 215.

16 Ibid., 212, 214, 216, 217, 218, 219. From left to right the units posted along Olmsted's main line of resistance were: the 184th Pennsylvania, the 36th Wisconsin, Bland's the 152d [illegible] and 57th New York. The left flank of the skirmish line held by the 1st Minnesota rested on Hatcher Run, where it connected with the right flank of the 19th Massachusetts.

17 Ibid., 192, 212, 220, 222.

18 Ibid., 212, 222, 249-250; John D. Billings, The History of the Tenth Massachusetts Battery of Light Artillery in the War of the Rebellion...(Boston, 1909), 382.

19 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 224, 238.

20 Ibid., 238, 242, 243, 244-245, 246. The 11th New Jersey held the picket line to the left, while the 120th New York was deployed to the right.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 192; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 398.

23 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 207, 208, 211. The disposable force of Ramsey's brigade included: the 8th New York Heavy Artillery, the 64th New York, and the 53d, 116th, and 144th Pennsylvania.

24 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 398.

25 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 207, 208, 211, 238, 242, 243, 245, 246, 247. From left to right, Ramsey's brigade was posted: the 64th New York, the 53d and 116th Pennsylvania, the 8th New York Heavy Artillery, and the 144th Pennsylvania.

26 Ibid., 164, 227, 235.

27 Ibid., 164. Hess had failed to open direct communications between the two bridgeheads, so the only direct contact between the troops at the Vaughan road crossing and Armstrong's Ford was along the picket line posted on the left bank of Hatcher Run.

28 Ibid., 164, 192, 227, 235.

29 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 398.

30 Ibid., 1204; D. S. Freeman, R. E. Lee (New York, 1947), III, 535-536.

31 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 1204.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 477.

35 Ibid., 134-135; Randolph Barton, "The Battle of Hatcher's Run," Confederate Veteran, XVII, 119.

36 Barton, "The Battle of Hatcher's Run," Confederate Veteran, XVII, 119; Henry Kyd Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall (Chapel Hill, 1940), 335-336.

37 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 134-135. Mahone's division was in the habit of providing about 200 men daily to picket in front of Lane's and Scales' brigades of Wilcox's division.

38 Ibid., 1210; R. L. T. Beale, History of the Ninth Virginia Cavalry in the War Between the States (Richmond, 1899), 147.

39 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 134-135; J. F. J. Caldwell, The

History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, Known First as "Gregg's," and Subsecuently as "McGowan's Brigade" (Philadelphia, 1866), 199.

40 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 393-394.

41 Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, 200.

42 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 391; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 423, 438, 499.

43 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 214, 217, 218.

44 Ibid., 220.

45 Ibid., 238-239, 242, 243-244, 245, 246, 248.

46 Ibid., 220-221.

47 Ibid., 212, 222, 223.

48 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 384-387; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 249-250.

49 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 225, 235.

50 Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 385. In front of the sector held by the 8th New Jersey, the Rebels were able to close to within 80 yards of the Federals' main line of resistance.

51 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 235-236, 239, 242, 243-244, 245, 246, 248.

52 Ibid., 207, 208, 210. While the fighting to their left was at its height, Rebel artillery hurled a few shells into the works held by Ramsey's troops.

53 Ibid., 236, 239.

54 Ibid., 193.

55 Ibid., 195, 202.

56 Ibid., 381, 391; Caldwell, History of a Brigade of South Carolinians,

200; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 389, 397, 423.

57 William H. Powell, The Fifth Army Corps (Army of the Potomac)... (New York, 1896), 755; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 253. The V Corps' camps were located between the Jerusalem Plank and Halifax roads. Besides the ambulances, the corps' train included: 50 ordnance wagons and 56 wagons heavily loaded with forage and ammunition for the cavalry.

58 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 253, 258-259, 259-260, 283-284; Powell, History of the V Corps, 756.

59 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 253, 258, 260, 284.

60 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 400.

61 Ibid.

62 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 253, 258; 260; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 401.

63 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 253; John Esten Cooke, Wearing of the Gray...(Bloomington, 1959), 540-541.

64 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 256, 260. Corps headquarters were established at the crossing of the Quaker and Vaughan roads. Gwyn's brigade of Ayres' division was on the left, Bowerman's in the center, and Winthrop's on the right. Griffin's brigades were posted from left to right, Pearson, Sickel, and Burr. Burr's right rested on Ayres' left, while Pearson's pickets connected on the left with Crawford's. Ibid., 269, 270, 277, 284.

65 Ibid., 260.

66 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 401, 409.

67 Ibid., 402.

68 Ibid., 404.

69 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 287, 292-293.

70 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 402.

71 Ibid., 402-403.

72 Ibid., 404.

73 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 254, 258, 266, 269, 270.

74 Ibid., 254, 277, 282, 284.

75 Ibid., 254, 287, 293.

76 Ibid., 254, 366, 368, 371; Powell, History of the V Corps, 758.

77 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 389.

78 Ibid., 407-409; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 315, 344.

79 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 315; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 395, 407, 408. The Engineer Brigade reported to Parke on the evening of the 5th, and was posted as a reserve near Avery's house.

80 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 344.

81 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 405. Getty, as senior officer present, had been in charge of the VI Corps since January 17, Major General Horatio G. Wright having received a leave of absence.

82 Ibid., 405, 406.

83 Ibid., 405.

84 Ibid., 406.

85 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 297-298.

86 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 389.

87 Ibid., 390.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid., 391-392.

THE BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN, FEBRUARY 5-7, 1865

Chapter III

General Gordon and His Confederates Win the Second Round

By 8 a.m. on February 6, 1865, General Warren's three V Corps divisions were massed near Hatcher Run. In accordance with instructions from Warren, General Griffin saw that the soldiers of his First Division relieved De Trobriand's II Corps bluecoats in the rifle-pits covering the approaches to the bridges.[1] Ayres' Second Division was massed behind the rifle-pits held by Griffin's troops, while Crawford's Third Division crossed the run and bivouacked.

General Mott, 12 hours before, had been alerted by his corps commander (General Humphreys) that Warren was to relieve his people holding the bridgehead. As soon as it had been replaced, De Trobriand's brigade was to recross Hatcher Run and take position in rear of McAllister's and Ramsey's brigades. Mott was to take charge of Ramsey's First Division troops in addition to his own. Hess' cavalry battalion was to be recalled at the same time.[2]

As soon as he had assembled his brigade on the morning of the 6th, De Trobriand marched the troops, reinforced by the 105th Pennsylvania, across Hatcher Run and up Vaughan road. De Trobriand, in obedience with Mott's instructions, massed his troops near Tucker's house.[3]

Rooney Lee's Confederate cavalry followed Gregg's horsesoldiers, as they screened the rear of the V Corps as it marched up Vaughan road. General Davies' brigade easily parried Lee's initial thrusts. General Gregg, however, was of the opinion that the butternuts might be disposed

to press the attack, so he posted Brigadier General Henry E. Davies' 1st Brigade and Colonel Oliver B. Knowles' 3d Brigade across Vaughan road and in a large field, near Keys' house. The troopers were dismounted, horse-holders detailed, and skirmishers advanced. Colonel Gregg's 2d Brigade, after the troopers had fed and watered their horses, remounted and took position in support of their comrades.[4]

General Meade on the evening of the 5th had made a serious error. At 9 o'clock Humphreys had been informed that Warren and Gregg had been directed to report to him. With these troops, and Wheaton's and Hartranft's divisions, Humphreys was to hold his "present position, extending as far as possible toward our line of works." Should the Confederates attack again and be repulsed, Humphreys was to launch a counterattack and drive them into their fortifications. Meade's mistake was in assuming that Humphreys was the senior corps commander on the field, which he was not.[5] Warren's commission as major general of volunteers predated Humphreys' by two months.

The next morning at 7:50 Chief of Staff Webb sent identical telegrams to Humphreys and Warren. They were to feel the enemy in their "front and determine whether or not they are outside their line of works." In case the rebels were, the corps commanders were to attack at once and drive them within their fortifications. If, however, the Southerners were found behind their lines, there was to be no assault.[6]

Warren at 8 o'clock received his copy of Webb's message. Since he preceded Humphreys, Warren considered the area where the fighting had occurred the previous evening as part of his front.

While endeavoring to ascertain what Meade intended, Warren received

a note from General Humphreys that the II Corps "was about to attack the enemy if outside his works." Warren accordingly deemed it best to await the results of Humphreys' operations, holding the V Corps and Gregg's cavalry in hand to co-operate if needed.[7]

While awaiting additional news from Humphreys, Warren, learning that Rooney Lee's horsesoldiers were growing bolder, determined to reinforce Gregg with one of his V Corps infantry brigade. Colonel Frederick Winthrop's brigade of Ayres' division was ordered forward. Marching out Vaughan road, Winthrop posted his troops on the right of the road, near Keys' house.[8]

Humphreys, in obedience to Meade's orders, had told Mott and Hartranft to organize and send out strong reconnaissance patrols. At the same time, instructions were issued by Humphreys for all division commanders reporting to him, including General Miles, to hold their units "ready to attack the enemy should he be found outside his works."[9]

Mott assigned the task of undertaking the forced reconnaissance to his reserve brigade, De Trobriand's. When he moved out, De Trobriand took with him four regiments.

The 2d U. S. Sharpshooters, deployed as skirmishers to the left and right of the road running north from Tucker's, had the advance. On the left of Thompson's house, De Trobriand found a cart road through the woods. Two companies of the 20th Indiana were detached to hold this position. No Confederates were encountered as the Yanks beat their way through the woods, so the general concluded that they had called in their outposts. Reaching a clearing, the Federals sighted a "light work" held by a small number of greyclads. Several shots sent the butternuts

scampering toward the northwest. Beyond Watkins' house, De Trobriand and his sharpshooters were able to make out "a continuous line of works occupied by the enemy." Moving in that direction, the regulars, as they approached the house, flushed several Confederate pickets.

It was becoming apparent to De Trobriand by this time that he was in front of the Rebels' works. To develop their strength, he pushed his skirmishers closer. As he did, he saw a Confederate column dash toward the cart road, where he had left the two Indiana companies. Suspecting that the greyclads intended to cut his line of retreat, De Trobriand sent back all his command, except the skirmishers. The regulars were then turned into the road running west of Thompson's house, paralleling the route taken by the Johnnies. The butternuts showed no disposition to attack, so De Trobriand pushed two companies, deployed as skirmishers, through the woods and into a morass.

Advancing across the swamp, the sharpshooters found themselves in front of a line of breastworks, with a redoubt, armed with two guns, commanding the road. The Federals banged away at "the rebels visible above the parapet." Taking position in the rifle-pits fronting their main line of resistance, the Southerners returned the Yanks' fire. De Trobriand by this time (11 a.m.) had accomplished his mission. Orders were now received to return to the Union lines.[10]

It was 10 o'clock when General Hartranft sent the 200th Pennsylvania "move by way of the Smith and Hawks houses, and ascertain, if possible, the position and force of the enemy outside of their main works...." The regiment advanced beyond the abandoned Rebel redoubt and found Confederate troops occupying the same line, as they had at the time of the battle of

the Boydton Plank Road in October. Satisfied that the butternuts were not in force outside their main defensive works, the Pennsylvanians retraced their steps and told Hartranft what they had seen.[11]

General Humphreys at 11 o'clock informed Warren that the Confederates to the II Corps' front had retired into their entrenchments. Seventy-five minutes later, Warren received a sharp note signed by Chief of Staff Webb, notifying him that he had misinterpreted Meade's dispatch of 7:40. Meade had wanted both the II and V Corps, not just Humphreys', to reconnoiter to determine whether the foe was to their front.

Meade now visited Warren's command post. While there, he made it clear that the V Corps was "to make a reconnaissance south and west of Hatcher's [sic] Run, to ascertain the whereabouts of the enemy's line in that direction."[12]

Warren made his plans accordingly. Crawford's division was to cross Hatcher Run and "move out on the Vaughan road to where it turns off to Dabney's Mill, and then follow up that road toward the mill, driving back the enemy and ascertaining the position of the enemy's entrenched line...." Ayres was to support Crawford. Part of Gregg's cavalry was to push down Vaughan road, driving the Rebel horsesoldiers across Gravelly Run, while a second detachment was to screen Crawford's and Ayres' left. Finally, Gregg was to dispatch a small mounted force to watch the road leading down the east side of Hatcher Run and Rowanty Creek to Monk's Neck Bridge.[13]

Warren believed Gregg would encounter no difficulty in carrying out assignment, because only an inconsequential Rebel force had been reported moving to the V Corps' left. Griffin's division would continue to hold

the earthworks covering the bridgehead and be prepared in an emergency to support either the infantry or the cavalry.[14]

Should he encounter the Confederates in strength, Warren could look to Humphreys for reinforcements. Humphreys had told Warren that Wheaton's division, 4,500 strong, was en route to Cummings' house, adjacent to the Vaughan road crossing of Hatcher Run, while De Trobriand's brigade was available and could be ordered to the V Corps' support.[15]

General Wheaton at 2:30 p.m. was directed by Humphreys to pull his VI Corps troops out of the breastworks covering Squirrel Level road and march them "to the vicinity of the Cummings house on the Vaughan road...." The rear brigade had reached Cummings', when one of Humphreys' staff-officers hailed Wheaton, telling him to push on down Vaughan road. An aide at the same time was to be sent to see whether Warren wanted him to mass his VI Corps troops on the east or west side of Hatcher Run.[16]

Soldiers from General Hartranft's division replaced Wheaton's in the earthworks to their right. By placing his reserve regiments on the line, Hartranft "still had a reasonably strong one." Large details were turned to slashing timber to strengthen further the position held by the IX Corps division.[17]

* * *

Crawford's division with Brigadier General Edward S. Bragg's brigade in the lead crossed Hatcher Run at 2 p.m. Colonel Henry A. Morrow's 3d Brigade followed Bragg's; Brigadier General Henry Baxter's brought up the rear. As they passed through the breastworks, Crawford's people bantered with Griffin's soldiers. One-third of a mile beyond the bridge, the head

of the column turned into the road to Dabney's Mill. Crawford glanced at his map, and saw that he was within a mile of his goal.

A brief halt was called in a cleared field to allow General Bragg to form his brigade into battle line, and to cover his front with skirmishers. The ground across which Crawford would be called on to advance was "rolling and principally covered with a heavy growth of wood, part of it thick underbrush, a swamp, and several old fields."[18]

Bragg's brigade as it entered the timber encountered an entrenched picket line defended by troops from Colonel John S. Hoffman's Confederate brigade. While Bragg's skirmishers and the butternuts banged away, Crawford formed Morrow's brigade into battle line 300 yards to the rear, and extending beyond Bragg's left. Baxter's 2d Brigade was hustled into line on Morrow's left. As soon as Morrow had refused his right, Crawford shouted, "Forward!" The bluecoats swept through the woods, routing the badly outnumbered butternuts from their breastworks, and pursuing them to Dabney's Mill.[19]

Like General Meade, General Lee wanted to know what the foe was doing. General Rooney Lee, who had followed Gregg's horsesoldiers across Gravelly Run, reported that the Yankees were pulling back to the east bank of Hatcher Run. As yet, not all of Rooney Lee's cavalry had arrived from the camp near Belfield, and until all his men were up, young Lee hesitated to assail Gregg's roadblock.

Since the cavalry was unable to secure the desired information in regard to Meade's movements, General Lee told his commander of the II Corps, General Gordon, to have his infantry make a forced reconnaissance toward the Vaughan road crossing.[20]

General John Pegram's division, which was encamped south of Hatcher Run, was given this mission by Gordon. Pegram, to carry out his task, divided his command into two columns. Colonel John S. Hoffman with his five-regiment Virginia Brigade was to reconnoiter the road leading past Dabney's Mill, while Pegram's other two brigades (Brigadier Generals Robert D. Johnston's and William R. Lewis') were to march down Quaker road to its junction with Vaughan road, then up Vaughan road. It was almost noon, before the two columns moved out in search of the enemy. General Pegram accompanied Hoffman's brigade.

At Dabney's Mill, Pegram told Hoffman to halt and post his brigade. Scattered shots could be heard off to the south, where Rooney Lee's horse-soldiers skirmished with Gregg's troopers. Pegram, believing that there was only cavalry to his front, called for Major Douglas. The young major was to take two of Hoffman's regiments and feel the Federals' position. As he approached the bridgehead, Douglas sighted Crawford's oncoming column. After deploying a small holding force behind the rifle-pits, erected during previous fighting in this area, Douglas galloped back to Dabney's Mill to warn his general that a powerful Union force had advanced out of the bridgehead. [21]

While Hoffman's Virginians took position covering the ruins of the mill, Pegram dispatched a messenger to ask Gordon for help. Gordon issued marching orders to General Evans' division, and then sent an aide to notify General Lee that the situation had changed drastically. If the Union advance were being made in the force Pegram reported, the II Corps would have to be reinforced.

Earlier in the day, the "long roll" had been beaten in Evans' camps.

The troops had been turned out under arms and marched rapidly down the Boydton Plank Road to Burgess' Mill. Here Evans' three infantry brigades remained until about 11 a.m., when Generals Lee and Gordon, satisfied by the reports forwarded by Rooney Lee that the Federal infantry had recrossed Hatcher Run, ordered them back to their encampments. When the division retraced its steps, a small detachment from Colonel Peck's Louisiana Brigade was left to guard the bridge.

Not long after the regimental commanders had dismissed their units, the "long roll" sounded. Once again, the men fell out on the double. Many of the men were heard to complain that this was probably another false alarm. As soon as the brigades had formed, the division moved out and hiked down the Boydton Plank Road. Crossing Hatcher Run and passing Burgess' Tavern, the head of the column turned into a wood road, leading to the southeast. Taking cognizance of the firing in the woods to their front, Evans' men knew that this time there would be a fight. As Peck's brigade crossed the bridge, it was rejoined by the men who had been on picket.[22]

Evans' vanguard reached Dabney's Mill at a critical moment for the Confederates. As Hoffman's brigade retired beyond the mill site, Evans had his brigade commanders file their troops into line of battle in the woods on the Virginians' left.[23]

From left to right Evans' brigades were posted: Colonel John H. Lowe's, Brigadier General William Terry's, and Colonel William R. Peck's. Peck's right flank companies were in contact with Hoffman's left. When he drafted his "After Action Report," Colonel Peck wrote, "My command was much reduced by this time by the heavy picket detail still on duty,

and I was forced, with the mere handful left, to conform my movements entirely to those of the larger commands on my right and left." [24]

As soon as the brigade commanders reported their lines formed, General Gordon passed the word to counterattack. The shrill "Rebel Yell" burst forth, as the lean, combat-hardened veterans stormed forward. Within a matter of moments, the butternuts had stopped Crawford's division in its tracks.

Morrow's supporting brigade closed up on Bragg's bluecoats, who were battling the Confederates for possession of the clearing where the mill had stood. Bragg's left began to give ground. General Baxter on the left was told by Crawford to advance his lines and take position on Bragg's left, which was hard-pressed.

The 39th Massachusetts and the 16th Maine, supported by the 97th New York, came up with a cheer, the Maine regiment anchoring its left on Bragg's right. Baxter posted his other regiments to the left and rear. Although they took heavy losses, the 39th Massachusetts, the 16th Maine, and the 97th New York forged ahead and drove Hoffman's Virginians and Peck's Louisianians from the mill site. Bragg's regiments on their right, however, continued to be hammered back by Lowe's Georgians and Terry's Virginians. (Terry's brigade included units that had won fame as the "Stonewall Brigade.") Bragg's people broke and took to their heels. As they retreated, they rushed through Morrow's lines. Morrow and his officers experienced considerable difficulty holding their soldiers in ranks. As soon as Bragg's bluecoats were out of the way, Morrow's line sent volley after volley crashing into the "advancing columns of the enemy." The Rebel surge was checked, and Evans' brigades

halted on the opposite side of the clearing. With a cheer Morrow's brigade dashed across the field, chasing the Confederates into the pines beyond.

Baxter's three regiments on the left of Bragg's line were unable to hold their position, when the troops to their right fled. Although reinforced by the rest of the brigade, they were pressed back about 200 yards, by Hoffman's and Peck's greyclads before they held. Baxter's soldiers took advantage of the success scored by Morrow's battle line to regain the pile of sawdust marking the mill site.[25]

Having entrusted the conduct of operations on Vaughan road to General Gregg, Warren had accompanied Crawford's infantry as it drove toward Dabney's Mill. Before he had ridden very far, the sound of heavy firing came rolling in from the southwest. An excited aide soon rode up with word that Colonel Winthrop's brigade had been assailed by the foe in force and could not rejoin Ayres' division, as it marched to Crawford's support. Indeed, he continued, Gregg and Winthrop had all they could do to hold their ground, and they were in need of assistance. Warren sent word by Captain Cope for General Griffin to reinforce Winthrop with a brigade and to take personal charge of operations on Vaughan road. Griffin at the same time was to order Pearson's brigade, "his largest and best," to accompany Ayres in place of Winthrop's.

Within a few minutes, Warren had received a second call from Gregg for reinforcements, as the Rebels were turning his left. Not having any more V Corps troops to commit, Warren called on Humphreys for help.[26]

Unknown to the Federals, two of General Pegram's brigades (Johnston's and Lewis') had reached Vaughan road to Gregg's front and had taken posi-

tion on the left of Rooney Lee's cavalrymen, who were fighting dismounted. At the time that Winthrop's brigade reported to Gregg at Keys', the cavalry was skirmishing heavily with Pegram's soldiers some distance down Vaughan road. In compliance with Gregg's request, Winthrop had relieved the cavalry pickets with the 146th New York. Winthrop then deployed the 5th and 140th New York to the right of the road, and the 15th New York Heavy Artillery on the left of the road in a large open field. These dispositions had hardly been completed before Gregg's troopers started forward. [27]

When the cavalry moved out, Davies' brigade was to the right of the road, Gregg's to the left, and Knowles' in support. Colonel Gregg's brigade, which went into action mounted, established contact with the Rebels first. The 4th Pennsylvania, followed by the 8th Pennsylvania, charged down the road by sections of eights. As the horsemen approached the ground where Johnston's brigade was posted, a deadly volley crashed into the head of the column, causing the horsesoldiers to recoil. Among the casualties was Colonel Gregg, who was shot in the leg. Before leaving the field, Gregg turned command of the 2d Brigade over to Colonel Michael Kerwin of the 13th Pennsylvania. Colonel Samuel B. M. Young of the 4th Pennsylvania quickly re-formed his regiment. A second charge was made across an open field, with the same result. A third charge was undertaken and failed, before Young and his men realized that they were fighting Confederate infantry, who were not about to be dislodged by horsemen. [28]

To the right of the 4th Pennsylvania, the 16th Pennsylvania had gone into action afoot. While their comrades of the 2d Brigade were

being battered, the troopers of the 16th had dislodged a strong Rebel detachment holed up on Myers' farm, capturing 30 of Johnston's North Carolinians. A greyclad standard-bearer was shot down, but a horsesoldier in the 13th Pennsylvania, which came up mounted, reached the colors first. No time was given the Yanks to argue over the colors, because a Confederate counterattack rolled them back.[29]

North of Vaughan road, Davies' cavalrymen had been mauled by the butternuts. Davies, along with the colonels of the 1st New Jersey and the 10th New York, was shot from his horse. As Gregg's bluecoats fell back in confusion, they were closely followed by Rebel infantry.[30]

Colonel Winthrop, when he saw that the horsesoldiers had been repulsed, ordered up the 5th and 140th New York Infantry, and the 15th New York Heavy Artillery. Moving forward on the double, the footsoldiers, after opening their ranks to allow the retreating troopers to pass, delivered several well-aimed volleys which checked the Confederates' advance. Recoiling, Johnston's and Lewis' North Carolinians retired into the woods out of which they had chased Gregg's cavalry. As soon as they had reformed their lines, Johnston and Lewis led their cheering troops out of the timber and into the field beyond, only to be repulsed a second time. A third, but very half-hearted, attempt by the greyclads to close with Winthrop's brigade was easily repelled.[31]

At 5 p.m. Winthrop was warned by his subordinates that ammunition was running short. Meanwhile, General Griffin had pulled his 1st Brigade, Sickel's, out of the earthworks covering the bridgehead, ordering it to report to General Gregg out on Vaughan road. Reaching Keys', Colonel Sickel found Winthrop's troops closely engaged with Rebel battle lines

in the open ground west of the road.

General Gregg told Sickel to support Winthrop, "whose line at the time was being pressed by a vigorous assault of superior numbers of the enemy." Forming his brigade into line of battle, facing southwest, Sickel put his bluecoats in motion. As Sickel came up, Winthrop's troops, most of whom had emptied their cartridge-boxes, retired.

Sickel now called for a charge. At the first volley from the fresh brigade, Johnston's and Lewis' North Carolina Brigades, abandoned "the field in great disorder, leaving their killed and wounded" in Union hands, together with several prisoners. The blueclad infantry followed the Rebel infantry for "some distance," only halting when confronted by an ammunition shortage. General Griffin, having ridden up, Sickel reported his difficulties.

Griffin told Sickel to hold the ground gained and to advance a strong skirmish line, which was done.

It was starting to get dark. The firing off to the north having increased in intensity, Griffin shouted for Sickel to change front to the northwest. As the Union infantry was being re-formed, Colonel Knowles' brigade of dismounted cavalry was posted on the left, facing west. Winthrop's soldiers, having visited the ordnance wagons, were deployed on Sickel's right, their right anchored on Vaughan road.[32]

The infantry having broken the back of the Confederate thrust up Vaughan road, General Gregg called for Davies' and Knowles' brigades to harass the retreating butternuts. Advancing to the left and right of Vaughan road, the cavalry drove for the Gravelly Run crossing. Johnston's and Lewis' infantry brigades retired toward the northwest, to join General Gordon at Dabney's Mill; Rooney Lee's cavalry retreated down Vaughan road,

followed at a respectful distance by the Yankee horsesoldiers. The 4th Pennsylvania, having remounted, took the lead. As the Federals neared the Gravelly Run crossing, they were shelled by two guns of McGregor's Virginia Battery, unlimbered on the opposite side. This checked the pursuit, and, as it was getting dark, the brigade commanders recalled their troopers and returned to Keys' farm.[33]

* * *

General Ayres earlier in the day had pushed forward rapidly to support the left of Crawford's division at Dabney's Mill, which he understood was hard-pressed. Because of the thick undergrowth, Ayres marched his troops in two lines by the flank. As the footsoldiers were ascending a ridge, a mounted detachment of Gregg's cavalry, riding rapidly, overran the left of Colonel James Gwyn's brigade, throwing that unit into confusion. Without halting to re-form, Ayres pushed on with Colonel Richard N. Bowerman's Maryland Brigade, and soon engaged the foe. The Marylanders took position on Crawford's left at the mill site. Gwyn, on rallying his troops, moved up and occupied ground well to Bowerman's left.[34]

Colonel Pearson's First Division brigade, guided by one of Warren's staff, in the meantime had filed out of the works covering the bridgehead. As the troops were passing through a "strip of woods," they were shelled by 3-inch rifles mounted in the fortifications off to their right. Several men were struck down. General Warren now hailed Colonel Pearson, and told him to form his brigade in line of battle. When he deployed his unit, its right rested in rear of the center of one of Crawford's brigades and extended to the left behind Ayres' battle formation. Pearson's troops had scarcely formed, before the Rebel artillery opened. Shells shrieked overhead,

tearing limbs and boughs from the tall pines, The area where the brigade had formed was marshy, and the underbrush close and heavy. Even if there had not been opposition, a march across such terrain would be fraught with difficulty.[35]

At 4:30 Pearson's brigade advanced in line to a position in close support. All the while, the shooting to their front continued constant and severe. The line halted in an open field in which there were a few scattered trees. Here it came under a fierce artillery fire.[36]

Lieutenant Colonel William J. Pegram (General John Pegram's younger brother), in compliance with instructions from General Heth, had sent several of his batteries down the Boydton Plank Road. After crossing Hatcher Run, the cannoneers of Ellett's Virginia Battery drove the teams hitched to their four 3-inch rifles down the road to Dabney's Mill. Reaching an open field, the gunners unlimbered their pieces and began hammering the Federals to their front.[37]

Orders were now received from General Warren, who rode up on a "splendid white horse," for Pearson to reinforce Ayres with part of his brigade. Accompanied by the 155th Pennsylvania and the 32d Massachusetts, Pearson hastened forward and deployed these units on Bowerman's left, "where they immediately became fiercely engaged with the enemy." In accordance with instructions from Ayres, Pearson retraced his steps and brought up another regiment, the 16th Michigan, which was posted on Bowerman's right. Before returning to his brigade, Pearson told Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin F. Partridge of the Michigan unit that he was to hold this ground as long as feasible.[38]

General Gordon and his division commanders, Pegram and Evans, had regrouped their brigades in the woods northwest of Dabney's Mill. While

the arrival of Ayres' division and Pearson's brigade had tipped the scales momentarily in favor of the Yankees, the Rebels were far from ready to abandon the field. As soon as the brigade commanders reported that they were ready, and the battery commanders had unlimbered their guns and found the range, Gordon ordered, "Attack!" Pegram's and Evans' divisions advanced with their characteristic ardor. Hoffman's brigade of Pegram's division charged the Union left, while Evans' battle lines assailed Warren's center and right.[39]

As soon as Pearson's troops had taken post on Bowerman's left and right, Ayres passed the word for the troops to roll up log barricades. While the Marylanders were doing this, the 32d Massachusetts and the 155th Pennsylvania suddenly moved, without orders, 300 yards farther to the front, where they formed a line at an angle with Bowerman's. The sawdust pile that marked the mill site was at this line's apex. To the right of the clearing was a thick grove of small pines, covering Crawford's left--Baxter's regiments.

Gordon's battle lines, covered by skirmishers, beat their way through the pines and underbrush. Over on the Union right, Terry's Virginians and Lowe's Georgians forced Morrow's brigade to give ground. With Morrow's troops falling back, Evans maneuvered his men so as to enfilade Baxter's advance regiments (the 16th Maine, the 39th Massachusetts, and the 97th New York). Baxter's blueclads up to this moment had been blazing away at the Rebels (Peck's Louisianians) who threatened their front. These volleys ripped through the pines, whistling across the ground defended by the 32d Massachusetts and the 155th Pennsylvania. These two regiments (against whose lines Hoffman's Virginians were advancing) broke. The retreat of the 32d Massachusetts and the 155th Pennsylvania enabled

Hoffman to roll back the Maryland Brigade. Baxter's three regiments, with the units to their right and left retreating, found their position untenable. "The men of the different regiments, mingling together, fell back in some confusion, but soon rallied around their colors...." [40]

Encouraged by their gains, the Rebel leaders urged their men on. As General Pegram was shouting encouragement to his Virginians, he was shot through the body near the heart. Major Douglas, who was riding with the general, leaped from his horse and caught him as he fell. Assisted by several others, Douglas took Pegram from his horse. He died in the major's arms, almost as soon as he touched the ground. Colonel Hoffman was severely wounded. Deprived of two of their leaders, Hoffman's brigade was thrown into confusion. Valuable time was lost while General Gordon reorganized the brigade, and placed the senior regimental commander, Colonel John G. Kasey, in command. To make matters worse, Hoffman's and Evans' troops had diverged to the left and right, a large gap had opened in Gordon's battle line, near the mill site. [41]

The Union leaders took advantage of the Confederates' discomfort to regroup. General Baxter in the center had his troops erect barricades about 200 yards southeast of Dabney's Mill. To Baxter's right, Morrow called for a counterattack. As the troops of Crawford's 3d Brigade started through Dabney's orchard, Colonel Morrow was seriously wounded. His senior regimental commander, Colonel Thomas F. McCoy of the 107th Pennsylvania, was nearby when Morrow fell. As he turned over command, Morrow placed in McCoy's hands the brigade flag, which he had been carrying. McCoy, seeing that the brigade had come up into line with Baxter's troops to the left, called a halt, and shouted for his men to entrench. [42]

Colonel Pearson and his officers, "after much hard labor and exertion," re-formed the 3d Brigade on Baxter's left.[43]

Bowerman's Marylanders on Pearson's left braced themselves for a stand at the sawdust pile. Checking with his regimental commanders, Bowerman was dismayed to learn that ammunition was running short.[44]

Meanwhile, Confederate reinforcements had reached the field. General Finegan had marched up at the head of his division. In accordance with orders from General Gordon, Finegan formed his troops to fill the gap that had opened between Evans' right and Kasey's left. Many of his men had been killed or wounded, and with many of his men having fired their last round, Colonel Peck, on the arrival of Finegan's division, withdrew the Louisiana brigade a short distance to where the ordnance wagons were parked.

Within a few minutes, the aggressive Gordon had completed his dispositions and the entire line advanced.[45]

From left to right the Union line assailed by the hard-driving Confederates was defended by Bowerman's, Pearson's, Baxter's, and McCoy's brigades. An anxiously expected ordnance train failed to reach the front in time.

The cry, "We need cartridges!" was raised by a number of the blueclads fighting to check Gordon's steamroller. A volley from the rear threw Pearson's brigade into a panic, a stampede ensued. The brigade on Pearson's right (Baxter's) was the next to collapse. Having caved in Warren's center, the greyclads, swung to the left and right, intent on rolling up Bowerman's and McCoy's units. McCoy, seeing that his brigade was in danger of being encircled, called retreat. With empty cartridge-boxes and their flanks exposed, Bowerman's Marylanders pulled back. Unless the Confederates could be checked, it could well spell the end of the [illegible] for the Union.[46]

General Ayres remembered that there were several ridges, with marshy terrain intervening, between Dabney's Mill and the field fronting the bridgehead. Assisted by his staff, Ayres tried to rally the troops for a holding action along these ridges. So shaken were the soldiers, who wore the Maltese cross on their caps, that on only one occasion was Ayres able to bring a semblance of order out of the chaos. But when the troops that had been positioned saw an armed mob pass to their left, they took to their heels.[47]

Fortunately for the V Corps reinforcements were at hand. As he rode down Vaughan road to confer with General Warren, General Wheaton heard firing off to the southwest. Wheaton, satisfied that the V Corps had engaged the foe, ordered his division to push on, while he galloped ahead to Warren's command post. Warren had gone to the front, so Wheaton was directed by Meade "to move over Hatcher's [sic] Run, and be in position to support the Fifth Corps on the Vaughan road or elsewhere."

As he rode out Vaughan road, Wheaton now met Generals Griffin and Gregg, who told him that they could cope with the Rebels to their front, consequently, they had no immediate use for any VI Corps troops. While the three generals were conversing, one of Warren's staff raced up on a sweat-flaked horse. He reported that he had just come from the right, where Crawford and Ayres were engaged, and that reinforcements were needed there.

Wheaton's lead brigade by this time had crossed Hatcher Run. Guided by one of Warren's aides, Colonel James Hubbard's 2d Brigade was conducted through the entrenchments and out the road to Dabney's Mill. Overtaking the brigade, Wheaton learned from the staff-officer that Warren had told him to bring up only one brigade. Before riding on for the point of danger,

Wheaton ordered his other two brigades to form behind the entrenchments and await further instructions.

Three-quarters of a mile beyond the run, Wheaton began to encounter stragglers. A glance at their badges told the general that these fugitives belonged to Crawford's division. Within a few moments, the number of troops fleeing toward the perimeter so flooded the road that Wheaton knew that some grave misfortune had befallen the V Corps troops at Dabney's Mill. To be on the safe side, he called for Colonel Hubbard to halt and deploy his brigade into line of battle. Before Hubbard could complete his dispositions, "the mass of the troops in front came rushing through the dense woods and quite over us, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the line could be formed, so obstructed was it by the fugitives, who were deaf to every entreaty...and refused to rally on the flanks or in support of the brigade there forming. Squads, companies, and regiments went rapidly to the rear despite our greatest efforts to halt them."

While the confusion was at its height, Wheaton was joined by General Warren, who remarked that "the line in front had broken irreparably." Up till this moment there had been only sniping in the woods to Hubbard's front. While Hubbard was preparing to throw out skirmishers, his men received several volleys from a line of troops clad in blue uniforms to their left rear. Fortunately for the VI Corps people, these volleys were fired too high to inflict many casualties.

These crashing volleys were discharged by Burr's brigade of Griffin's division. Burr's troops had followed Sickel's down Vaughan road. Before he reached Keys', his orders were countermanded, and Burr was directed to follow Hubbard's brigade to the scene of action at Dabney's Mill.

When the VI Corps people disappeared into the pines, Burr halted and formed his troops into line of battle in a field. Without doing much checking, Burr bellowed, "Fire!"

To avoid having his troops slaughtered by the V Corps, Wheaton told Hubbard to withdraw from the pines. Falling back about 300 yards, Hubbard redeployed his brigade in a field. As the VI Corps soldiers retired, so they were followed by Confederate sharpshooters, who infiltrated the woods to their front.

The gathering darkness and "general confusion" made it difficult for Hubbard to effect his dispositions. Pearson's brigade, having been reformed, filed into position on Hubbard's left. Three regiments (the 1st Michigan and the 118th Pennsylvania of Pearson's brigade, and the 121st New York of Hubbard's) were deployed and advanced as skirmishers.[48]

Burr's brigade in the meantime had disintegrated, retreating in great disorder, "their officers having no control of them, whatever." Losing all sense of direction, many of Burr's bluecoats became so frightened that they continued to fire into the backs of units to their front. Others discharged their rifle-muskets into the air. Colonel Burr finally rallied a small force, which he led into position on Hubbard's right.[49]

When Ayres had advanced to Dabney's Mill, he had presumed that Gwyn's brigade, having been disorganized by the horsesoldiers breaking through its ranks, would rejoin him as soon as the men had been re-formed. But in going forward, Gwyn became confused as to directions and had wandered to the left. He encountered a Rebel picket line, which he engaged. Isolated and unsupported, the brigade soon collapsed.[50]

Lieutenant Colonel Frederick T. Locke was en route to the front from Meade's Cummings' house command post, when he saw stragglers coming toward him.

He quickly deployed the corps' provost guard and Warren's escort across an open field, with instructions to round up the refugees. Sighting "a mass of troops with colors retiring through the woods to the left" of the field, Locke rode over to learn who they were. Most of these soldiers were found to belong to Gwyn's brigade.

Locke shouted for them to halt and form on their colors. Gwyn galloped up shortly thereafter and explained that "his brigade had broken after receiving but a slight fire from the enemy."

"Re-form your brigade, advance to the woods, and deploy so as to stop the retreat," Locke snapped, as he pointed toward the pines to his front.

A number of Bowerman's Marylanders were now encountered wandering about the field. Locke rallied a number, telling "Gwyn to take charge of them along with his own command." [51]

Night had closed in, so the fighting soon ceased. Taking advantage of a full moon, Warren reorganized his corps. The five brigades (Burr's, Bowerman's, Gwyn's, Bragg's, and Baxter's) that had disintegrated were re-formed and mustered inside the breastworks defended by Wheaton's 1st and 3d Brigades.

Colonel Winthrop's brigade of Ayres' division was recalled from Keys' farm. Marching to the right, Winthrop's blueclads relieved Pearson's, and assumed responsibility for picketing the pines to the left and right of the Dabney's Mill road. Pearson, as soon as he had recalled his regiments, moved back into the rifle-pits out of which he had led his troops, several hours before. [52]

Upon the withdrawal of Winthrop's brigade, Colonel Sickel discovered

that his people were the only ones remaining in Keys' field. He accordingly redeployed his troops along "a new and more eligible line for defensive operations and remained under arms all night." Sickel's pickets on the right were in contact with Winthrop's, while on the left they connected with Gregg's cavalry.[53]

Hubbard's outposts were relieved by Winthrop's soldiers at 8 p.m. Orders were now received for Wheaton to withdraw his division east of Hatcher Run and "mass in some convenient place." As Hubbard's troops tramped through the earthworks, the 1st and 3d Brigades fell in behind. Crossing the stream, Wheaton's division went into bivouac near Cummings' house.[54]

The Confederates pursued the Federals through the forest. Darkness was at hand by the time Gordon's battle lines gained the fields fronting the breastworks, guarding the approaches to the Vaughan road crossing. Gordon's units had been disorganized by the rapid advance, and it would take time to regroup for an assault on the barricades to his front. Gordon accordingly decided to recall his troops and return to Dabney's Mill.

Before beginning the return march, Gordon saw that a strong line of outposts was established, while fatigue parties were organized to police the battlefield and collect arms and accoutrements abandoned by the V Corps people in their wild flight. Men also had to be detailed to escort into Petersburg the numerous prisoners bagged in the fighting.

There was little rest in the Southern camps, as Gordon and his generals, certain that the battle would be renewed, saw that their men entrenched their position at Dabney's Mill.[55] While the surgeons and

hospital stewards dressed the wounds of the injured, burial details went about their grim task.

* * *

At 3 p.m. General Mott had sent Colonel McAllister with a patrol to reconnoiter the ground explored during the morning by De Trobriand. A one and one-half mile advance brought the bluecoats out in front of the Rebels' breastworks, but the butternuts were so engrossed in the fighting beyond Hatcher Run that they ignored the patrol.[56]

News that the Confederates were sweeping back the V Corps caused Meade a few unpleasant moments. Chief of Staff Webb at 5:45 telegraphed II Corps Commander Humphreys to hold all the troops he could "spare in readiness to move to Warren promptly and rapidly."[57] Hardly had the key in Humphreys' command post clicked out this information, before a wire was received to rush troops to the Vaughan road crossing of Hatcher Run.[58]

Humphreys told Mott to put De Trobriand's 1st Brigade in motion. While De Trobriand's troops, 2,500 strong, were falling out, orders reached Mott from II Corps headquarters to withdraw West's brigade from the line. West's people were to follow De Trobriand. To increase further the strength of the column, he was to march to Warren's assistance, Mott called on Ramsey and McAllister for a regiment each.[59]

De Trobriand's brigade took the lead as the relief column started down Vaughan road. Near the bridge, General Meade halted De Trobriand, telling him that Warren's troops had checked the Confederate onset, and that he was to return to his former position.[60] West's brigade was

likewise stopped and countermarched. While the regiments from McAllister's and Ramsey's brigades were returned to the breastworks, De Trobriand's and West's brigades were massed in the woods. [61]

At the time that De Trobriand and West were instructed to reinforce Warren, Humphreys had telegraphed General Miles to rush a brigade down Vaughan road. Miles at 7 o'clock replied that his 2d Brigade, Colonel Richard C. Duryea commanding, had been ordered out. Duryea's troops had gone only a short distance, when Miles at 7:37 was notified that the emergency had passed, so he was to recall his 2d Brigade. [62]

Two sections of II Corps artillery (one from Battery K, 4th U. S. and the other belonging to the 10th Massachusetts) employed their guns to support the V Corps. As the men who wore the Maltese cross retreated, the four guns emplaced near Armstrong's shelled the woods across the run. [63]

At the time the V Corps broke, two units of Colonel Pierce's brigade, the 69th Pennsylvania and the 4th Ohio Battalion, were called up from the reserve and took position covering the dam and a bridge that had been thrown across Hatcher Run, near Armstrong's Mill. As they double-timed into position, they were fired on by Rebel sharpshooters posted in the timber and underbrush on the south bank.

Meade, realizing that the VI Corps had been materially weakened by the need to employ Wheaton to strengthen his field force, issued orders for General Parke to rush the Engineer Brigade to Aiken's house. [64] The brigade on reporting to Getty occupied the line between Batteries Nos. XXIV and XXVI, its right resting on Battery No. XXIV. A 287-man detail from the Engineer Brigade relieved the men Wheaton had left on the picket line. [65]

* * *

After the results of the forced reconnaissance undertaken by the II Corps had been studied, Meade at 1 p.m. telegraphed General Grant that if Warren's troops, who were then preparing to move out, encountered the Confederates behind fortifications, he would require fresh instructions. Because, he added, he would have "accomplished all originally designed or now practicable." The condition of the roads, which was very bad, and the lack of trains and supplies precluded any extended movement to the west. As far as Meade could see, he had only two options--to entrench where he was or withdraw. Meade was of the opinion that if further operations were contemplated, it might be well if the Army of the Potomac extended its entrenched line to Hatcher Run.[66]

Grant registered his opposition to making an attack on a fortified line. He, however, went along with Meade's suggestion that "it will be well to hold out to Hatcher's [sic] Run."[67]

THE BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN, FEBRUARY 5-7, 1865

CHAPTER III

General Gordon and His Confederates Win the Second Round

Notes

1 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 260, 266, 269, 270-271, 287, 293. Pearson's 3d Brigade was posted in the works on the right, its right resting at Armstrong's Mill and its left extending to within 50 yards of Vaughan road. Pearson, after advancing a strong picket line, put his trocps to work strenghtening the rifle-pits. Crawford's division was to constitute a strategic reserve, ready to march at a moment's notice to either Warren's or Humphreys' support.

2 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 399-400.

3 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 225, 227. The 105th Pennsylvania of West's brigade had reported to De Trobriand on its return from the reconnaissance down Vaughan road. Major Hess and his troopers of the 3d Pennsylvania, having patroled Vaughan road during the night, took position at Cummings' house on recrossing the run.

4 Ibid., 254, 258, 260, 366, 368, 371. The 6th Ohio at this time rejoined Knowles' brigade.

5 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 396. Meade spent the night of the 5th at Aiken's house.

6 Ibid., 423.

7 Ibid., 423; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 254.

8 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 254, 258, 280.

9 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 423; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 193.

O. R., Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 668, 1071.
Dixon's Co.

10 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 225; 228; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 424. De Trobriand was accompanied on his forced reconnaissance by the 2d U. S. Sharpshooters, the 20th Indiana, the 17th Maine, and the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery. The redoubt was on rising ground, near a barn in front of Armstrong's house.

11 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 344; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 424.

12 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 254; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 431-432. Confederate deserters had stated that their works extended south to Gravelly Run, about a mile southwest of Dabney's Mill.

13 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 434.

14 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 254-255.

15 Ibid., 255.

16 Ibid., 298.

17 Ibid., 344.

18 Ibid., 287, 293; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 286.

19 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 287, 293, 296, 390; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 286, 288, 290.

20 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 381.

21 Ibid., 381, 390; Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall, 326.

22 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 290, 291-292; Barton, "The Battle of Hatcher's Run," Confederate Veteran, XVII, 119.

23 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 390.

24 Ibid., 390, 392; Barton, "The Battle of Hatcher's Run," Confederate Veteran, XVII, 119.

25 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 287, 293, 392; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 286, 288, 291, 293, 295. Colonel Charles W. Tilden

of the 16th Maine reported that in this advance, Color Sergeant Luther Bradford "was wounded in the left arm (causing amputation of same) while gallantly bearing the colors in advance of the line, urging the men on to their work. This is the third time he has been wounded...." O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 288.

26 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 255, 260; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 432.

27 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 280; Beale, History of the 9th Virginia Cavalry, 147.

28 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 366, 368, 369-370.

29 Ibid., 368, 370.

30 Ibid., 280, 366. Colonel H. A. Janeway of the 1st New Jersey recovered, while Lieutenant Colonel F. L. Tremain of the 10th New York Cavalry died.

31 Ibid., 280-281; H. C. Wall, "The Twenty-Third North Carolina Infantry," Southern Historical Society Papers, XXV, 175.

32 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 266, 280, 281. Upon being relieved by Sickel's troops, Winthrop reported, his men retired "75 to 100 yards in rear of my position and replenished my boxes with the ammunition which I had just then succeeded in procuring."

33 Ibid., 366, 368, 370.

34 Ibid., 277, 278, 282, 284.

35 Ibid., 271; History of the Corn Exchange Regiment, 118th Pennsylvania Volunteers..., Compiled by Committee (Philadelphia, 1888), 551. From right to left the brigade was posted: the 32d Massachusetts, the 155th Pennsylvania, the 16th Michigan, the 118th Pennsylvania, the 20th Maine, the 83d Pennsylvania, the 91st Pennsylvania, and the 1st Michigan.

36 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 271, 277, 278.

37 J. C. Goolsby, "Crenshaw Battery, Pegram's Battalion, C S Artillery," Southern Historical Society Papers, XXVIII, 368-369.

38 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 271, 277, 278.

39 Ibid., 390.

40 O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 286, 288, 290-291; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 279, 282, 293.

41 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 390, 392; Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall, 326-327. After the fighting for the day had ceased, Major Douglas recalled, the question was asked, "Who would tell Mrs. Pegram?"

"You must do it Douglas," snapped General Gordon.

"Heavens! General--I'll lead a forlorn hope--do anything that is war--but not that. Send New. He's married and knows women; I don't.

"Major New went on his unenviable duty and I took the General's body back to my room at Headquarters. An hour after, as the General lay, dead, on my bed, I heard the ambulance pass just outside the window, taking Mrs. Pegram back to their quarters. New had not seen her yet and she did not know; but her mother was with her. A fiancée of three years, a bride of three weeks, now a widow!" Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall, 327.

42 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 287, 289, 293; O. R., Series I, LI, pt. I, 286, 288, 291.

43 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 271-272, 276; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 293, 295, 296.

44 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 282.

45 Ibid., 390, 392; G. Moxley Sorrel, Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer (Jackson, Tenn., 1958), 272-273.

46 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 271-272, 277, 279, 282, 28[illegible]; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 286.

47 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 279.

48 Ibid., 261, 269, 272-273, 298-299.

49 Ibid., 259, 269.

50 Ibid., 279, 284.

51 Ibid., 258-259.

52 Ibid., 266, 272, 280.

53 Ibid., 266.

54 Ibid., 299; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 437.

55 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 381, 390-392; Sorrel , Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer, 272-273.

56 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 225, 239; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 425.

57 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 425.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 426; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 225.

60 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 228; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 426-427.

61 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 225, 236. West's brigade was positioned in the woods on the right of Smyth's main line of resistance.

62 Ibid., 195; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 428-429.

63 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 212, 222, 250; Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 391.

64 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 439.

65 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 72.

66 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 417.

67 Ibid.

THE BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN, FEBRUARY 5-7, 1865

Chapter IV

The Federals Fortify a Line From Fort Sampson to Hatcher Run

It had clouded up and a cold rain was falling at daybreak on February 7, 1865. General Warren as his first order of business commenced shifting his brigades, "so as to bring all of each division together." At 8:15 a.m. Warren telegraphed Chief of Staff Webb that since the fighting had ceased, all had been quiet along the V Corps' front. Out on the picket line, Winthrop's people could see Confederate troops moving about in their picket posts. Warren speculated that the foe was either relieving their outposts or reinforcing them.[1]

Webb, in replying, observed that General Meade desired a report on the condition of the V Corps, and an estimate of the casualties suffered in yesterday's battle. Warren was to push out skirmishers to ascertain if the Rebels were still in force to his front. If they were, he was to use his own judgment as to the wisdom of attacking.[2]

Meanwhile, Rooney Lee's cavalry, trailed by an infantry skirmish line, was sighted advancing across the fields south of Vaughan road. Colonel Sickel's outposts and the greyclads soon opened fire, and for the next 45 minutes the two skirmish lines banged away.

As soon as he spotted the butternuts, Colonel Sickel had contacted Generals Griffin and Gregg. The cavalry leader promptly called up one of his regiments, which he positioned on the left of Sickel's infantry. The cannoneers of Battery D, 1st New York Light Artillery were also ordered up. Not having been able to employ their guns in the fight on

the 6th, because of the dense woods, the artillerists were glad to see, as the battery drove down Vaughan road, that the country hereabouts was open. By the time the gunners reached the front, it was raining very hard. The rain soon changed to sleet. The Confederates, who had been sent to gather arms abandoned in the previous afternoon's fight, now pulled back into the woods. [3]

Warren at 9:20 received another note signed by General Webb. The chief of staff wanted the V Corps leader to give due consideration in drafting his plans to Meade's desire that Gregg's cavalry be withdrawn at the earliest opportunity. [4]

Twenty minutes later, Warren advised headquarters of the "slight demonstration" made by the Confederates on Vaughan road. So far, all that he had seen and heard satisfied him that the Rebels would not make a stand this side of Dabney's Mill. He was convinced that the V Corps could drive the Rebels "that far, if at all, without the aid of more than one of Gregg's brigades...." If Meade so wished, the other two cavalry brigades could be recalled at once. [5]

Meade at 10:40 issued instructions for Warren to "order General Gregg to take two of his brigades to Rowanty Post-Office, with their horses, &c...." There Gregg would see that his troopers were provisioned and kept well in hand, so they would be ready to march against the foe's cavalry or to the support of the II Corps. This message was delivered to Warren at 12:30 p.m., who forwarded a copy to Gregg with a notation "to carry out the instructions contained therein." [6]

Gregg moved promptly. By 1 o'clock the two brigades (Davies' and Knowles') that were to accompany the cavalry leader across Hatcher Run

were ready to ride. Just as he was putting his horsesoldiers into motion, a courier rode up with additional instructions from army headquarters. Gregg now learned that he could post his command in the most suitable place to watch the Halifax and Perkins' roads. Should he find it difficult to supply his division at that point, he was authorized to move back to Fort Dushane.[7]

Gregg by dusk had posted his two brigades at the junction of the Halifax and Wyatt roads. One regiment (the 21st Pennsylvania Cavalry) had been advanced to Rowanty Postoffice, with pickets thrown out on the Perkins' and Reams' Station roads. Another regiment had been sent to reconnoiter the country between Reams' Station and Stony Creek. Troopers from the 21st Pennsylvania, occupying an outpost near Monk's Neck Bridge, had watched as a brigade of Rebel infantry marched down the road on the opposite side of the Rowanty. Union and Confederate pickets in this sector confronted each other with the stream between.[8]

Several hours before he left the west side of Hatcher Run, Gregg had had the troopers of the brigade (Kerwin's) that was to remain behind to relieve Sickel's infantrymen, so they could rejoin their parent unit--Griffin's division. Kerwin's horsesoldiers by 11 a.m. had moved into position across Vaughan road, and Sickel's brigade marched up the road.[9]

Colonel Kerwin, not long after Gregg had departed, received orders from Warren's headquarters to send a combat patrol down Vaughan road. This force was to try and push the Rebels to their front across Gravelly Run. If the Confederates were encountered in force, the patrol was to retire on the brigade.[10]

The 4th Pennsylvania, Colonel Young commanding, was the unit selected to make the sweep toward Gravelly Run. No Confederates were encountered by

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the Pennsylvanians as they rode down Vaughan road, till they had penetrated to within one-half mile of their goal. Striking the Rebel picket line at this point, Colonel Young shouted for his bugler to sound, "Charge!" The butternuts were forced back to the stream, where they braced for a stand. A lightning-like flank movement by Young's 1st Battalion (which had dismounted) drove the greyclads across Gravelly Run and into rifle-pits on the other side.

Cannoneers now opened on the Yanks with their two 3-inch Whitworths. Recalling his troopers, Colonel Young headed back up Vaughan road, as the hexagonal bolts knocked branches and boughs from the trees to the troopers' right and left. A squadron of Rooney Lee's dismounted Confederates followed the bluecoats as far as the point where the pickets had been assailed. Young now wheeled his column about, and these Rebels quickly rejoined their comrades beyond the stream.

On his return, Colonel Young explained to Colonel Kerwin that the Confederates appeared "to have one brigade of cavalry" in the trenches south of Gravelly Run.[11]

General Ayres had spent a good part of the morning on the picket line. What he saw and heard from Colonel Winthrop convinced the general that this rugged duty had taken its toll, because the infantrymen of the 1st Brigade appeared to be exhausted. Returning to his command post, Ayres, recalling that Warren had expressed an intention to relieve Winthrop's bluecoats "as soon as some other troops could be fitted out to take" their place, wrote Colonel Locke. Ayres, after explaining the situation, urged that Winthrop's brigade be replaced.[12]

Warren acceded to Ayres' request. As soon as Sickel's troops re-

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entered the perimeter, they replaced Burr's brigade behind the earthworks on Pearson's left. Burr's people then moved out and relieved Winthrop's on the picket line. Troops of his unit not assigned to outpost duty were formed into line of battle by Burr, and turned to erecting breastworks. At periodic intervals during the cold, wet afternoon, the woods occupied by Burr's brigade were shelled by Rebel artillery.[13]

Forming and mustering his troops as soon as they were relieved, Winthrop led them back into the bridgehead, where they camped behind the units manning the barricades.[14]

On the morning of February 7, Warren had dispatched Captain Cope to examine the ground to the right and locate a battery position, where the Federals could emplace guns to reply to the Rebels' cannons at Dabney's Mill. Near Armstrong's Mill, the captain found ground having the necessary prerequisites. He also observed that the II Corps' batteries at Armstrong's house could be helpful in neutralizing the troublesome Confederate guns.

Fording Hatcher Run where Pearson's right anchored, Cope crossed the open ground in front of the works and visited the II Corps pickets. Seeing no signs of the Johnnies, the captain concluded that they must have pulled in their line of outposts. Cope, on rejoining Warren, told what he had seen.[15]

Warren, after listening to what Cope had to say, determined to see if he could dislodge the Rebels from their advance rifle-pits. At 10 a.m. he reduced his plan to writing. General Crawford was to move out from the right of the bridgehead and assail the foe; Wheaton's VI Corps division would be held ready to reinforce Crawford.[16]

When Captain Cope delivered to Crawford his copy of the circular, he explained that the Third Division was to "push out as far as possible toward Dabney's Mill, bury his dead of the day before, and see what was going on." [17]

By the time that Cope reached Crawford's command post, the troops had refilled their cartridge-boxes. When Crawford passed the word to prepare to move out, the brigade commanders called for their units to fall in on their color lines.

Baxter's brigade took the lead as the column marched up the west side of Hatcher Run, the breastworks behind which Pearson's troops crouched to their left. Opposite Armstrong's Mill, the column turned to the left and passed through the works. A short distance beyond the rifle-pits, Crawford called for General Baxter to halt and deploy his troops into line of battle. Covered by a double line of skirmishers, the 39th Massachusetts in advance and the 11th Pennsylvania in support, the brigade resumed the advance. Crawford's other brigades followed Baxter's battle line--Bragg's on the left and McCoy's on the right.

Baxter's skirmishers were fired on by Rebel pickets, posted behind slight earthworks. These greyclads belonged to Brigadier General G. Moxley Sorrel's Georgia Brigade of Finegan's division. The 11th Pennsylvania advanced to assist the 39th Massachusetts, and the Georgians were quickly dislodged. Closely followed by the battle line, Baxter's skirmishers forged ahead through the sodden forest, driving the greyclads before them. General Sorrel was among the casualties in this phase of the fighting. A Union rifleman put a minié ball through his chest, piercing the general's "right lung, smashing the ribs front and rear."

Sorrel was carried to the rear by his aides. Although he recovered, the war was over for Sorrel. A three-quarter mile advance brought Baxter's people to a clearing. Out in the field in front of the skirmishers was a formidable line of works held in force by Confederate infantry. A short distance to their right was a parapet with embrasures, through which protruded the ugly muzzles of several cannon.[18]

The Confederates had spent a miserable morning strengthening the line of works, marked out the previous evening, covering their position at Dabney's Mill. Guns manned by Ellett's and several other batteries of Colonel William J. Pegram's Artillery Battalion were manhandled along muddy trails and into position at strategic points behind the parapets. A brigade from General Finegan's division led by General Sorrel had been sent forward at dawn to hold the picket line.

As soon as he was notified by Sorrel that the Federals were advancing in force, General Gordon had the "long roll" beaten. In forming his troops to meet the renewed Union advance, Gordon posted Pegram's division (now commanded by General Johnston) on the right, while Finegan's division filed into position on Johnston's left. General Evans' division was held in reserve, ready to move forward at a moment's notice.[19]

After Baxter's troops had chased Sorrel's Georgians out of their advance rifle-pits, these fortifications were occupied by Colonel McCoy's brigade. In accordance with instructions from Crawford, McCoy had his men start strengthening and refacing the trenches and slashing timber. While engaged in this work, the soldiers were shelled by artillery, emplaced north of the run, and to the fire of Rebel sharpshooters from Brigadier General John R. Cooke's brigade posted in the underbrush north

of Hatcher Run. Apprehensive lest the greyclads slip a column across the stream to turn his position, McCoy dispatched skirmishers to cope with this threat. When General Crawford learned of this situation, he personally positioned several of Bragg's regiments between McCoy's right and Hatcher Run.[20]

To hold his position fronting the Rebels' main line of resistance, Baxter called up and deployed his three remaining regiments (the 16th Maine, the 97th New York, and the 88th Pennsylvania) as skirmishers to the right and left. One of McCoy's units, the 56th Pennsylvania, was brought up and posted as a reserve to Baxter's skirmish line.[21]

Meade at 11:45, shortly after Crawford had passed through the barricades, telegraphed Warren that in view of the inclement weather and General Grant's strong feelings against attacking a fortified line, an assault at this time would be inadvisable, unless great advantages could be gained. Plans at army headquarters were being prepared to withdraw the V Corps "to-night or to-morrow" to the east bank of Hatcher Run.[22]

His fighting blood aroused, Warren determined to ignore his superiors and push matters. At 3:45 Crawford was directed to "drive the enemy just as far as you can in the daylight that is left you, and use all your supports I have sent you."[23]

Writing Chief of Staff Webb at 4:30, Warren placed himself on record that if it were necessary to fall back across Hatcher Run, he would prefer to do so in the morning. In an effort to get Grant and Meade to change their minds, he reported, "We have regained most of the ground we held yesterday, and drawn the artillery fire from the enemy's works, and we could hold the south side of Hatcher's [sic] Run toward Dabney's Mill

so long as may be required." [24]

The supports referred to by Warren in his 3:45 communication to Crawford belonged to Wheaton's division. At the time of the Rebels' morning demonstration on Vaughan road, General Warren had called for Wheaton to rush one of his brigades to V Corps headquarters. With this threat evaporating, the brigade (Colonel Joseph E. Hamblin's) was massed in a field east of the run. At 12 o'clock Hamblin's people were ordered across the stream to support General Crawford. Colonel Hubbard's 2d Brigade was then concentrated in the field vacated by Hamblin. Hubbard's bluecoats, within the hour, crossed the run and formed near the bridge, prepared to march to Hamblin's assistance on Crawford's call. [25]

Preparatory to assailing the earthworks covering Dabney's Mill, Crawford had the remainder of Bragg's troops take position between McCoy's and Hatcher Run. To afford sufficient space for Bragg's people behind the captured works, McCoy's battle line filed to the left several hundred yards, resting its left on a morass. As soon as this movement was completed, orders were received from Crawford for McCoy to advance and take position on the left of Baxter's skirmishers. Hamblin's VI Corps brigade marched up and occupied the works just before McCoy's people started forward. As his troops drew abreast of Baxter's, McCoy refused his left wing. [26]

When Crawford passed the word that all was ready, Baxter's and McCoy's troops advanced against the manned barricades to their front. It was sleeting and a thin crust of ice had formed on many of the soldiers' arms and accoutrements. Baxter's skirmishers on the right drove to within 100 yards of the newly erected breastworks, before their thrust was blunted by the well-aimed volleys of Finegan's footsoldiers. [27]

McCoy's battle line came forward through the pines on the run. When "Willie" Pegram's artillery to their front swept the woods with canister, part of McCoy's line "gave way and retired to the works in their rear before they could be rallied." Other individuals, such as Major H. J. Sheafer and the color guard of the 107th Pennsylvania, only retired about 100 yards and re-formed.[28]

Gordon's Confederates made no effort to follow up this success. On the Union right, Baxter's bluecoats retired to the ground held prior to the attack. The troops on McCoy's left, who hadn't bolted, threw up breastworks within 300 yards of the Confederates' entrenchments. Here they were joined, as soon as it was dark, by the rest of the brigade.[29]

Crawford at 6:20 wrote Warren that he had advanced his lines, driving the Rebels into their "new lines of works." Prisoners bagged by the Yanks reported that the V Corps was opposed by the same units it had fought yesterday. His division was extended as far as the exhausted condition of the men would allow, so orders had been issued for one of Wheaton's brigades to take position on McCoy's left.[30]

At 9 p.m. Baxter's skirmishers were relieved by picked men from Hamblin's and McCoy's brigades. Retiring about 100 yards, Baxter's soldiers formed line and began erecting works within one-quarter mile of the Rebel rifle-pits, connecting on the right with McCoy's brigade and on the left with Hamblin's.[31] Bragg's brigade by this time had been advanced and occupied the ground between McCoy's right and Hatcher Run.[32] There in the pines, the soldiers, chilled to their bones by the sleet, grimly held their ground. Needless to say, the ranks had been thinned, as the sunshine patroits and summer soldiers slipped to the rear.[33]

General Crawford at this time notified Warren that his advanced line had dug in. He had just returned to his command post from inspecting the picket line. From the road which he was on, the Rebel fortifications ran northeast and southwest. His troops, he observed, needed rest badly, not having had an opportunity to build fires and make coffee for over ten hours.[34]

Because of the shoddy condition of many of the units' uniforms, the Confederates undoubtedly suffered greater discomfort from the hostile elements than the Federals. General Lee, after visiting the front, wrote Secretary of War James A. Seddon on the 8th:

> All the disposable force of the right wing of the army has been operating against the enemy beyond Hatcher's [sic] Run since Sunday. Yesterday, the most inclement day of the winter, they had to be retained in line of battle, having been in the same condition the two previous days and nights. I regret to be obliged to state that under these circumstances, heightened by assaults, and fire of the enemy, some of the men had been without meat for three days, and all were suffering from reduced rations and scant clothing, exposed to battle, cold, hail and sleet.[35]

* * *

General Humphreys' II Corps held its ground on February 7. At the time of Warren's decision to undertake a forced reconnaissance, Humphreys was directed by Meade to support the people who wore the "Maltese cross" with all his available force, if called upon. Contacting Warren at 12:35, Humphreys reported that he had two brigades in ready reserve—De Trobriand's and West's.[36]

Replying for his boss, Colonel Locke inquired into the possibility of the II Corps batteries, emplaced near Armstrong's, giving Crawford's troops fire support, "more for the moral effect it will produce on our

In Grant's opinion, "we should hold from our present left to Armstrong's Mill. The cavalry could then picket down Hatcher's [sic] Run and cover our rear easier than at present." The weather having turned bad, Grant thought it would be wise to get the soldiers "back to the position you intend them to occupy." [41]

At 1:30 Grant wired Meade that he had been called to Washington to testify before the Committee on the Conduct of the War. He hoped to leave by boat for the capital in the morning, but he would defer his departure till Meade notified him that the "troops now out are in the new position they are to occupy." [42]

Meade answered that he would advise Grant as soon as the troops were in position. He, however, doubted if they would be by tomorrow, because "some works" had to be constructed before he could "unmass the forces on the left." [43]

Meeting with his staff and Chief Engineer J. C. Duane, Meade drafted a circular, sketching the fortified position the troops were to take up. Major Duane was "to lay out and construct an intrenched line from Fort Sampson to Armstrong's Mill, placing works at the latter point and the crossing of the Vaughan road, so as to hold and command both these crossings." Suitable artillery emplacements were to be selected and connected by rifle-pits, timber was to be slashed, dams built on Hatcher Run, and the stream obstructed.

As soon as these works had been surveyed, the Petersburg investment line would be held: the IX Corps from the Appomattox to Fort Howard; the VI Corps from Fort Howard to Fort Gregg, inclusive; the II Corps from Fort Gregg to Armstrong's Mill, Warren's V Corps was to occupy

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own troops than anything else." [37]

Warren at this time did not believe he would require any II Corps troops. [38]

In compliance with this request, cannoneers of Smith's section, Battery K, 4th United States Artillery shelled the woods in front of Crawford's advancing line. The regulars continued to fire till the men of the V Corps had pushed deep into the woods and close up against the Rebel position at Dabney's Mill. Along toward dark, a section of the 10th Massachusetts Battery opened on a Rebel battery near Dabney's Mill, at a range of one mile. After the redlegs had expended 25 rounds, the butternuts ceased fire. [39]

* * *

Meade at 10:15 a.m. had telegraphed Grant that foul weather, "and the ignorance I am under of the exact moral condition of Warren's corps, and his losses from stragglers, has restrained me from giving him positive orders to attack." Even so, Warren had been instructed to undertake a forced reconnaissance.

In regard to the plan of holding to Hatcher Run broached late on the 6th, Meade explained, his "idea was to hold it permanently by a strong line, which a small force could hold, if we moved farther to the left." Humphreys' and Warren's people had already thrown up a line of light works, but if Meade's suggestions were adopted a permanent line, with redoubts, could be quickly established. [40]

Grant replied that as Meade was on the ground, he should know "better than the people at City Point what line the troops should occupy."

fortifications covering the Vaughan road crossing, picketing Hatcher Run above and below, "and will be posted on a line from the crossing of the Vaughan road via Cummings' and Wyatt's houses, and so held as to meet any attack from the rear, or to support" the II or VI Corps, if they were attacked. Warren's people were to hold a line of outposts from Hatcher Run to the intersection of Church and Halifax roads. Gregg's cavalry was to take position on Jerusalem Plank Road, and picket from the left of the V Corps to the James River.[44]

Chief of Staff Webb, to ready Warren for the bombshell, wrote him at 5:15 p.m. Meade, Webb observed, was pleased to learn of the success registered by Crawford's command. Nevertheless, his troops were to be withdrawn, but not at night. When Warren redeployed his corps, the soldiers were not to return to the camps from which they had marched on the 5th.[45]

After studying Meade's circular and Webb's communication, Warren replied, we will forsake our old quarters cheerfully, because "when any extension of our line is to be made, we have the priviledge of doing it."[46]

General Meade, shortly after dark, called on Warren for information as to when he would have no farther employment for Wheaton's infantry and Kerwin's cavalry.

Warren replied that it would be possible to withdraw Wheaton's division at any time, while he would see that Kerwin's horsesoldiers were relieved in the morning.[47]

Crawford, on being informed that Wheaton would be recalled, advised Warren that he would then be unable to maintain his position, if the Confederates attacked in force. Warren thereupon directed Crawford to recall his division simultaneously.

While Crawford was strengthening his picket line, Wheaton sent for Hamblin's and Hubbard's brigades. Recrossing Hatcher Run, the two VI Corps brigades fell in behind Campbell's. Wheaton then put his column in motion up Vaughan road. Daybreak on February 8 saw Wheaton's VI Corps division back in the camps from which the troops had marched 56 hours earlier.[48]

Screened by a formidable rear guard, Crawford's division followed Wheaton's through the breastworks and across the run. At 3 a.m., near Cummings' house, a halt was called, and the exhausted troops allowed to bivouac in the surrounding fields. Having left their shelter-halves behind when they took the field, Crawford's bluecoats, because of the frightful weather, were unable to rest comfortably.[49]

Colonel Kerwin's troopers, who were holding the roadblock at Keys' farm, were relieved by a detachment from Ayres' division by 7:45 a.m. on February 8. Riding up Vaughan road, the horsesoldiers marched eastward to Globe Tavern, where Kerwin reported to General Gregg.[50]

In obedience with Meade's circular of the previous afternoon, General Gregg, on the arrival of Kerwin's unit, ordered two of his brigades to return to their camps east of Jerusalem Plank Road, while a third (Kerwin's) would watch Halifax road.[51]

Gregg during the day received notification that his resignation from the army had been accepted. One of the cavalry leader's last official acts was to inform Chief of Staff Webb that at dark, soldiers from Crawford's division had assumed responsibility for picketing the countryside from Halifax road to Hatcher Run. Meanwhile, his troopers had taken station to enable them to picket the area from Halifax road to the James River.

With Crawford's footsoldiers on duty, Gregg wished to relieve Kerwin's brigade, so the horses could be foraged.[52]

Two of Warren's divisions (Griffin's and Ayres') continued to be responsible for the defense of the bridgehead. Warren, as an officer who had belonged to the Corps of Engineers, was understandably interested in the extension of the fortified zone from Fort Sampson to Hatcher Run. At 12:35 p.m., February 8, he telegraphed Meade's headquarters that unless the Federals constructed a work on the south bank of Hatcher Run at Armstrong's Mill, the line held by Humphreys' left division (Smyth's) would be untenable. A reconnaissance had disclosed that the foe, if this redoubt were not erected, would possess "commanding ground that will overlook and take the line in rear in front of Armstrong's house." It appeared to Warren that the best line the Army of the Potomac could take up would be from Fort Cummings, via Westmoreland's and Tucker's houses, to C. W. Cummings'. "No matter where we put the line on the left bank," Warren cautioned, "if the enemy establishes one on the other side along the high ridge from Armstrong's Mill to the Vaughan road a small force will be able to prevent us from crossing the stream."[53]

Meade was impressed with Warren's comments, so Chief Engineer Duane's instructions were ammended to read, for him to "proceed to lay out and construct an intrenched line from Fort Sampson to the crossing of the Vaughan road, placing a work at the latter point to hold and command that crossing."[54]

On the afternoon of the 8th, Crawford had sent his 3d Brigade, McCoy's, to relieve Kerwin's horsesoldiers on the picket line extending eastward from Monk's Neck Bridge to Halifax road. Soldiers from Ayres'

division held the line of outposts from the left of the earthworks guarding the approaches to the bridgehead to the point where McCoy's picket line anchored on the east bank of the Rowanty. [55]

General Humphreys' II Corps held its ground on the 8th, while the engineers surveyed the new line the men wearing the "Clover leaf" were to take up. After studying the area between Fort Gregg and Armstrong's Mill, and discussing the situation with his generals, Humphreys issued a directive. At 8 a.m., on the morning of February 9, General Miles was to be relieved along the sector of the entrenched line between Forts Fisher and Gregg by Brigadier General Truman Seymour's VI Corps division. One hour later, Miles was to march his troops and "take position in the new line, from Fort Sampson to the chimneys of the Westmoreland house."

Mott at the same hour was to shift that part of his division slated "to occupy the new line on the right of the battery to be erected on McAllister's front, and take position on the new line," his right resting at the chimneys of the Westmoreland house. Both division commanders were to see that their men slashed the woods to a distance of 700 yards to their fronts, and threw up a substantial parapet, with a ditch on the side facing the foe. Details from the 4th New York Heavy Artillery were to be given the task of supervising the construction of the five batteries that were to be erected along the new line. [56]

In accordance with instructions from Meade's headquarters, Humphreys, on the morning of February 9, saw that his First and Third Divisions took up the positions assigned them along the new line. Ramsey's brigade at this time reported back to Miles, having completed its assignment with Mott's Third Division. [57]

There was no hostile activity in front of the bridgehead held by the V Corps during the 36 hours beginning at daybreak on the 8th and ending at nightfall on February 9. Ayres' troops were kept employed erecting a strong work "on the Vaughan road, below the run," while Griffin's held the breastworks covering the crossing of Hatcher Run. A line of outposts was established by Griffin, connecting with Smyth's II Corps division on the right. East of the run, Crawford's troops continued to man the picket line, "starting from a point near the burnt saw-mill, thence running easterly, passing through Rowanty Post-Office, and connecting with the cavalry pickets at the intersection of the Church and Halifax roads." [58]

Before retiring on the evening of the 9th, General Warren prepared a set of instructions that were to govern his corps' activities on the following day. Crawford was to have a large working party at Cummings' at 7 a.m. This force would be assigned the task of corduroying Vaughan road. General Griffin would begin relieving Ayres' pickets at 6 a.m.; Ayres with his division was to report to Corps' headquarters at 7 o'clock, prepared "to construct a new line of intrenchments." Griffin's pioneers were to spend the day felling "all the timber between the line of breast-works on the right bank of Hatcher's [sic] Run and the edge of the stream." [59]

Warren at 10 a.m. on February 10 wrote Chief of Staff Webb that by nightfall, Ayres' fatigue parties would have completed the breastworks to the battery on Hatcher Run. He therefore wished to know, "How much of this line will be the responsibility of the II Corps?"

Since his last communication, Warren had had a survey made of

Hatcher Run below the Vaughan road crossing. On doing so, he found that the stream ran "south 40 degrees east for one mile and three-fourths...." His pickets at this time extended a mile below the crossing on the left bank, then due east along a road to J. W. Spiers' on Halifax road.[60]

Replying, Webb informed Warren that the V Corps was to hold the works at the Vaughan road crossing, while Humphreys' people held to that point. The right of Warren's picket line west of Hatcher Run was to connect with the left of Humphreys', northeast of the stream.[61]

The task of corduroying Vaughan road was completed by late afternoon, so General Crawford was authorized to return with his division to the camps they had left on the 5th. There the troops were to collect from their old quarters all their gear, and be ready to head west at 6 a.m. On reaching the area near Colonel Wyatt's, Crawford would mass his troops and await further orders.[62]

General Bragg's brigade would be detached at this time from the Third Division and marched to Warren Station. At noon on the 11th, Bragg's troops were to board the cars that were to carry them to City Point, where they were to embark on transports. After casting off, the ships were to proceed down the James and up Chesapeake Bay to Baltimore. As soon as he had disembarked at Baltimore, General Bragg was to report by telegraph to Major General Henry W. Halleck.[63]

General Humphreys, on being notified that the earthworks between McAllister's left and the Vaughan road crossing had been completed, notified General Smyth that at daylight on the 11th, he was to withdraw his division from its position at Armstrong's and occupy these works. When he did, Smyth was to post two brigades in the rifle-pits, while holding one in reserve. The artillery was to be retired at midnight,

under the direction of Major John G. Hazard. Before recalling his troops, Smyth was to see that they destroyed "such rifle-pits...as might be useful to the enemy."[64]

General Mott, prior to Smyth's recall, was to withdraw West's brigade and mass it in rear of McAllister's. De Trobriand, during the morning, was to relieve troops of General Miles' division on his right as far as the first redoubt (Battery C) to the right of the ruins of Westmoreland's house. To accomplish this, De Trobriand was to deploy one or both of his reserve regiments.[65]

General Hartranft, whose IX Corps division had been employed since the 8th opening and building roads, was notified at 7 p.m., February 10, that his troops had been relieved of duty with the II Corps. It took Hartranft's people less than one hour to pack their gear, preparatory to moving out. As soon as the two brigades had been formed and mustered, Hartranft passed the word to move out. Marching by way of Globe Tavern, Hartranft's bluecoats were back in their camps by midnight.[66]

As directed, General Smyth, shortly before daybreak on the 11th, withdrew his division from its position, covering the Armstrong's Mill crossing of Hatcher Run. Screened by a strong skirmish line, the troops marched back and moved into the newly constructed earthworks, their right anchored on McAllister's left and their left resting on Vaughan road. Cannoneers of the 10th Massachusetts and Battery K, 4th U. S. Light Artillery had previously limbered up their guns and driven them to the rear.[67]

General Griffin's V Corps division at the same time evacuated the bridgehead and went into camp east of Hatcher Run.[68]

* * *

General Lee, when informed on the morning of February 8 that the Federals had pulled back into the breastworks covering the Vaughan road crossing, concluded that Generals Grant and Meade for the time being had abandoned their efforts to cut the Army of Northern Virginia's supply lines. In view of the bad weather, which compounded the hardships of the under-fed and inadequately clothed Confederates, Lee ordered the units massed to cope with Meade's latest thrust to return to their camps. By nightfall Finegan's and Evans' infantry divisions, and Rooney Lee's horsesoldiers were back in the comfortable winter quarters out of which they had marched on Sunday, the 5th. Johnston's division drew the unpleasant task of manning the earthworks covering Dabney's Mill. [69]

* * *

Union casualty lists for the operation were forwarded by the corps commanders to General Meade's headquarters for tabulation. Checking the figures, Meade found that in the period, February 5-7, the units involved in the battle of Hatcher's Run had suffered 1,539 battle casualties--171 killed, 1,181 wounded, and 187 missing. As was to be expected, Warren's V Corps had been hardest hit, losing 131 killed, 970 wounded, and 159 missing. Despite the stampede of a number of V Corps units on the 6th, the number of Union missing was surprisingly small. This undoubtedly resulted from two factors: the comparatively short distance that separated the commands that broke from a haven of refuge behind the breastworks covering the Vaughan road crossing; and a failure on the Confederates' part to press the pursuit. [70]

Although few of the war-weary soldiers in blue and in grey realized it, the battle of Hatcher's Run presaged the early collapse of the Army of Northern Virginia. On February 5, although several divisions of his ready reserve were close at hand, it was late in the day before General Lee could mount a counterattack. And, when the counterthrust was delivered, the Confederates failed to drive ahead with their former abandon. There were reports that orders to charge were repeatedly ignored by certain units. General Lee was said to have "wept like a child," when he witnessed this breakdown of discipline in his army.[71]

Then on the 6th, General Gordon and his people had failed to capitalize on the V Corps' stampede. A powerful blow, delivered at the proper moment, could have doomed Warren's command, as frightened bluecoats came pounding out of the woods and over the breastworks guarding the approaches to the bridges.

The breakdown of the Confederate cavalry was evident. To forage their mounts, the cavalry units had to be posted a considerable distance from the Petersburg lines. Consequently, the Federals had been out of their works for over 24 hours, before Rooney Lee's cavalry division was able to reach the field. When the Rebel horsesoldiers did arrive, they and their mounts were already fatigued by the long march up from Belfield, and they failed to demonstrate any of the dash that had characterized their operations, even as late as the battle of the Boydton Plank Road, October 27 and 28, 1864.

As for tangible gains, Meade and his generals had succeeded in extending their fortified line from Fort Sampson to the Vaughan road crossing of Hatcher Run. To cope with this extension, General Lee had to spread

his troops even thinner than heretofore. Where he had been able to hold three divisions as a strategic reserve, he was soon compelled to reduce his ready reserve to one infantry division.

No report was made by Confederate leaders of their losses in the battle of Hatcher's Run.

THE BATTLE OF HATCHER'S RUN, FEBRUARY 5-7, 1865

Chapter IV

The Federals Fortify a Line From Fort Sampson to Hatcher Run

Notes

1 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 256; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 454.

2 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 454.

3 Ibid., 454; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 267, 297, 368.

4 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 454.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 455.

7 Ibid., 464.

8 Ibid., 464, 465; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 371.

9 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 267; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 459.

10 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 465.

11 Ibid., 465-466; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 368, 369.

12 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 460. While Ayres was visiting Winthrop, he heard the chopping of axes and the crash of timber in the woods to his front, a certain indication to the veterans that the Rebels were felling timber and throwing up breastworks.

13 Ibid., 459; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 269. The left of Burr's picket line anchored on Vaughan road, while the right joined Ayres' line of outposts.

14 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 459.

15 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 261.

16 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 458-459.

17 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 261.

18 Ibid., 290; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 286-287, 289, 290, 291, 292; Sorrel, Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer, 272-273.

19 Sorrel, Recollections of a Confederate Staff Officer, 273; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 392.

20 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 290, 295, 296; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 294, 295, 296.

21 O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 287, 295; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 290.

22 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 455.

23 Ibid., 461.

24 Ibid., 456.

25 Ibid., 462; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 299. Wheaton's 1st Brigade at 3 p.m. was assembled in the field east of the run, recently vacated by Hubbard's bluecoats.

26 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 290, 292, 295; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 294, 295, 296.

27 O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 287, 289, 290, 291, 295.

28 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 290, 292; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 294, 296.

29 O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 287, 289; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 291, 295.

30 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 461.

31 O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 287, 289, 291, 292.

32 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 291; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 294, 295.

33 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 291.

34 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 461.

35 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 381-382.

36 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 451.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 452.

39 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 213, 250, 252, 261; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 285; Billings, History of the 10th Massachusetts Battery, 392.

40 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 447.

41 Ibid., 447-448.

42 Ibid., 448.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 450.

45 Ibid., 456-457.

46 Ibid., 457.

47 Ibid., 457, 458.

48 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 299; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 485, 491. General Getty, upon the return of Wheaton's command, posted his divisions as follows: Wheaton's division occupied the line from Fort Howard to Fort Keene (not including the latter), besides garrisoning Forts Davison and McMahon on the rear line; Mackenzie's division would hold the line from Fort Keene to Fort Fisher (not including the latter), while garrisoning Fort Dushane; Seymour's division was to defend the line from Fort Fisher to Fort Gregg. The Engineer Brigade was to occupy the works extending from Battery No. XLIV to Fort Howard, not including the latter. O. R.,

Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 491-492.

49 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 485, 487-488, 490; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 256, 291, 295. In the fighting on the 7th, Crawford's division had lost 23 killed, 152 wounded, and 158 missing. Losses in the division on February 6 and 7 totaled 1,168.

50 O.R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 485; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 116, 118.

51 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 494.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 488.

54 Ibid., 480.

55 Ibid., 490; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 291.

56 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 483-484, 500. Miles' division for the time being would continue to be responsible for the defense of the line between Forts Gregg and Sampson, as well as for garrisoning Fort Cummings. Mott announced that De Trobriand was to move up from the reserve and post his troops on Miles' left.

57 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 81, 193. Miles' brigades were posted from right to left: Ramsey's, Macy's, and Von Schack's, with Duryea's in reserve, about 500 yards in rear of Von Schack's brigade. Mott established his command post at Claypole's house.

58 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 500-501.

59 Ibid., 501, 502.

60 Ibid., 518-519.

61 Ibid., 519.

62 Ibid., 520.

63 Ibid., 519-520.

64 Ibid., 516, 517.

65 Ibid., 517, 518.

66 Ibid., 521, 522; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 344. As soon as Hartranft's troops returned to their camps, Brigadier General Robert Potter of the Second Division extended his line to the left, relieving the Engineer Brigade. Upon being replaced in the rifle-pits, the Engineer Brigade on the 11th returned to City Point.

67 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 193, 212, 252; O. R., Series I, Vol. LI, pt. I, 285; O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 526.

68 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 88, 89, 90.

69 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 499.

70 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. I, 69; Powell, History of the V Corps, 763-766.

71 O. R., Series I, Vol. XLVI, pt. II, 499.