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**SOME  
PERSONAL REMINISCENCES  
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OF THE  
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.**

**BY**

# **COLONEL HAMPTON S. THOMAS.**

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## **SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE IN THE CAVALRY OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.**

At the earnest solicitation of my many military friends, I have thrown together some reminiscences of my personal experience as a cavalryman during the late War of the Rebellion. Though my four years of campaigning began with a three months' tour of tramping with the "dough-boys" under General Patterson in the spring and early summer of 1861, the latter was only a prolonged picnic. Two days before I was mustered out of the Ninth Pennsylvania Infantry I enrolled myself in the First Pennsylvania Cavalry, and soon discovered that I was more fitted for riding a horse than for trudging through the slush and mud with a heavy "Harper's Ferry" musket on my shoulder.

I will pass over the tedious instructions of the school of the trooper, mounted and dismounted, and begin my reminiscences as a full-fledged Yankee cavalryman.

The First Pennsylvania Cavalry, which originally belonged to the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps, began its experience as a fighting regiment in a skirmish and charge near Dranesville, Virginia, on November 26, 1861, and, strange to relate, the first man killed was our assistant surgeon, Dr. Alexander. The regiment's first experience of heavy firing was in the battle of Dranesville, on December 20. This engagement was fought by a brigade of the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps, commanded by General E. O. C. Ord, my regiment supporting Eastman's battery. The enemy had the same number of regiments and guns that we had, and their commanding officer was General J. E. B. Stuart, but Ord outgeneraled him and gave us the victory, the rebels retreating from the field.

The campaign of the spring of 1862 showed what some, at least, of the cavalry did before General Hooker offered his liberal reward for a "dead cavalryman."<sup>1</sup> Those who served in the Army of the Potomac will remember that from the fall of 1861 to the summer of 1862 the cavalry were for the most part scattered about and used as escorts, strikers, dog-robbers, and orderlies for all the generals and their numerous staff officers from the highest in rank down to the second lieutenants. The cavalry force under General George D. Bayard, then colonel of my regiment, consisting of the First New Jersey, Second New York, and First Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiments, was the first brigade organized in that branch of the service in the United States army. The campaign began with easy marches to Catlett's Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and scouting to Warrenton and Rappahannock Station.

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it may be well to quote the following extract from an article in the *Century Magazine* of May, 1888, by Colonel William F. Fox, entitled "The Chances of being hit in Battle": "The muster-out rolls of the various mounted commands show that there were ten thousand five hundred and ninety-six 'dead cavalrymen' who were killed in action during the war, of whom six hundred and seventy-one were officers, the proportionate loss of officers being greater than in the infantry."

On the morning of the 17th of April we left Catlett's Station and moved in the direction of Falmouth. In this movement we were supported by a brigade of infantry commanded by General Augur. On the morning of the 18th, about three o'clock, we charged upon the heights of Falmouth, drove the enemy from their position, and captured the quaint old town, but we were unable to save the bridge spanning the river, as the enemy had set fire to the

end on the Fredericksburg side. This was my first experience in a mounted charge of any consequence. In this engagement I was acting as assistant adjutant-general for Bayard, with the rank of first lieutenant. The success of our cavalry engagement gave Bayard his star and promoted me to the rank of captain and the command of a squadron.

After a tour of scouting and picketing along the Rappahannock River south of Fredericksburg, we were assigned to General McDowell's corps of observation, which was composed of three divisions of infantry,—McCall's, Shields's, and King's. The operations of this corps were intended to serve either as a protection to the city of Washington or as a reinforcement to McClellan on the Peninsula.

About June 1 the cavalry took the advance on the telegraph road leading towards Richmond, and reached the forks of a road near Hanover Court-House, to which place McClellan's patrols came. While we who were in the advance-guard were congratulating ourselves upon getting under the right wing of McClellan's army without a fight, our hopes were suddenly blasted by the following order sent to "Capt. Hamp. Thomas, Commanding Advance-Guard: Sir,—You will return with your command as rapidly as possible. Don't blow your horses if you can help it. Cross over to Falmouth and receive further instructions. (Signed) G. D. B., B. G."

When we reached Fredericksburg we noticed considerable excitement. General Shields's division had gone, the First New Jersey and First Pennsylvania Cavalry and four companies of the "Bucktails" were on the march northward, and the balance of our brigade of cavalry was left with King's and McCall's divisions. Upon reporting to General Bayard, we learned the cause of all this rapid marching. The authorities at Washington had become frightened at Stonewall Jackson's movement against General Banks, who was in the Shenandoah Valley. This scattering of General McDowell's strong corps was fatal to General McClellan's plans while he was on the Peninsula.

Then commenced one of the wildest marches I ever experienced. Day and night we marched through heavy rain-storms, over the mountains and swimming swollen streams. The last ten miles were made in one hour and twenty minutes, and we lost several horses foundered after crossing the Shenandoah River. We reached Strasburg, in the valley, on June 7, just in time to cut off the rear of Jackson's army. We had a running fight all the way up the valley until we reached Harrisonburg, where we had a very severe engagement,—our two regiments of cavalry and the four companies of "Bucktails" against a division of rebel infantry. The First New Jersey Cavalry lost its colonel and several officers captured, and the "Bucktails," Colonel Kane and Captain Fred. Taylor captured. The rebels lost heavily in killed and wounded, among the former being General Turner Ashby. General Fremont's command, which had crossed over from the Kanawha Valley, joined us at Harrisonburg the next day, when we moved towards Port Republic. Here Fremont's men had a very sharp engagement at Cross Keys on June 8. Our cavalry were only lookers-on in this fight, but Jackson succeeded in checking our forces with his rear-guard, while the head of his column crossed the bridge at Port Republic, driving away Shields's advance, which had passed up the Luray Valley expecting to cut him off. They were too late, however, in reaching that point, for Jackson had slipped away and moved his men down to Richmond by rail, taking the same position which we were to have taken on McClellan's right flank. The result was the change of base, with all its hard fighting, hard marching, and heavy losses, to the James River at Harrison's Landing.

We then began a long and weary march down the valley, over rivers and mountains, to the vicinity of Culpeper Court-House. On our arrival there came the order for General Bayard's cavalry to report to the head-quarters of the Army of Northern Virginia, J. Pope commanding, with head-quarters in the saddle. It took twenty wagons to haul that saddle! We were assigned to picket and scouting duty, our lines stretching from Raccoon Ford to Barnett's Ford, on the Rapidan, a distance of fifteen miles. On the night of August 8 our pickets were driven in a short distance from the river, and on the morning of the 9th commenced what is known as the battle of Cedar Mountain. In that engagement General Bayard showed the finest order of generalship. With four regiments of cavalry he held Jackson's whole command of eighteen thousand men at bay from 4 A.M. until 4 P.M. This movement of Bayard's was made in echelons of squadrons, single-rank formation, and gave the idea to the enemy that we had about ten thousand men in his front. The men of Crawford's and Hartsuff's brigades will bear witness to the tenacity with which our cavalry held on until they came to our relief.

To relate an incident of what cavalrymen could do before a reward was offered for a dead one: During the afternoon a battery of four guns belonging to General Banks's command was left in a very exposed position. In front of these guns was an open field, and on the other side some woods in which a brigade of rebel infantry had formed in regimental front, four lines deep, and was moving out to capture the battery. General Banks asked General Bayard if the guns could be saved. Bayard, taking in the situation, ordered Major Falls, of the First Pennsylvania Cavalry, to charge his battalion upon the enemy's infantry. The charge was made, but only one company succeeded in reaching the enemy. Some men of the company

passed through the lines and returned, while the balance of the battalion was repulsed before reaching the open field. The captain of the company was wounded in five places, the second lieutenant killed,—in fact, the company came near being wiped out of existence; and when the first lieutenant, Warren L. Holbrook, came to rally the remnant of his company he found but a corporal's guard. Knowing the modesty of that gallant officer, I take the liberty of mentioning his name. Eighty-eight horses were left dead on the field. The celebrated charge of the Eighth Pennsylvania Cavalry at Chancellorsville is familiar to all; but this charge of the First Pennsylvania Cavalry even excelled that in boldness, for when the Eighth Pennsylvania Cavalry made its charge it was in column of fours and in the woods, and it came upon the enemy unexpectedly. But the First Pennsylvania cavalrymen at Cedar Mountain saw what was in their front: a clear, open field and death staring them in the face,—cannon in front of them and cannon to the left of them,—and theirs was a feat at arms not unlike the charge of the Earl of Cardigan and his six hundred, made immortal by Tennyson.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The charge of the Eighth Pennsylvania Cavalry was made historical by General Pleasonton's official report after the battle of Chancellorsville. Reports like that sometimes cover up a multitude of blunders and give credit only to those who are killed. They also sometimes make great newspaper generals of their authors, and the millions who read the newspapers at home thus get their impressions as to who are the great fighters at the front.

We remained in the vicinity of the battle-ground of Cedar Mountain, taking up our old positions, until the 18th of August, when the great game of chess between Lee and Pope commenced, Lee trying to capture Washington before McClellan could transport his troops from the Peninsula to the defense of our capital, while we were trying to close the gaps in the mountains. Our cavalry did some sharp fighting during this backward movement of Pope's. But there was no opportunity for us to attack the enemy's cavalry in mass until we arrived, on the 20th, on the open plains to the south of Rappahannock Station. Here Bayard formed his squadrons for a general attack. The enemy advanced a brigade of cavalry upon us, and they were met by the First New Jersey, First Pennsylvania, First Rhode Island, and Second New York Cavalry Regiments, with sabres drawn. We drove them back to Culpeper, and this check of their cavalry caused their infantry columns to halt and go into position, while we moved leisurely back, giving our infantry and trains time to cross the several fords of the Rappahannock River.

A few nights afterwards there was a terrific storm of thunder, lightning, and rain. It was impossible to recognize a person an arm's length away, and yet we received orders to move rapidly up the river road to Sulphur Springs, and thence by way of Warrenton to Thoroughfare Gap. The storm, however, delayed us until the next morning, when we resumed our march, and reached Thoroughfare Gap on the evening of August 26, but too late by one hour, for Jackson had slipped through ahead of us. We captured about six hundred of his stragglers and a very important dispatch from Longstreet to him, informing him that he would be through early next morning. This information was sent to headquarters, and General Rickett's division was sent to our support. Bayard's cavalry kept Longstreet's corps back for six hours, and they were no doubt long ones to Jackson, who was then at Manassas.

On the morning of August 28 my regiment took position between Bull Run bridge and Groveton. Being in the advance with my squadron, I was ordered to deploy as skirmishers and develop the enemy, who were soon found, for they opened a battery upon me, and this was, I think, the beginning of the great battle of Second Bull Run. My squadron remained in this position all that day, with instructions to keep a sharp lookout on Jackson's right and report results to General Reynolds. My squadron at this time numbered ninety-five men, all armed with carbines, revolvers, and sabres.

General Bayard received orders that evening to mass his cavalry on the open ground to the left of the Gainesville pike and prepare for a grand charge and night attack on Jackson's right flank. Bayard, knowing that my men were familiar with that flank, sent me orders to retire quietly and report to him at the Burnt Chimneys, near the Bull Run bridge. This having been done, we were taken along the flank of the brigade to the head of the column and were told what we were expected to do,—to lead the charge and strike directly for the enemy's artillery, destroy its usefulness, if possible, and come out at the point where we had been picketing during the day, while Bayard was to lead the brigade in person down the right and left centres of the main lines. The signal for this charge was to be three artillery shots over our heads at intervals of one minute each, and when the third shot was fired I was to move at a walk to within a short distance of the rebel skirmish line, then hurl my squadron in column of platoons upon the enemy, sweeping along their extreme right. Imagine the thoughts that passed through my mind,—home, mother, sisters, brothers, and sweetheart all jumbled in my head at once. The suspense was awful! The men were admonished to follow their leader, and if he should fall to continue on and carry out his orders. The first shot was fired; then came a long delay. Wondering what could be the cause of this, I rose in my saddle, looked to the rear, and found that all the supports had retired

and that we had been left alone. Suddenly Bayard rode up to me and, with choked voice, said, "Thank God, you are saved! The orders have been countermanded, and you can take up your old position over on the left." I must acknowledge that tears trickled down my cheeks while I was on the way to my old position. What would have been the result had this charge been made? Directly in our front, as we discovered next day, was a deep gully or washout, though Bayard had been assured that it was a clear, open field. Here would have been another "sunken road" as at Waterloo, and perhaps another Victor Hugo writing of the charge, while we poor souls would have been hurled to death, trampled beneath the hoofs of the horses of those who followed us.

On the afternoon of the last day of the battle of Second Bull Run I observed that the enemy were massing a large body of troops in front of our extreme left, and I sent several verbal messages to that effect by trustworthy non-commissioned officers to General Bayard, who was near General Pope. I began sending these messages between three and four o'clock, and my last one was to inform him that the enemy had placed four batteries of artillery in position, that I had counted twenty-eight sets of colors, that more troops were moving into position, and that if the enemy made an attack, they would strike the Pennsylvania Reserves on the left and rear. When the sergeant who carried this message returned, he told me that General Pope remarked to General Bayard, "Oh, that officer don't know his business. He don't know what he is talking about. Tell the fool that those people he sees are General Porter's men forming on the right of the enemy." I felt very much annoyed at this, and I don't deny that I used some very strong language about my superior officer, though most of it was done mentally. However, I rode rapidly over to General Reynolds, informed him of the fact, and persuaded him to come and see for himself. One glance was sufficient for him. He dashed back to his division and changed front to the left to meet the attack. Those who were in the Pennsylvania Reserves at that time can testify that the movement to the left was hardly finished when the heavy column I had again and again reported burst upon them, crushing their left back upon and through our artillery, leaving the guns in the hands of the enemy. I have often wondered *who* was the fool,—the general or the captain.

My squadron rode along the flank of this charging column of the enemy, and expended nearly all of its carbine ammunition upon it. They paid no more attention to us, however, than if we were so many gnats flying in the air. In my opinion the final repulse of the enemy was chiefly due to a small brigade of regular infantry. It seemed to me that every line that came in their front was wiped out. Their firing was done with coolness and precision; their commanding officer had them well in hand. It was a scene well worthy of the pencil of an artist; but we did not have that kind of people with us when such opportunities occurred. I crossed the Bull Run bridge with these regulars between sundown and dark. At that time the enemy seemed to be retiring very rapidly, as though they were retreating from the field. I thought at the time that we should have been pursuing them instead of retiring. But orders had to be obeyed.

I joined my regiment next morning near Centreville, my squadron having been held for picket duty that night near the bridge.

General Bayard and I had several conversations afterwards about what I have stated. He always cautioned me to be careful in my language about what I knew, as doubtless there would be an investigation concerning the battle, and he wanted me to corroborate him in case he should be called upon to testify before a court of inquiry. But the brave soldier was called to a higher court before his testimony could be taken, and until now I have remained silent upon the subject.

After the battle our cavalry brigade retired to the defenses of Washington, and remained there for six weeks, when we again took up the line of march, joining McClellan's army (which had recrossed the Potomac after Antietam) between the Bull Run Mountains and the Blue Ridge. We continued on in the advance, skirmishing and charging daily, and never halted until we arrived at Rappahannock Station, on a cold, stormy night in November, my squadron capturing a large picket post of the enemy and saving the railroad bridge. Here we received the news that McClellan had been relieved and Burnside placed in command of the Army of the Potomac. Soon we again took up the line of march and moved rapidly towards Fredericksburg.

In the battle of Fredericksburg the cavalry took a peculiar part. It is not generally known that Bayard's cavalry was used for the purpose of developing the enemy's artillery and infantry in front of Franklin's crossing, but such was the fact. An English officer who, if I remember rightly, was a volunteer aide on General Lee's staff, in an article published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, referred in complimentary terms to the manner in which my squadron manoeuvred across the railroad, and for its bold advance upon the enemy's lines. I may be mistaken, but I have always given to Thomas Martin, a private in my company ("M"), the credit of having unhorsed General Maxcy Gregg. Observing a general officer, as I thought, about two hundred yards in my front, looking at us through his field-glass, Martin and I dismounted, and standing between our two horses, Martin rested his carbine on my shoulder, and the instant he fired I noticed the mounted officer fall from his saddle. I

afterwards learned that General Gregg was killed on that part of the field, and about that time.

In all my experience, from my baptism of fire at Falling Waters on July 1, 1861, down to Jetersville, April 5, 1865, I never was under such a terrific fire of shot, shell, and musketry as in this movement in General Franklin's front. The shot and shell seemed to make the atmosphere blue. Our loss in men was very small, but in horses large. Poor Martin was wounded and made a cripple for life.

In this battle of Fredericksburg fell mortally wounded my beau-ideal of a cavalry general. Quick to act, brave to a fault, careful of his men, and dearly beloved by his whole command was General George D. Bayard, the Sheridan of our army in the early days of the war. His last words to his adjutant-general (Captain H. C. Weir) were, "Give my compliments to General Burnside, and say that I desire Colonel Dave Gregg to command my cavalry," and then he expired.

A few days after this our old stand-by, General David McM. Gregg, assumed command of our brigade. He was well dubbed "Old Reliable." He proved himself to be the Stonewall of our cavalry corps.

Early in the year 1863 the cavalry was organized into a corps under the command of General Stoneman, the First Division under General Pleasonton, the Second under General Averell, and the Third under General Gregg. Our duties during the winter were not very arduous. On April 1 an order came from the War Department detailing me for duty as inspector-general on the staff of General Gregg.

On April 29 we moved out of camp, crossed the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, pushed boldly into the enemy's country, and soon came back faster than we went. As a stupid failure "Stoneman's Raid" was a complete success. Our only accomplishments were the burning of a few canal-boats on the upper James River (at Columbia), some bridges, hen-roosts, and tobacco-houses.

This campaign of Stoneman's put a damper upon Bayard's old cavalry command. Many times have I had a quiet laugh when remembering conversations with brother officers about our new corps commander, who promised to show General Hooker a few dead cavalrymen. His career, however, was happily soon cut short, and he was succeeded by General Pleasonton, who, afterwards, at Gettysburg, according to his own account, offered to give General Meade a lesson as to how to make a great general out of himself.

Under the new leadership came the cavalry battle of Brandy Station, or Fleetwood, as it is called by the rebels. This was the beginning of the Gettysburg campaign. Early in June information was received at head-quarters that the rebel cavalry corps, numbering about twelve thousand men, was to be reviewed on the 8th by General Robert E. Lee at Culpeper Court-House. Lee expected great achievements from this mounted force, for it was composed of the flower and pick of the "Southern chivalry," the eyes and ears of the grand army he was about to lead into Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Now came a good chance to pile up dead cavalrymen. On June 9, the day after this grand review, General Buford crossed his division at Beverly Ford early in the morning, intending to attack the enemy's cavalry in front, while Gregg's and Duffie's (formerly Averell's) divisions crossed farther down, at Kelly's Ford, to attack it in the rear. This movement was not intended to bring on a general engagement between the two armies, but merely to find out what was up, and at the same time to take the conceit out of the rebel cavalry. Whole regiments came together with tremendous shocks, we using our sabres with effect, while the rebels used their revolvers, crying out to us, "Put up your sabres; draw your pistols and fight like gentlemen!" At one time the dust was so thick that we could not tell friend from foe. This hand-to-hand business continued on and off for about a couple of hours, when we retired from the field at our leisure, unfollowed. Many a brave man fell that day; some of them in, and beyond, the rebel batteries. The First New Jersey lost heavily; their colonel, Percy Wyndham, was wounded, Lieutenant-Colonel Broderick and Major Shelmire killed, and Captain Sawyer and others captured. Broderick's body was found with a sabre sticking through it, and at his side lay a dead rebel with Broderick's sabre through his body also.

General Gregg was so unfortunate as to lose three guns of the Sixth New York Light Battery through the recklessness of Colonel Percy Wyndham, who commanded my brigade. The latter had ordered the battery to follow the First New Jersey Cavalry in a charge, and go into position on the crest of Fleetwood Hill, to the left of the Barbour house. Just as the guns were swung into position and unlimbered the enemy made a countercharge, driving back a broken squadron of the First New Jersey and a detachment of the First Pennsylvania Cavalry, both of which passed through the battery to the rear. The men in charge of the limbers were swept back in the confusion. The dust was so thick it was almost impossible to tell a Reb from a Yank. I sent my orderly to the rear to find the limbers and have the guns taken back to their original position, in the open field, to the right of Brandy Station. In a few moments two squadrons of the First Maryland Cavalry came trotting through the dust,

and I asked the commanding officer where he was going. He replied that he was ordered forward to support the battery. I told him to follow me at a gallop, or there would not be any battery to support. As we emerged from the dust we could see the cannoneers dragging the guns by hand down the hill, followed by a large body of the enemy firing their revolvers. We at once charged the enemy, clearing the crest of the hill, and driving them back through their own battery. By this time there was but a small squad left of the First Maryland, for they had drifted in all directions through the heavy clouds of dust. I took back at a gallop the few of us who kept together, and began searching for the guns. I found the pieces, but lost the Marylanders. After keeping me waiting a long time my orderly came back, stating that he could not find the limbers, and reported that Colonel Wyndham was wounded, that he could not find the brigade, and could not tell who was in command of it. I was so chagrined about the predicament in which the battery was placed that I gave vent to my feeling so forcibly as to be noticed by the brave cannoneers, who gave three cheers, and said they would remain and be captured along with their guns. I said, "No, men, none of that kind of medicine for me. I will try and find help for you." The guns had been drawn down to the base of the hill, and while I was trying to collect some men together for the purpose of having them hauled away, a heavy column of rebel cavalry came charging around the corner of the house, with their battle-flag in advance. One of the guns happened to have a round of canister in it. The sergeant in command of the piece pointed it towards the charging column, fired, and repulsed them, within forty yards of us. The head of this column was badly cut up, leaving a number of horses and men, and the battle-flag, on the slope of the hill. The sergeant ran up the hill to pick up the rebel colors, and was within a few yards of them, when the head of the First Maine Cavalry came dashing past the spot in pursuit of the enemy. One of the men wheeled his horse, dismounted, picked up the colors, and rode off, the sergeant of the gun losing his prize. Seeing General Kilpatrick near the First Maine (that regiment being in his brigade), I rode over to him and begged him to rescue the abandoned guns. His answer was, "To hell with them! Let Gregg look out for his own guns." I implored him not to be so selfish, but to come on and help us out of our scrape, but his reply was, "No! damned if I will." I then rode back and told the few cannoneers that were left to save themselves by crossing the railroad, and to go over to the woods, where they would find some of our infantry. I remained with the guns, in hopes of our command returning for them, until another column of rebel cavalry came trotting down the hill towards me, capturing the pieces without a struggle. Not wishing to be on too intimate terms with my Southern friends, I politely raised my cap to them and rapidly rode away.

General Gregg was not aware of the loss of the guns until late in the day, when I told him of it, and he was very much annoyed to think that such a thing could happen, and so unnecessarily, and he be in entire ignorance of the matter.

To give an idea as to how the authorities at Richmond felt about this battle, on the day of the engagement I picked up the *Richmond Inquirer*, fresh from Richmond, containing an article extolling the Confederate cavalry, calling it the flower and chivalry of the South. A few days afterwards I read another article, and a very mournful one it was, wondering who was to blame for its broken condition, and exclaiming what an outrage it was that tailors and shoemakers mounted on horses should be permitted to come upon their chivalry and treat them in so unseemly a manner.

After this engagement we were kept busy scouting in all directions upon the rear and flank of our army, constantly watching along the slopes of the Blue Ridge and Bull Run Mountains. On June 13 the cavalry corps, still under General Pleasonton, was consolidated into two divisions under Generals Buford (First) and Gregg (Second).

At Aldie, near a gap in the Bull Run Mountains, on June 17, the corps, with Gregg in the advance, met the rebel cavalry again, and drove them back in the direction of Middleburg, and again on the 19th drove them beyond it. In these engagements we lost heavily, for the rebels fought behind stone fences, dismounted, while we attacked them mounted. Nevertheless the "tailors and shoemakers" were too much for the "chivalry," and they were compelled to fall back to Upperville. Here, on the 21st, Gregg and Buford made a combined attack, charging over stone walls and ditches, capturing many prisoners, and driving the rebel cavalry through Ashby's Gap into the Shenandoah Valley, shutting them out from a view of the movements of our army. We held these people back until the main body of the Army of the Potomac had crossed the Potomac into Maryland. Then we moved back to Aldie, through the Bull Run Mountains and northward to Edwards Ferry, on the Potomac, which we crossed on the afternoon of June 27, and marched direct to Frederick city, Maryland. While there, on June 28, a new division (the Third) was formed out of General Stahl's cavalry, and General Kilpatrick placed in command of it, with Custer and Farnsworth, just commissioned as brigadier-generals, in command of brigades. Poor Farnsworth only lived a few days to enjoy his star, falling at the head of his brigade at Gettysburg.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> It was the general opinion among us cavalrymen that Farnsworth was murdered through a foolish and reckless order of his division commander. Farnsworth's brigade was ordered to charge mounted down a wooded hill

covered with large round bowlders, with a stone fence at the bottom, behind which lay the enemy's infantry. Farnsworth, thinking there was a mistake, hesitated, when his superior asked if he was afraid to charge the enemy, for if so, he, the superior, would charge his brigade for him. Farnsworth, with a look of scorn and contempt, ordered his men forward, and fell dead at the stone wall, while the portion of his command which he took with him was cut to pieces.

We spent the next day near Frederick scouting in all directions. During the night of June 29 we resumed the march towards Westminster. At daybreak next morning we charged the town, struck Stuart's rear-guard, and took a number of rebel prisoners. We continued on to Manchester and Hanover Junction, from which latter place Huey's brigade was sent back to guard the wagon-train. Thence we marched towards Hanover and Gettysburg. These movements of ours forced the rebel cavalry to keep well off to our right, and prevented them from knowing what our infantry were doing or where their own army was.

Now for the Right Flank at Gettysburg. Histories and poems had been written about this great battle and maps published, utterly ignoring our services, until at last we of the cavalry had to cry "Halt." Nor did we hear anything from our government historian, Colonel Batchelder, except about the first and the second and the third day's fights, the Round Tops, the Emmittsburg road, Culp's Hill, Cemetery Hill, Seminary Ridge, and John Burns, but nothing about the cavalry.

And here I must return thanks to the Comte de Paris and to his able assistant, Colonel John P. Nicholson, who in their investigations went more thoroughly into the history of the battle than any previous historians, for it was they who were instrumental in bringing to the notice of the world what we always knew to be the case, that the cavalry under the command of General Gregg were the means of saving the Army of the Potomac at the time Pickett was moving up to the "high-water mark" of the Rebellion.

The rebel general J. E. B. Stuart came upon the field early on the morning of July 3, with about seven thousand mounted men under him. After he had made disposition of his command on or near the Stallsmith farm, about three miles east of Gettysburg, he caused several random shots to be fired in various directions. This firing no doubt was prearranged with Lee, signaling that his position was favorable and that he was ready to move in conjunction with Pickett to strike our infantry in rear. Colonel McIntosh, on whose brigade staff I was serving, concluded that something was up, and, having relieved a portion of Custer's Michigan Brigade, he ordered an advance of our line dismounted. This movement of McIntosh's brought on the engagement before Stuart expected, and exposed his whole design. Gregg, seeing the situation, recalled Custer, who had previously received orders to move over to the left flank of our army near Round Top. He then put in position all of his artillery, under cover of a wheat-field, ordering the guns to be double-shotted with canister and await his further orders. Our dismounted lines were refused in the centre, in front of the artillery, forming an inverse wedge. After we had held them back for about an hour, heavy bodies of the rebel cavalry burst into view over a rise of ground. They came on in magnificent style. It was terribly grand to witness. In two parallel columns, charging in squadron front, little knowing what was awaiting them, they came on, yelling and looking like demons. Canister and percussion-shell were poured into them until they reached within one hundred yards of our guns. Then our bold Custer came dashing over the field at the head of the First Michigan Cavalry, with his yellow locks flying and his long sabre brandishing through the air. He looked like a fiend incarnate, the fire of battle burning in his eyes. In the mean time the dismounted men poured in a withering fire with their carbines upon both flanks of the rebel columns. What a sight this was! The enemy's horses climbing over each other, rearing and plunging, many of their men being struck in the back by the fore feet of the horses in their rear. Then McIntosh and his staff charged with their orderlies, sabring right and left. Such a horrible din it was, amid the clashing of sabres and continuous roll of the small-arms and the curses and demands to surrender. I do not wish to be egotistical, but will quote from an account of the fight: "For minutes, which seemed like hours, the Confederate column stood its ground. Captain Thomas, of the staff, seeing that a little more was needed to turn the tide, cut his way over to the woods on the right, where he knew he could find Hart, who had remounted his squadron of the First New Jersey. In the mêlée, near the colors, was an officer of high rank, and the two headed the squadron for that part of the fight. They came within reach of him with their sabres, and then it was that Wade Hampton was wounded."

Captain William E. Miller, of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry, and Captain Hart, from the right of the field, charged their squadrons through the rear portion of the columns, and the former almost reached the rebel batteries. The desperate charging of these two squadrons seemed to me to turn the tide of battle. In this charge of Hart's squadron was another gallant though modest cavalryman, Lieutenant Edward H. Parry, who as a staff officer rode side by side with me in many severe engagements. Eventually the rebel cavalry were driven from the field never to return except as guests of the victors, twenty-three years after the battle, and as citizens of a country they tried to destroy. It is not difficult to conjecture what

would have been the result had these seven thousand cavalrymen succeeded in reaching the Baltimore pike, striking the reserve artillery and trains at the moment when Pickett was moving up to the assault of Cemetery Ridge.

On the night of July 4 our brigade moved over to the left of the army to picket in front of Round Top. I will never forget that night. It was raining hard and so dark that we were compelled to use lanterns to remove the dead and dying out of our way, fearing our horses would crush them under their feet. The moans of the dying were horrible. Sometimes I imagine I can still hear their voices ringing in my ears. It was awful!

Then commenced the race after Lee's defeated army. For a few days we had with us "Beau" Neill's brigade of the Sixth Corps, but on July 12 we cut loose from them, marched to Boonsborough, where we rejoined General Gregg and one of the other brigades of our division, and, pushing rapidly to Harper's Ferry, crossed over the Potomac on the 14th, with our head-quarters' band playing "I wish I was in Dixie." Next day the two brigades moved out to Shepherdstown and encountered the rebel cavalry again, fighting dismounted behind stone walls and fences all day. An officer of the signal corps sent us a report that all of Lee's army had crossed over to our side of the river and that we were being surrounded by the enemy. Consequently, when night came, we made a hasty retreat to Harper's Ferry. A singular thing about this fight was that while we did not claim any victory, and left all our killed and wounded behind in charge of our surgeons, when the latter rejoined us a few days afterwards they told us that the rebels had commenced their retreat even before we did, also leaving their killed and wounded in charge of their surgeons. That, it is believed, was the only drawn fight the cavalry of both armies ever had—where each abandoned the field to the other—during the four years' contest.

Our line of march southward was over the same ground as that traversed by McClellan in 1862 after Antietam. Nothing much of note occurred. We did not get a fair chance at the rebel cavalry again until we arrived, on September 13, in the neighborhood of Culpeper Court-House. Here Gregg made a mounted attack, driving the rebel cavalry fifteen miles. While we of the staff were placing the regiments in position for this mounted charge I was ordered to find a cover for the Sixth Ohio Cavalry, and took them into a heavy piece of oak timber near the edge of the open country. While I was reporting to General Gregg how our lines were formed he observed the Sixth Ohio breaking and coming back through the woods in great disorder. He at once ordered me to stop and re-form them, but I soon became demoralized myself when I felt the belligerent end of a hornet upon my cheek. The brave old colonel (Steedman) of the Sixth Ohio said that they could stand all the shot and shell the d—d rebels could give them, but not a hornets' nest. Thus were some of the bravest of our soldiers ignominiously put to flight.

And here let me call attention to another instance of the way in which some of our generals gained reputation. When Gregg made his dashing attack upon the enemy at Culpeper Court-House our brigade, being on the left of his line, made a half-wheel, swept down on the flank of the enemy, and drove away the cannoneers from their battery as well as its supports. While we were busy in front in pursuit of these people, having passed the guns, a brigadier-general commanding one of the other divisions, with his staff and orderlies, rode up and had the guns quietly hauled off the field. A few days after this I bought a copy of a New York paper, with a flaming header in large type, announcing the gallant and desperate charge of Kilpatrick's cavalry division, and how its commander had led it in person and captured a battery from the rebels. General Gregg, with his usual modesty, never protested, and we who had done the capturing were the only ones who did the growling for him. There is nothing like newspaper glory for promotion in time of war, and there were only too many of such newspaper generals among us. Gregg would never permit a newspaper correspondent about his command, and hence our division was not appreciated, outside of army circles, as it should have been.

In the month of October came our retrograde movement to Centreville and Fairfax, and another great cavalry charge was witnessed between Culpeper Court-House and Brandy Station, where we repulsed a fearful onslaught of the rebel cavalry and drove them back upon their infantry supports.

After we had crossed over to the north side of the Rappahannock we had a severe dismounted engagement, and during the day, which was election day in Ohio, the troops belonging to that State voted for State candidates. I was detailed to personally superintend the voting in the Sixth Ohio Cavalry. We relieved one company at a time for the purpose, then sent them back to the front and retired the next, and so on until the whole regiment had voted. I doubt if many of the "statesmen" of the present day would care to mix in "practical politics" under similar circumstances.

A few days after this I was severely hurt at Bristow Station and sent to hospital for ninety days. Upon my return to the front great changes had taken place. General Torbert was in command of the First Division, "Old Stand-By" Gregg retaining his own, the Second, and General Wilson in command of the Third Division, with "Cavalry Sheridan" in command of

the corps.

On May 3, 1864, Gregg's division moved out from its winter quarters at Warrenton, marched to the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford, and crossed over to Ely's Ford on the Rapidan. We forced our way over the river, taking the advance of the Second Corps into "The Wilderness" until we came to Todd's Tavern on the Brock road. There we were dismounted and moved to the left and front of a division of the Second Corps which was hotly engaged, and we pressed back the right of the rebel line. During this contest a gay-looking first lieutenant of the engineer corps from General Meade's staff came up to me, asked if I was Captain Thomas, and said that Gregg and Sheridan had sent him out there to me so that I might show him a cavalry charge if we should have one. A few moments afterwards an officer reported to me that General Davies, my brigade commander, on whose staff I was serving, and two of his officers had just been captured by the enemy. Learning the direction in which they had been taken, I took a mounted squadron of the First New Jersey, the nearest at hand, and said to the gay lieutenant, "Now is your chance for a charge." We dashed through the enemy to the rescue of our friends, the lieutenant far in advance of us all, and recaptured them. This officer afterwards distinguished himself as a general in the cavalry during the latter part of the war and on the Mexican frontier. The dashing Mackenzie, for he it was, afterwards called me his godfather for giving him his first baptism in a cavalry charge.

After our division had been relieved by the Second Corps, General Sheridan, with his command, cut loose for a short time from the Army of the Potomac and went on his successful raid around Lee's army, destroying the latter's communication with Richmond. While on this raid—at Beaver Dam Station, on the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad—Custer captured a train of cars loaded with some of our infantry who had been taken prisoners a few days before in the Wilderness, and they expressed their delight by singing, "Ain't we glad to get out of the Wilderness?" Our division remained as rear-guard, while the advance were destroying trains, stores, and railroads. On the morning after the capture of Beaver Dam Station, and just as day was breaking, I called up one of the orderlies, who was a barber, to shave me. He jumped to earn his quarter, while I looked around among my brother officers who were sleeping and chuckled to myself in having stolen a march on them. The barber had taken the beard from off one side of my face when the enemy opened two batteries upon us, the shells passing directly over our quarters. Such a scramble as we had to get to our horses, and I only half-shaved! The joke was turned upon me, and I did not have the balance finished until noon.

We again fought the rebel cavalry at Yellow Tavern on May 11 and gave them a severe thrashing, capturing some of their artillery and many prisoners. In this engagement the great rebel cavalry chieftain, General J. E. B. Stuart, was mortally wounded while rallying his men. During the attack in our front my brigade was having a lively time of it in the rear. We were being pestered all day by a regiment of rebel cavalry, and General Davies sent two of his staff back to look after his extreme rear and watch these troublesome people, for they were very annoying to our column. At last our opportunity came. We observed them preparing for a mounted charge. Quickly dismounting the rear-guard, we placed them in ambush on either side of a sunken road. The brave fellows came boldly on, but not one of them returned. They were all killed, wounded, or captured.

We continued our marching and fighting until we came into the defenses of Richmond on the Brook road, a broad highway leading into the city. Here were required skill, good generalship, and a cool head, but "Cavalry Sheridan" was equal to the occasion. We fought front, flanks, and rear against infantry and cavalry, repulsing charge after charge, killing two rebel generals and scores of their men. Oh, how we prayed for room to make a mounted charge, but could not! At one time our situation was critical, and some of us became a little nervous. For a while General Sheridan seemed at a loss what to do, and suggested that General Gregg mount his division and try to break through the enemy's lines, so as to draw off the forces attacking our other two divisions, and thus allow Wilson's command to cross the Chickahominy, and that he (Gregg) rejoin the Army of the Potomac the best way he could, leaving his artillery with Sheridan and the rest of the corps. Gregg, however, concluded to hold fast where he was. Then we dismounted some more regiments and advanced our lines on the flanks and rear. The enemy thinking we intended to make a general attack, concluded to anticipate it by a countercharge, which they did, just as we wanted them to do, and they were repulsed all along the lines. While we held the flanks and rear, Custer, with his Michiganders and their Spencer carbines, drove the enemy from the front and built a bridge across the Chickahominy at Meadow Bridges, by which we succeeded in getting all of our artillery over. We then retired without molestation. This proved that we had given the rebels a severe drubbing, and in sight, too, of the spires of the rebel capital. We then marched on until we reached Butler's army, and encamped on the banks of the James River at Haxhall's Landing, remaining there two days to replenish our supplies of rations, forage, and ammunition.

While at Haxhall's I got out my fishing-lines with the intention of having a catfish supper, for

catfish were plenty in the river. During the excitement of catching the fish I noticed one of my lines drawn taut. I began pulling it up, and said to Captain Parry, who was with me, "I guess I have a whale this time," when behold! a water-logged torpedo came to the surface with a large catfish twisted around one of the blocks. No one could have dropped anything quicker than I did that combination of catfish and torpedo, and pulled for shore. In the mean time Parry was having a good laugh at my expense. Out in front of me was a picket boat, and the officer hailed me to know what was the matter. When I told him, he passed word to the rear, and said, "Hold on to your line; the captain will come in his gig." I was curious to know how the captain could run a gig on water, and the crew of the boat laughed very heartily at my ignorance. I gave the whole business to the captain, and shortly after received from him in return a nice case of the "ardent."

We rejoined the Army of the Potomac near Spottsylvania Court-House on May 25, and then took the advance again until we arrived at Hawes' Shops. Here, on the 28th, we were attacked by cavalry and infantry, and fought dismounted for five hours, driving the enemy from the field. In this engagement I think we piled up more dead rebels than in any other of our fights during the whole war. A few days afterwards General Grant made his headquarters on our battle-ground, but was forced to move them on account of the stench arising from the dead bodies which were still unburied.

The next day after the fight at Hawes' Shops we moved to the left around Bethesda Church, witnessing the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps' hard contest with the enemy at that place. On the following day we arrived at Cold Harbor just in the nick of time to prevent the enemy's infantry from taking an old line of breastworks. We repulsed several of their charges, and held our ground until relieved by General "Baldy" Smith's command, which was very slow in coming to our relief from West Point, on the York River.

After being relieved by General Smith's command we mounted, moved by the left, and were constantly engaged with the enemy until we reached Bottoms' Bridge, where we took our stand to await all comers. After resting a couple of days, Sheridan took two of his divisions and commenced another long march for the relief of General Hunter, who was supposed to be at Lynchburg, or in its vicinity. At Trevellian Station, on the Lynchburg and Richmond Railroad, on June 11, we butted against the rebel cavalry corps and a division of infantry. These people gave us a good shaking up, but we captured several hundred prisoners, and learning from them that Hunter had retreated over the mountains and that they had been sent by rail to overtake us, Sheridan concluded that he had better get back home. So we gathered up our slightly wounded, and came back by the way of the Spottsylvania battle-ground, the column marching past the famous tree that was cut down by musket-balls in the Bloody Angle. We made a rapid and circuitous march, and arrived at the White House Landing, on the Pamunkey River. Here we found an immense wagon-train waiting for us to guard it over the country to the James River. In performing this duty General Sheridan displayed great generalship, preserving the trains and delivering them safely inside of our lines. During the movement Gregg's cavalry division covered the rear and flank next to the enemy. About the time Sheridan was parking the train on the banks of the James we were attacked at Saint Mary's Church, on June 24, by a superior force of the enemy, composed of mounted and dismounted cavalry and one division of infantry. We came together like two battering-rams, then backed off for vantage-ground, and went at each other again and again. This unequal engagement continued all day and until night spread its protecting mantle over us. We then retired within our lines near Wilcox's Landing. This retreat would never have happened had it not been that Sheridan and the other division were in entire ignorance of what was going on in their rear, for the enemy had captured all dispatches sent to him by Gregg, several officers and men being taken prisoners while performing this messenger duty. Our losses in killed, wounded, and captured upon the field were very heavy. But we did well, considering that the numbers opposed to us were three or four to one, and did not lose a single wheel, though we were pretty severely knocked about.

The cavalry corps were, on June 28, ferried across the James River to the south side, and we moved up towards Petersburg, taking position on the left and rear of our army at that point. During the months of July and August, Sheridan was kept very busy marching his cavalry from the left of the Army of the Potomac over to the right of the Army of the James and back again. In every one of these movements we were hotly engaged dismounted, and struck some severe blows, invariably killing some general officer belonging to the enemy. On one of these occasions, after moving over to the right, Sheridan was ordered to embark two of his divisions upon transports, and instead of going up the James he went down, crossed the bay and went up the Potomac to Washington, and thence to the Shenandoah Valley. The history of his succeeding campaign is familiar to all.

Gregg's division remained with the Army of the Potomac, covering its left and rear, taking the advance in all reconnoissances in force made by the army. During one of the engagements at Ream's Station, Colonel Chamberlain, of the First Massachusetts Cavalry, was wounded in the arm by a "tree-frog," or sharp-shooter. I asked him why he was limping around in such a funny manner. His reply was, "Damn it, Tommy, if you were wounded in the

arm you would limp too." We saw the fellow who fired the shot and ran some men to the bottom of the tree. Chamberlain gave the order to fire, when down came Mr. Tree-Frog looking like a bundle of rags. In this same engagement Mahone's division was repulsed three times by the First District of Columbia Cavalry, dismounted. This regiment was composed of Maine men and was shortly afterwards consolidated with the First Maine Cavalry. It was armed with the Henry rifle (sixteen-shooter), and was composed of veterans who could not be excelled for coolness and bravery. Its position at Ream's Station, on August 25, was on the left of a new division of the Second Corps. A German brigade in this division deliberately abandoned a new line of intrenchments with seven guns, leaving their loaded muskets standing up against the earthworks. Some of our dismounted cavalrymen used these muskets as long as they could find ammunition for them. General Hancock and General Gregg were present in person, for they were anxious to save the guns, and the slaughter in Mahone's division must have been terrible, as the repeating rifles wiped out line after line. No supports coming, the cavalry was compelled to give way when Mahone made his fourth charge, capturing the guns of the Second Corps. In the last charge my horse was killed and I was severely injured, and was sent home for thirty days in consequence.

Returning to the front on October 1, I was relieved from staff duty and ordered to take command of my regiment, now composed of reenlisted veterans who had passed through the furnace of war from 1861 to 1864.

In the latter part of October our brigade did some very effective work in the engagement at the Davis farm, on the left and rear of our lines at Petersburg. General Fitz-Hugh Lee threw his whole command upon us, compelling our brigade to change front three times, but we repulsed him at every point, driving him from the field. We did not know what force we were engaged with until we captured the adjutant-general of Young's brigade. That handsome officer remarked to General Davies that it was fearfully bad weather for moving about and for cavalry fighting. Davies replied, "Yes, you people were not contented in your camps, but must come out here for a fight, and I guess you got one." The adjutant-general, noticing the troops his people were fighting, asked General Davies how many brigades he had under him. Upon being informed that there was but one brigade of five regiments, he exclaimed, "Impossible! Why, we had three brigades against you." He was then started for the rear, apparently much chagrined.

A few days after this Gregg's division was ordered out to join the Second Corps in a reconnaissance in force to the left of our army, beyond Hatcher's Run. These reconnoissances were generally accompanied by Generals Grant and Meade in person, and our engagements with the enemy sometimes resulted in a heavy battle. During this particular movement the First Pennsylvania Veteran Cavalry covered the rear of our division, while the First Maine Cavalry was in the advance, forcing a crossing at some creek. General Gregg was anxious to connect with Hancock's left flank, but as he could only move his division in columns of twos through the dense woods, the movement was very slow. During its execution we were attacked by a brigade of rebel cavalry, commanded by General (now Senator) Butler, of South Carolina. For a full half-hour the enemy had a soft thing of it, throwing shot and shell into us without our being able to reply. But Gregg could not bother with side issues at that critical moment, so he ordered the First Pennsylvania Cavalry "to take care of those people," as he expressed it. The attack of this small regiment on the flank of the rebels was so sudden that the latter were glad to escape with their guns. The officers and men of the First Pennsylvania were highly elated over their success, and felt proud of themselves, for they were but a handful in comparison with the number they had attacked and driven away. The First Maine Cavalry were just as successful in their attack in front as we were in the rear.

During the month of November we made another movement to our left. My regiment was on picket duty when the order came to move to the front, but it was soon relieved and ordered to report to the brigade. Upon our arrival at the front, and as we were passing the head of General Crawford's division, General Gregg gave orders for his division to dismount and advance on foot. From what I could glean from a conversation with one of his staff, Crawford evidently had orders to close the interval between Gregg's right and the rest of the Fifth Corps. Those who have witnessed a division of cavalry dismounting and going into action on foot know what a demoralizing effect it has on those in the rear, for the led horses are generally sent back at a gallop to re-form and advance quietly, following up their various commands. While this retrograde movement of dismounted horses was being made, General Crawford yelled to one of his staff, and sent him off with his compliments to General Warren, to say that the cavalry were repulsed, and they would trample his men to death if he attempted to make the movement ordered. I began to expostulate with the general, but it was of no use, so I ordered my regiment forward at a gallop, dismounted, and went into action. My dismounted horses no doubt increased the demoralization of the "dough-boys."

During this same month of November, General Gregg moved his cavalry division out to Stony Creek Station, driving the enemy off and capturing and destroying the stores which had been accumulated there in great quantities. Among the articles was a cask filled with

sorghum molasses. Some of the men turned it up on end, drove in the head, and began filling their canteens with its sweet contents. Most of them were too short to reach over, when along came a tall Yankee of the First Maine Cavalry, with half a dozen canteens, and brushed the little fellows away as though they were so many flies. I noticed a consultation among these little fellows, when they suddenly made a rush, seized the big fellow by the legs, lifted him up and sent him head-foremost into the cask and turned it over. It was as much as I could do to save the poor fellow from being smothered to death. We rolled him down the hill into the creek, where he washed himself off, and when he came up, he said in his nasal tone of voice, "Warn't that the durnedst trick you ever hearn tell of?"

In the month of December, Gregg's cavalry division was ordered to take the advance of the Fifth Corps and cover the country while the infantry were tearing up and destroying the Weldon Railroad. We reached a point named the "Three Rivers," and had a very sharp brush with the enemy, losing several officers and men.

Upon the return march our cavalry took a road running parallel with the one that our infantry were on, the enemy following us closely. On this homeward march, while in the advance, I witnessed the sickening sight of some of our men lying dead with their hearts and private parts cut out and thrust in their mouths. These atrocities were supposed to have been committed by citizens of the neighborhood out "bushwhacking." The poor fellows who met with such horrible treatment had become intoxicated from the large quantity of apple-jack found in that section of the country, and were murdered in cold blood. That raid was known as the "Apple-Jack Raid."

During the month of January, 1865, my regiment was doing picket duty on the left and rear of our main lines. One day, noticing a number of hogs running loose in the woods in our front, I gave permission for some of the men to go out and kill them. Soon afterwards one of the videttes sent in word that two of the men were captured by the rebels. I quickly mounted a squadron and went off at a gallop, knowing well that there was but one place where the rebels could cross the stream below Lee's mill, we being on the inside circuit. I pushed rapidly for that point. Upon our arrival I noticed a few fresh tracks of horses that had crossed towards us, but had not returned. I then made preparations for the arrival of the squad with their prisoners. We waited perhaps half an hour, when the squad came in view with their two prisoners, each carrying a dead hog. The poor fellows were staggering under their heavy loads, and their captors were twitting them about being pork butchers. My men were entirely concealed on either side of the stream. We remained quiet until the whole party had reached the middle between the banks, when I gave the signal to my men to arise and cover the party with their carbines. It was like a dramatic tableau to witness the look of consternation upon the faces of the party, for there was no escape for them. As for the two butchers, it was laughable to look at them. They began looking around to ascertain if it was fun or earnest, when they espied me, and both hogs dropped from their shoulders into the water, and the two men fell against the bank, yelling for us to give their captors a volley. I then ordered the rebels to advance one at a time, dismount, and take off their arms. I asked my two men who it was that had suggested that they should carry the hogs, and they pointed to the sergeant and one other man. These two were ordered to pick up the pork and move back, under charge of the two that were recaptured, to the picket reserve. As the command was moving out for the return, some wag in the squadron remarked to the rebel sergeant, "How do you like that for a movement by inversion?"

In the month of March an order came from general head-quarters directing me to take my regiment, with a trusted scout, and proceed to the head of the Blackwater Swamp, when we would find a body of marauders composed of deserters from both armies. These men had been murdering our pickets nightly for what plunder they could get from the dead bodies. My orders were to destroy these scoundrels. The orders were carried out to the very letter.

On my return to camp, after six days and nights of hard marching, a leave of absence for ten days was sent me without application on my part. I took advantage of the furlough and went home. Upon my arrival there, I found awaiting me a personal telegram from General Sheridan, who had rejoined the Army of the Potomac that same morning with the other two divisions of the cavalry corps, having marched overland from the head of the Shenandoah Valley. This dispatch directed me to take the first train and come to the front as rapidly as possible, and upon my arrival at City Point to assume command of all the newly-remounted men there and join my division on the march. Though I had just arrived home I obeyed the order and took the first train for Washington, went directly to the War Department, showed my dispatch, and was at once sent to Annapolis on a special engine. I then took a dispatch-boat in company with Colonel Comstock, of General Grant's staff, arrived at City Point on the morning of the 31st of March, and joined our division at Dinwiddie Court-House in time to take part in the engagement of that day.

The next day came the battle of Five Forks. Here Sheridan threw his whole cavalry corps upon the enemy, with the exception of my brigade. As for my own regiment, we had all the fighting we wanted in keeping the enemy from getting around on Sheridan's left and rear. In this battle whole brigades went into action mounted and dismounted, the mounted men

dashing over breastworks as though they were mere piles of dirt, and capturing prisoners by the thousand. While in conversation with General W. H. F. Lee, who was taken prisoner, he told me that he was in the act of sighting a cannon to sweep along that portion of the works where the Fifth Corps were piling over when he heard a voice saying, "Surrender, you rebel son of a gun!" and looking up there he saw one of our cavalrymen astride a mule, with his revolver between the mule's ears, reaching over in the act of pulling trigger. In a few seconds the earth-work was filled with our mounted cavalry. The much-abused army mule, after all, was of some service besides hauling heavy loads.

On the following day, April 2, our cavalry struck the South Side Railroad and continued in pursuit of Lee's retreating army. Richmond and Petersburg fell on the 3d, and these good tidings seemed to give new life to both men and horses. On we pressed until we reached Jetersville, on the Danville Railroad, on April 4. About one o'clock that night, as we lay to horse, the First Pennsylvania Cavalry was ordered to mount and report to General Sheridan at once. Under Sheridan's fly I found General Crook (who was now in command of Gregg's old division) and General Davies looking over a map. I was shown the position where the enemy were supposed to be, near Amelia Court-House, and was instructed to proceed with my regiment about two or three miles in advance of our brigade, press through all small detachments, and attack the enemy's wagon-train at daylight. We reached some high ground just as the sun was rising, and below at our feet lay the whole rebel army in line of battle, apparently sound asleep. It was a beautiful sight to look upon. Here instructions were given to the men that when the charge was sounded by the bugles they should yell like demons and tell all the rebels they met, particularly the officers, that Sheridan and all his cavalry corps were upon them. This regiment with its three hundred veterans charged through a number of outlying commands, destroying about three hundred wagons, cutting out twelve hundred head of horses and mules, capturing eight hundred prisoners, eleven rebel battle-flags, and a bright, new spick-and-span battery of Armstrong field-guns, which shortly before had been presented by the ladies of Liverpool to the corporation of the city of Richmond. We held our ground and captures until General Davies came to our relief, which he did very promptly.

Let me relate an amusing incident. Between daylight and sunrise I observed a body of rebel cavalry holding Paines' Cross-Roads. In a house by the roadside there resided an Episcopal clergyman. The gentleman came out, stood at his gate, and looked first at us, then at his friends. He had a gold watch in his hand, as though looking at the time of day. I ordered two squadrons to charge the rebels and clear the road, and while they were performing that duty we advanced the balance of the command, halting in front of our religious friend, when the following conversation took place: "Good-morning." "Good-morning, sir." "You are the first live Yankee cavalry commander I have seen since the war commenced." My reply was, "Then you are not a pupil of General Hooker's." He laughingly said "No," and then he asked, hearing the firing of the small-arms of the charging squadrons, "Are you going to have a battle here? If so, how long will it last?" My reply was, "No, sir; we will move on." I then asked him why he kept his watch in his hand. His reply was, "I thought I would time you to find out how soon you would be driven off the sacred soil of the immortal Washington." I moved away, smiling at the old rector's loyalty to the Father of his Country, when I heard a scuffle behind me. Upon looking around I observed my own orderly seizing the watch and saying, "We will tell you the time when the Johnnies stop running." Then he dashed away before I could stop him to return the stolen watch.

All of our captures from the enemy, except the battle-flags and the watch, were turned over, by order of General Davies, to the Tenth New York Cavalry, and we then proceeded as rapidly as possible to join the main command. The First Pennsylvania Cavalry joined the brigade and resumed the fighting, for the rebels were very sore over the captures and were trying hard to retake their guns, but we succeeded in getting back to Jetersville safely.

About five o'clock that afternoon, April 5, the First Pennsylvania Cavalry were standing to horse, when Sheridan, Crook, and a number of other general officers, both infantry and cavalry, came riding up to examine the captured battle-flags. Among the colors was one presented to General Fitz-Hugh Lee by his lady friends of Richmond, which, by the way, I made a present to General Davies. The enemy, seeing these officers around the colors, sounded the charge and came upon us with a rush. Sheridan ordered me to mount my men and check the enemy until he could send in more regiments to my support. Then ensued a phenomenal display of shooting-stars by daylight, for the generals all scattered to their various commands. We mounted and charged the enemy and commenced a hand-to-hand fight, using pistols, sabres, and clubbed carbines. The heaviest of the fighting was around our colors. The brave old color-sergeant of the First Pennsylvania Cavalry, Antoine Wolf, carrying aloft the colors of his regiment in one hand, and with his sabre in the other cutting his way right and left, followed close at my horse's heels. Many a good trooper fell in the track made by us that day. That was my sixth and last charge during the engagement, and I lost a horse killed in every charge. While lying under my horse with my leg shattered by a carbine-ball, Colonel Janeway, at the head of the First New Jersey, passed by at full charge, saying, "Cheer up, Tommy, we are here with you," then instantly exclaimed, "My God!" and

fell dead from his saddle but twenty feet from me. Our brigade started that morning with sixteen field officers, and at sundown but one was left, the other fifteen having been either killed or wounded. After I was wounded I turned my command over to Captain Holbrook, who led it through several charges on the 6th, 7th, and 9th of April. He had the satisfaction of planting the regiment across Lee's front on the Lynchburg pike, with its colors in the middle of the road, there to witness the surrender of the rebel army.

This ended my experience as a cavalryman.

And now I trust that I will be excused when I say that we cavalrymen soon taught the other arms of the service to respect us and stopped that old slurring remark, "Here comes the cavalry back; now there is going to be a fight." Although we were criticised sharply at the beginning of the war, yet at its close we of all the branches of the service proved ourselves the most efficient under the command of that prince among soldiers, "Cavalry Sheridan."

COLONEL HAMPTON S. THOMAS.

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\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF SERVICE IN THE CAVALRY OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC \*\*\*

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