

CHAPTER IX.

To Winchester-----Battle Of Kerntown-----List Of
Casualties-----Retreat-----Report Of General Crook-----At
Harper's Ferry Again-----A Hot, Hard March-----At
Monocacy Junction-----Back To Bolivar Heights-----
Arrival Of General P. H. Sheridan, 6th And 19th
Corps And Torbert's Cavalry-----Dawn Of A New Era
In The Valley

On the next day after the battle of Snicker's Ferry, the 6th and 19th corps moved off in the direction of Washington, and the day after their departure, our division crossed the Shenandoah at Snicker's Ferry and went into camp where we remained until the 21st, when we started for Winchester. Arriving there our regiment camped on the same ground we occupied when on our way up the valley in the spring under General Sigel. We here joined the second division under Colonel Duvall. In the forenoon of the 23d our brigade of the first division and Hayes' brigade of the second division went forward on a reconnaissance, advancing about two miles beyond Kerntown. We met but few of the enemy, none till we reached the vicinity of Kerntown. There we encountered a few cavalry, which, without resistance, retired as we advanced. We returned to camp in the afternoon, rather glad the coast was so clear of rebels. General Hayes says in his report of this reconnaissance: "From what was seen of the enemy, as well as what could be learned of citizens, it was believed that the rebel force consisted of about 1,000 cavalry, and two or three pieces of artillery. This was reported to Major General Crook and soon after the brigade was ordered to return." *General Hayes' report, Aug. 8, 1864.*

About 9 o'clock on the 24th, evidence began to thicken that a strong body of the enemy was gathering in our front, and a few brigades were again pushed forward beyond Kerntown. Sharp firing and some cannonading soon ensued, when the whole corps, except a strong train guard, was brought up to the line of battle. As soon as the line was formed it advanced behind a strong skirmish line, and for a time drove the enemy back. But almost as soon as the advance began, the second division was struck on its left flank and rear by an overwhelming force of the enemy, and another large force was detected moving around our right. Our regiment was on the left of our division near the pike and was then near the centre of the line. Orders were at once given to fall back. Early's army of 30,000 was upon our little corps 6,000 or 7,000. The second division was fairly flanked out of its position, by a force far exceeding it in numbers, coming in far to its rear and on its left. Hayes' brigade was on the left, and, when driven back covered the retreat on the right of the pike to Bunker Hill, while ours covered it on the left. Hayes had his horse shot under him and was himself slightly wounded in the head. He displayed great gallantry throughout this engagement and handled his brigade with wonderful skill. In falling back we came upon two pieces of artillery abandoned by our cavalry. The infantry halted and checked the advancing enemy, now close upon us, long enough to hand off the pieces, which was done by hand by a portion of the 36th Ohio, one of Hayes' regiments. Frequently, during the retreat that night, the enemy pushed forward his cavalry with great dash, but it was every time handsomely repulsed. Our regiment behaved splendidly throughout the retreat, scarcely a man straggling from his place. Indeed, the conduct of the whole brigade during the day and night was worthy of all praise. We made a stand between 9 and 10 P.M. at Bunker Hill, where we remained until morning. We had now a large amount of army stores at Martinsburg which must fall into the enemy's hands, unless he was held back long enough to give time to remove them. How it rained that night at Bunker Hill! Before daylight we were under arms, and moving across the creek, soon became engaged in a brisk skirmish with the enemy, who was now pressing us hard with a large force of cavalry, mounted and dismounted, especially on our left flank, which our weak cavalry was unable to cover. We held our position at Bunker Hill until about 9 A.M., when we fell back slowly towards Martinsburg, which we reached about noon, skirmishing all the way, our regiment being rear guard, as the night before. In front of the town, we again drew up in line of battle, and sending out strong skirmish lines, kept up a brisk musketry fire and cannonade until about 4 P.M., when we fell back through the town, where we again halted. The stores had, in the meantime, been all sent out by rail, and our own trains pushed on to Williamsport, under a strong guard. The rebel cavalry occupied Martinsburg as soon as we evacuated it. But we were not yet ready to leave, and while it was yet light, General Crook, with our division and most of the second, charged into the town, giving the rebels a genuine surprise, and drove them pell mell out of

the town again, capturing a number of prisoners and horses. Passing through to our former position the other side of town, we lay down in line of battle, and building a long line of camp fires, soon fell back again and retreated to Williamsport, and marched by way of Sharpsburg, Maryland, to Harper's Ferry, where we recrossed the river, and camped at Halltown, four miles south of Harper's Ferry, on the 28th.

Hunter was not on the field, but was at Harper's Ferry. Of the bad conduct of some of the troops, teamsters, etc., General Crook, in his report of the battle, says: "Some of my teamsters got stampeded, and cut loose from their wagons along the road, but their wagons were destroyed, so that nothing fell into the hands of the enemy. I regret to say that the greater portion of my dismounted cavalry, along with some infantry, to the whole number of 3,000 or 4,000, broke to the rear at first fire, and all efforts to stop them proved of no avail. They mostly got into Martinsburg, circulating all manner of reports. A few of them were captured endeavoring to escape my guards. I lost over one-third of my cavalry in this way." *General Crook's reports, July 27, 1864.*

This is a sorry picture enough, but it is not overdrawn. This battle settled the question that Early had yet an overwhelming force in the Valley, compared to ours. It also demonstrated that he had largely increased his force of cavalry. Our own teamsters, Dye and McKnight, always cool, took their teams through in good shape. Their example had a good effect upon others. There was no such thing as stampeding them.

General Crook, in his report of the battle, says: "I have the honor to report that on the 24th instant I was attacked by a large force of the enemy at Winchester. I repulsed their force twice, and was driving them, when they partially turned my left, and threw it into some confusion. At the same time a heavy column was moving around my right, and I gave the order to fall back. My left soon reformed, and my whole line re-formed in good order, the enemy pushing both my flanks and center all the time. I got off all my artillery and wagons. * * * I fell back to Bunker Hill, arriving there between 9 and 10 o'clock P.M., part of the enemy's force camping within two miles of me. Next morning the enemy's cavalry pressed my front and commenced turning my flank, and, as I had not sufficient cavalry to ascertain whether his infantry was trying to turn my position, I fell back on Martinsburg. I skirmished with them almost all day, they making demonstrations to turn my flanks. Toward evening I fell back toward Williamsport??, when the enemy followed me into town. Supposing they would tell the inhabitants all about their force, intentions, etc, I turned my column back, drove them out of town, and captured a few prisoners. From all the reliable information I could get, the force that attacked me was Early's raiding force, joined by the force left in the Valley when he went into Maryland." * * * "I would also state the enemy was increased his force of cavalry, in the Valley, very materially."---*General Crook's report, July 27, 1864.*

The loss of our regiment was one killed...Benjamin G. Patterson, Company B, a few slightly wounded, whose names we have been unable to learn, and eight prisoners, as follows: Corporal Peter Wolf, Company B; William Ball, Company B; John Cole, Company B; Willard Reed, Company B; Corporal Wesley Mickel, Company I; George Bates, Company I; Albert Woodruff, Company I; William Clark, Company K.

The defeat at Kerntown was complete and demoralizing. The dismounted cavalry which broke so shamefully at Snicker's Ferry, repeated the performance here, and some regiments of infantry, and much of the cavalry, did not behave much better, but we are glad to state that none of the troops with Hunter, on the Lynchburg expedition, proved unsteady! Early had sent large bodies of cavalry around our flanks for the purpose of getting in our rear and attacking our trains. The body of cavalry, sent around the left, struck the pike some distance below Winchester, stampeding some of the teamsters, and causing some wagons and caissons to be abandoned and burned. It was here that an artillery officer cut loose his horses and abandoned the two guns mentioned as hauled off by the infantry "It was owing to the steadiness and good conduct of the infantry which came with us from the Kanawha, that the army was saved from annihilation." *General Hunter's report to General Halleck.*

We were now pretty sick of this sort of campaigning. If the pursuit of Early, in the Loudon Valley, was unskillful, this pursuit, in the Shenandoah, was incautious and reckless. With the knowledge that the 6th and 19th corps had returned to Washington, greater caution should have been exercised in following Early, for, as soon as he learned of their departure, it might reasonably have been expected that he would return

down the Valley, unless some of his force had also been sent to Richmond. "Learning, on the 23d, that a large column, sent after him (Early) from Washington, was returning, and that the Army of West Virginia, under Crook, including Hunter's and Sigel's forces, was at Kernstown, he (Early) determined to attack at once."---Jeff Davis' *"Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government."*

After relieving Washington, the only purpose, it seemed, of the movement of the 6th and 19th corps toward the Shenandoah Valley, was to follow Early long enough to start him on the retreat, which all seemed to regard as equivalent to his return to Richmond, acting upon which idea they at once fell back to Washington. It was fallacious reasoning, as events proved. Hearing of Crook's defeat, Halleck telegraphed to Grant at 8 P.M. that day: "General Wright, in accordance with your orders, was about to embark for City Point. I have directed him to await your further order. I shall exercise no further discretion in this matter, but shall carry out such orders as you may give." The 6th and 19th corps were immediately ordered back, and part of the 19th united with Crook's corps on the 29th near Halltown. Had there been a better understanding, and more unity of action between Hunter and Wright, there can be no doubt that many of the blunders, from the 14th to the 24 of July, could have been avoided. As it was, no campaign of the war was more disjointed, more fruitless and demoralizing.

In sixteen days we had fought two hard battles, skirmished from Winchester to Martinsburg, much of the time moving in line of battle, and had marched 190 miles. Considering the worn out condition of shoeless men when we reached the Valley on the 12th, their terrible condition now must be left to the reader's imagination, for, even at this distance of time, we have no heart to describe it. We now reviewed?? our requisition for clothing, and, especially, shoes, and lay down to await them, never doubting that now, *surely now*, we would get shoes and clothing for our barefooted, ragged, and dirty men before we were moved again. Before daylight, the morning of the 29th, the quartermaster and his men were routed out to draw clothing, shoes, etc. Willingly, all hands turned out, and, scarcely stopping to eat during the day, succeeded in getting shoes issued to all in need in the regiment. Over 150 men were barefooted on the recent hard marches. Considerable clothing was also issued, and long after dark the Quartermaster and his men ate their suppers and lay down to rest a few hours, intending to finish issuing early in the morning. The Quartermaster was just ready, on the 30th, with the rest of his stores, including "hard bread," on the ground, when the order to "fall in" was given. In a short time the order to move came, and we took our place on the road. All the corps were on the move. No one on that march will ever forget the fearful heat of the July day, as we marched along side of Maryland Heights. We were started off at a very rapid rate, which was kept up for several miles without a halt. Over 100 of the men of the army died of sunstroke, and many more than that were seriously affected, and dropped down by the roadside. We passed several by the road who were either dead or dying, and, seeing the effect of such marching, slackened our pace as a mere act of humanity. We thus fell a little to the rear, but soon caught up with the thoroughly exhausted troops resting by the roadside. We marched fifteen miles, and camped near Middletown. The people of this place, on hearing of our coming, set to cooking, and when we arrived, met us with an abundant meal of everything good. The next day we marched fifteen miles further, the next about the same distance, camping near Wolfesville, and about noon, on the 3d of August, reached Frederick City, Md. This is a loyal city, true as steel. In the afternoon we moved to within a mile of Monocacy Junction and went into camp. Next day we waded the Monocacy River, and camped near the Junction. We were now on the return trip to the Shenandoah. This marching was to head off Early, from Washington, who was again in Pennsylvania, burning and pillaging. On the 30th, the day we started, he was marching on Chambersburg, which General McCausland wantonly burned late that day. Hearing at Middletown, the next day, that he was retreating, with Averill in pursuit, and another panic occurring in the neighborhood of Frederick, Monocacy and Poolesville, we turned in that direction, to which point the 6th and 19th corps also moved. Here we were greeted with the announcement of another change in commanders. On the 5th of August, General Grant had met Hunter at Monocacy and determined upon a plan of campaign with General Sheridan as commander. On the 6th, General Grant telegraphed to Halleck from Monocacy Junction: "Send Sheridan, by morning train, to Harper's Ferry, calling here, on his way, to see if General Hunter has left. Give him orders to take command of all the troops in the field within his division. General Hunter will turn over to him my letter of instructions." Sheridan arrived at Monocacy that same day, the 6th, and there met Grant and Hunter, and next morning reached Harper's Ferry. Grant returned to Washington the evening of the 6th, and there, next day, caused an order to issue from the War Department, creating the Middle Military Division, out of what

then composed the Departments of Pennsylvania, Washington, Maryland and West Virginia, with General Sheridan in command.

The War Department, General Grant, and the government authorities generally, had at last been forced to devote some of its energies to West Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, which, from the beginning of the war, had been treated as though they hardly made a shadow on the troubled field of operations. This Shenandoah Valley, especially, had acquired the soubriquet?? of “the race ground” in the army and among the people of the country, and Harper’s Ferry that of “Harper’s Weekly,” the title denoting the time of departure and return of armies. Every commander who had entered the Valley had retired “under a cloud” and been labeled “a failure.” The troops, whose evil destiny it had been to “occupy it,” had been knocked about, whipped, driven and marched up and down it until they had become disheartened, disgusted, and almost demoralized. While they had fought many desperate battles, had won many brilliant victories, and had patiently endured untold hardships, yet they had, withal, suffered so many reverses, had been so thoroughly exhausted by long, fruitless raids and useless campaigns, that they had now arrived at a point where all felt that further endurance “had ceased to be a virtue.” “They yearned for a change,” and now their hopes began to brighten, and their spirits to revive, as they saw around them ample signs of preparation for another campaign, in which sufficient numbers were to take part to prevent further repetitions of our past disastrous experience. Early had again returned to the Valley, and was now camped at Bunker Hill. It was a satisfaction to us to hear that, on the 7th, Averill had come upon McCausland, at Moorefield, and given him a terrible whipping, capturing 450 prisoners, four pieces of artillery, all he had, all his caissons but one, nearly all his wagons which contained his plunder, over 400 horses, three battle flags, a large number of small arms, killing and wounding a large number, and scattering the rest far and wide through the mountains. Early, in summing up the causes of his misfortunes later in the season, said: “This affair at Moorefield had a very damaging effect upon my cavalry for the rest of the campaign.” The infamous act of McCausland, in burning Chambersburg, gave to this annihilating victory over him a peculiar significance, and it earned for General Averill the plaudits of the whole North.

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