

rear, and, as if the work was not going on fast enough, on the afternoon of the 2d of May, a tornado struck the camp, tore off all the tent roofs, demolished many of the cabins, blew down many trees and covered everything with red dust. The Seventh was out on battalion drill at the time; field and staff had to dismount; men were actually lifted off their feet. On the whole, it was a pretty strong hint to leave.

The camps of a cavalry division now made their appearance in front near the base of Mount Pony, and one of their preliminary movements was a raid upon the private horses of the Seventh, and the capture, while innocently grazing, of a valuable horse belonging to the Adjutant, and a spare horse of the Colonel's. The latter was seen a few days later crossing the Rapidan on a pontoon bridge; no time then for swapping horses, or claiming stolen ones.

Behind camp, and between it and Culpeper, glittered the bright pieces of Wainwright's artillery brigade of our corps. On the crest of a ridge back of this, a red line of earthworks was being industriously thrown up, in full view of the enemy's signal station on Clark's Mountain. What those banks were made for, just on the eve of an advance, was one of those mysteries that still remain unexplained, unless for the purpose of deluding the enemy into the belief that we intended to stay behind them for "three years or the war," or run back to them after defeat.

#### **The Rapidan Crossed.**

Heavy weights thrown off, weather not unfavorable, roads as good as ever they were likely to be, all are waiting for the word "go," when, on Tuesday, 3d of May (1864), the general officer of the day goes out to order in the picket line, and advanced copies of Meade's printed address to the army, dated 4th May, are handed around and read at dress parade. Following that came the order to be ready to move at midnight, with a caution against making unusual fires.

The rolls of the Seventh at this time show an aggregate of 794, and its effective fighting strength, on the morning of the first battle in the Wilderness, was 556, including 26 officers, with Colonel Phelps in command.

Early on the morning of May 4 the Fifth Corps had pulled out, and at noon crossed the Rapidan at Germanna Ford. Flankers were thrown out on the right, and, after a cautious progress of some five miles or more, the Maryland brigade bivouacked for the night in a piny old field near the old Wilderness tavern.

#### **Wilderness—First Day.**

At daylight of the 5th the Maryland brigade (Colonel Denison), now acting separately, took position on the high clearing near the Lacy House, from which were seen heavy columns of troops disappearing in the thicket, and the skirmishing fire playing around the unseen heads of these columns as they deployed. After some marching and counter-marching, as if prospecting for a good location, the brigade deployed along an edge of small timber facing west or northwest, in what might be called the right center of the general position, and advanced in line, brigade front, through the woods, brush and undergrowth. After some 500 yards or more of such scrambling, the ragged line suddenly stumbled upon another line of somebody else's skirmishers, waiting for something to turn up. It was then discovered that these were the skirmishers of the "Iron Brigade" of western regiments, which had the right of way,