

Lee's whole army in full retreat to Richmond! Nothing in front but a rear guard of cavalry and horse artillery trying to cover his retreat! Whereat, there was extreme elation. Foot-sore, famished, jaded as the men were, on that theory they felt as if they could have kept on to Richmond, if necessary. Unhappily, that was not the situation, but quite otherwise.

#### General Stuart's Compliments.

While about three miles of stubbornly contested ground were being thus wrested from Fitz Lee's cavalry, another force, under Stuart in person, was engaged in throwing up a hasty but sufficient line of timber defenses, and Anderson's leading division, under Kershaw, was taking position behind them, with artillery somewhat advanced on his right, to enfilade an attacking column. Here Stuart remained to witness the expected assault. (Southern Hist. Soc. Papers, March, 1879; 67 War Records, 1036-1056.)

These important works commanded the fork of the Brock Road, one branch leading to Spotsylvania Court House, one and a-half miles southeast, and the other leading to the old Court House, about two miles south, the Block House being about half way. Both roads directly or indirectly pointed to Richmond. Since the war, a small settlement has made its appearance at the fork, with a postoffice, called "Sunlight."

#### General Warren's Speech.

Reaching the high clearing about Alsop's farm, Warren saw this line of works in a skirt of woods along the ridge of Laurel Hill, and energetically addressed his troops as they came up. While the Seventh was passing his white horse, he was heard to exclaim, with an impulsive gesture, at each sharp, crisp sentence: "Never mind cannon! Never mind bullets! Press on and clear this road. It's the only way to get your rations."

#### Formation for Assault.

Robinson's three brigades were promptly formed in three parallel columns of attack, column by regiment, the Seventh, as usual, doubled by wing, and in rear of the Eighth and the battalion of the First. The Fourth made the charge with another brigade to left. The Maryland brigade formed on the right of the division, near the spot where General Sedgwick fell the following day, indicated now by the Sedgwick monument. A battery took position on the right of the Maryland brigade and opened fire, but was not allowed time to get the range, and made no impression upon the works, which could have been easily breached by a few well-directed shell.

The formation was in an edge of timber, about four hundred yards from the works, the intervening space being an undulating, open field. These works on Spotsylvania Ridge, otherwise Laurel Hill, are still to be seen, in fair preservation, together with the epaulement for the advanced battery on the Block House road, to their right.

At first, the men generally failed to take in the gravity of the situation. Their senses were simply stupefied by sleepless overwork. They had been temporarily braced up by the intoxicating excitement of combat and pursuit, but, when massed in close column, they acted as if they supposed the next order would be to stack arms and rest, preparatory to throwing up entrenchments, as in the days of McClellan and Meade.