

## CHAPTER VII.

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After the battles of the 18th and 19th of August on the Weldon Railroad the brigade, or what was left of it, returned to Battery No. 37, and for weeks were constantly engaged on the fortifications and in manning the trenches.

On September 2d the Second Maryland was withdrawn from the trenches and placed three miles west of Petersburg, between the Weldon and Southside Railroads, forming a part of the force designed to oppose movements of the enemy's left. The battalion remained here for several weeks employed in building a series of earthworks to cover the exposed left flank and rear of General Lee's army. Among this series of works thus constructed was a strong hexagonal fort upon the farm of Dr. Peebles, within a short distance of the Squirrel Level road. This fort it was hoped the brigades of Archer and Walker were destined to man, and the men felt confident of their ability to hold it against a much superior force. But such was not to be the case, for on the 30th of September Archer's Brigade was ordered to the Star Fort, situated about half a mile to the right of Petersburg, at which point Lee was concentrating troops in anticipation of an attack. And it was made that day in overwhelming force. It was simultaneous on both flanks — the expedition of Hancock north of the James, which resulted in the capture of Fort Harrison, was followed by that of Warren; who attacked with four divisions of infantry and one of cavalry, and they swept the handful of artillerists who had been left in charge of the strong defenses built by Archer and Walker, and they carried everything before them. The strong fort which had cost these brigades so much labor was wrested in a moment, and with little defense. Hancock, the splendid soldier that he was, continued his movement and made his success complete. He had gained a strong position, from which he felt confident of dealing sledge-hammer blows upon his antagonist, and in this he made no mistake. Hancock had made these achievements before. He overran Johnson's Division at Spottsylvania, and achieved the only success that can be accredited to Grant's "On to Richmond," though he was unfortunate at Cold Harbor, as were all of the other subordinate commanders of General Grant.

When Warren's movements were made known to General Lee, Archer's Brigade was ordered back to the position they had occupied, and General Heth formed his command in the rear of the main line of Confederate works, with the view of assaulting and recapturing the position the enemy had carried.

It might be well to describe the positions held by the opposing forces prior to inaugurating a battle of unusual severity.

The two lines were almost parallel. Half way between the contending forces