

CHAPTER VIII.

It was the latter part of March, and General Lee determined to put into execution, if possible, a plan that he had long before resolved upon. That he could no longer remain at Petersburg was becoming every day more painfully evident. Grant with his overwhelming army, now further augmented by the arrival of Sheridan with ten thousand cavalymen, was fast closing in upon Lee. Could the latter but unite with Johnston, then moving through North Carolina, something might be done. The war was becoming enormously expensive to the North, owing to the vast armies it was necessary to keep in the field, and the people were becoming clamorous for peace. Could the war be prolonged one year by uniting the armies of Lee and Johnston, and by skillful manœuvring a crushing defeat could be administered to Grant, a recognition of the Confederacy *might* be effected. It was, indeed, a forlorn hope, but General Lee was not satisfied to surrender his army without making one more effort in a cause for which he and the brave men around him had battled for almost four years.

We will not give here a detailed account of the operations around Petersburg preliminary to its evacuation by the Confederates, but will follow those movements with which the Second Maryland was associated.

On April 1st Captain John W. Torsch, in command of the battalion, received the following order :

HEADQUARTERS McCOMB'S BRIGADE, April 1, 1865.

Captain Torsch, Commanding Maryland Battalion :

Captain :—You will report with your battalion, under arms, at once, at the chapel of General Davis' Brigade.

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER-GENERAL WILLIAM McCOMB.

JOHN ALLEN, A. A. G.

At 2 o'clock A. M. Captain Torsch repaired to the point designated, where he found three other battalions, and all had been assembled to attempt the recapture of some rifle pits taken from Cook's Brigade several days before.

Before daylight the men were ordered to quietly steal over their own works, and as noiselessly as possible approach the enemy. This was done with suppressed breaths, when at a signal agreed upon the different battalions rushed forward to take the pits in their respective fronts.