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By M. Fields.

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## The War News.

### THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG.

A Full and Detailed Description of the Fight.

The correspondent of the New York Tribune gives the most intelligible account of the great battle at Fredericksburg which has yet been published. It appeared in that journal of the 17th inst. and we extract the following:

**FREDERICKSBURG, Saturday, Dec. 13—11 P. M.**—The third act of the grand martial drama opened on Thursday last and is over. Another great battle has been added to the bloody record of the Army of the Potomac.

Night now covers once more with her benign mantle scenes of carnage, strife and destruction. Under her guiding influence, let me attempt to forget the excitement and describe the fatigues of the day, and describe in concise though comprehensive terms, the fearful events of which I was an eye-witness during the last twelve hours.

Last evening, a general council of war, attended by all the grand division corps and division commanders, was held at a late hour, at General Sumner's headquarters, at which General Burnside submitted and explained his plan for the general attack he proposed to make to-day upon the position of the enemy.

The plan comprised a simultaneous advance of our whole line upon the enemy's strong positions on the hills in front of the left and right grand divisions, which were to be carried by sudden assaults upon the stronghold, by select bodies of troops.

It was in keeping with the well-known boldness and dash of its author, but some doubts were expressed in the council of its practicability by a number of those in attendance. All, however, expressed their readiness to undertake anything ordered by the Commander-in-Chief, and the necessary instructions were given to commence a general movement upon the enemy with daylight.

The fog that kept the valley of the river and the adjacent heights from view every day this week, again prevented the commencement of operations at the stated time. Fortunately, however, it cleared away early in the day, and about 10 o'clock orders were transmitted to the general commanding the right and left grand divisions to prepare to charge immediately the works respectively assigned to them.

**THE BATTLE ON THE RIGHT.**

Gen. Sumner and staff left their headquarters about 11 o'clock and repaired to the Lacey House, from which a full view of the scene of the impending action on the right grand division could be obtained. Gen. Sumner had selected French's division of General Couch's corps for the advance of the attacking column.

It had orders to move from its position in the streets of Fredericksburg next to the river to the outskirts of the town, form a line of battle by brigades, and preceded by a line of skirmishers, move at a double-quick upon the first line of the enemy's works.

Gen. French was necessarily obliged to march his troops in solid column in parallel streets. As soon as the head of the column had emerged from the lower into the higher portions of the streets, the enemy's batteries opened upon them from several points. Upon reaching the outskirts of the town, the order was given to deploy, but stone and other fences prevented its ready execution.

During the delay thus caused, the troops were exposed to an enfilading fire which taxed the advance of the troops most severely.

The line being formed at last, about noon the order to advance was given. The line moved up and over a low range of elevations and down toward the foot of the hills on which the enemy's breastworks were situated. From houses, ridges, barricades, across the roads and other shelter, the Rebel sharpshooters now opened from all sides with fearful effect. The vigor of the fire of the Rebel artillery also steadily increased, and when the line reached the foot of the second range of hills, a perfect hail of lead fell upon it. The advance, however, was continued until within a few hundred yards of the crest of the hills, when a rapid succession of terrific volleys from long lines of Rebel infantry, suddenly rising in front of their works, checked it.

From the position they had gained, our troops now exchanged round about with the enemy until their ammunition became exhausted, and the line fell back some distance, leaving nearly one-half of its number on the field, to make room for General Hancock's division.

This division advanced, likewise formed in parallel lines of brigades. It moved forward steadily up to the point where French's had received its check, when it was also stopped by the murderous fire of the Rebel infantry and artillery.

For two hours it alternately replied to the enemy's musketry, and attempted to make its way up the second range of hills.

Although unable to advance, and continually losing numbers, it fought until its ammunition gave out, when it was relieved by Howard's division, and retired nearer to town.

Howard's command went into action about three o'clock. One after the other of its brigades were advanced to the front; but, like those of French and Hancock, did not succeed in reaching the enemy's works. The last of it, under General Sully, was ordered to charge up the hill with the bayonet, and moved forward in most gallant style, but was checked, as all the other troops had been.

Shortly after French's division had moved to the attack, Sturgis' division of Wilcox's corps advanced over a parallel road on the left of our right upon the works and batteries covering the enemy's right flank. It experienced the same difficulties in forming, in consequence of obstructions on the ground, as French's, but pushed forward with the utmost determination, halting only at times to open its way by musketry.

It reached within eighty yards of the crest of the hill it aimed to take, but having been fearfully weakened in numbers during its advance, had to halt. It held the point gained for three hours.

Notwithstanding it was confronted by vastly superior numbers of infantry, and enfiladed by batteries on each flank—even after its ammunition had all been spent—it did not give way, but firmly held its ground until properly relieved shortly before sunset.

When Howard's division moved to the front, the last of the available force of Couch's corps, forming our extreme right, was employed. Of Wilcox's corps, Getty's division, which had been held in reserve during the day, was all that were at command, after Sturgis had become exhausted by the severity of its protracted struggle—Burns having been sent early in the morning to establish connection between the left and right, and not being within ready march.

Fortunately, however, Butterfield's corps of Hooker's grand division, which was acting as a reserve to the right, Stoneman's was to the left, came to the rescue, when the energies of Wilcox's and Couch's corps had been nearly spent. It had commenced moving across the river, over the upper and middle bridges, as soon as the advance of Couch's and Wilcox's troops furnished room for it in the lower part of the town.

It had all moved across between four and five o'clock. Shortly before dark, Humphrey's and Griffin's divisions were ordered to advance to the front and receive the troops of General Couch on the right and General Wilcox on the left. They reached the front and formed in line just before sunset, and at once charged upon the enemy's works.

Humphrey's division came within a short distance of them, and Griffin's reached the point held by Sturgis, which respective positions they have since occupied.

During their advance the firing from the Rebel artillery reached the highest intensity of the whole day, but ceased shortly after nightfall.

Simultaneous with the advance of Griffin and Humphrey, Getty's division moved from its position up the valley of a little stream skirting the town, and advanced to the base of the hill occupied by the Rebel batteries on the extreme right, driving the Rebel infantry from behind a stone wall, from which they had greatly troubled our troops during the day.

Here it lay during the night. Syke's division of Butterfield's corps followed between Griffin and Humphrey to the front, but arrived too late for action. Thus ended the conflict between our right and the Rebel left.

**THE BATTLE ON THE LEFT.**

The lines of General Franklin, as formed for the attack, represented an obtuse angle, one line of which—General Reynolds's corps—extended diagonally from the river bank.

Smith's corps, in a line parallel with the river, formed on the right of Wilcox's corps. The extreme left was three miles below Fredericksburg, and the right of the left grand division was less than two miles from the town. The extent of General Franklin's line then was more than a mile from right to left.

The positions of the different divisions, as follows, commencing on the right: First, Brook's division, which lay upon the ground along the road to Fredericksburg, running parallel with the river, and half way between it and the Rebel batteries.

Howe's division next formed on the left; on his right joined Reynolds's corps, the first division of which, General Gibbons commanding, took position in advance beyond the road. Meade's division formed an angle with Gibbons and extended towards the river. Doubleday was next to Meade, and rested on the river. This in general was the position of the left grand division when the action commenced.

The first fire was made by the skirmishers of the 31st Massachusetts in our front. They had moved cautiously in

advance of our lines for half a mile when, discovering the enemy's pickets, they fired upon them. Conspicuous soon commenced in earnest. The haze of atmosphere of the early part of the day having cleared away, so as to give to each of the contending parties a view of the position taken by the other, Hall's battery, the 2d Maine, discovered a battery of the enemy in close proximity and opened a rapid and vigorous fire upon it.

In a few moments the artillery fire extended along the entire line. The 2d U. S. Cavalry, Captain Ransom, Cooper's battery of Pennsylvania Reserves, and others, made and received a severe attack. The skirmishing was kept up as our lines advanced, and the position of the enemy in the woods was almost reached. A scattering musketry fire continued from the first advance, about 9 o'clock, till noon, and with occasional lulls. The cannonading was heavy and severe.

During the advance of the left grand division upon the enemy's position, Major General Stoneman's corps of the second grand division, Hooker's, which had moved to the vicinity of the river the preceding previous, moved over the bridge. Gen. Birney's division, on the advance, moved toward the left to the support of that portion of the line. Great enthusiasm was excited among the troops as the battle flag of Gen. Birney, of Stoneman's corps, was seen moving across the plain, in advance of the flag, in deep column, winding onward from the river.

Gen. Birney had received orders to place himself in position to support the right of Gen. Reynolds's corps in an attack which was momentarily expected to be made. Orders to advance having been received, Gen. Gibbons and Gen. Meade's divisions were directed to advance upon the enemy in the woods and upon the hill, holding the position if support should come to them, abandoning it in case they should be too severely pressed.

Now came the most successful and determined effort on this part of our line. The attack was made from the point of intersection of the angle formed by our lines already referred to. This point was nearest to the woods, and the enemy's shells were falling thickly about it.

Gibbons' division and the Pennsylvania Reserves advanced boldly toward the works of the Rebels. They pushed determinedly through the highwood and bushes on to a grave of earth, and then up the hills toward the breastworks of the enemy. The works were carried, many prisoners captured, and the crest of the hill gained, not, however, without a heavy loss.

Gen. Gibbons has fallen, wounded in the arm, while leading his command to the attack. The works of the enemy at this point were gained, but not held. The enemy, unfortunately, possessed the strength to concentrate overwhelming numbers of fresh troops upon the threatened point, and for all the valor of those who survived, and all the sacrifices of those who fell, the position had to be abandoned, and our troops were compelled to fall back to the plain.

They had penetrated beyond the railroad and the Bowling-Green turnpike, through the woods and across the outer work of the enemy to the tip of the hill, and were then forced back to this side of the railroad, where they maintained their stand in advance of what they had originally occupied.

In the meantime Gen. Doubleday had been constantly pushing the enemy upon the left. A most determined resistance was made by the enemy as skirmishers and with reserves and artillery. The fire which during the forenoon was kept up on the left, told off the most severe fighting. For full a mile the enemy was pressed back, contesting the ground inch by inch, receiving and inflicting heavy loss. The enemy fell back upon his defenses and the advantage gained was indecisive.

During these successive advances and checks along the center and left grand divisions, an uninterrupted shelling was kept up by the Rebel batteries upon the bodies of troops at different points of the plain. At a large stone mansion near the centre of our line, used as a field hospital during the day, an incessant fire was directed.

Near this building Gen. Bayard found an untimely death. A shell struck him, while sitting under a tree, within a few yards of Gen. Franklin, in the leg, without exploding. His leg was nearly torn off, and he died in the course of the evening.

Toward the middle of the afternoon the firing along the lines of the left grand division grew weaker, and gradually settled into a comparative lull.

Shortly before sunset, however, the firing on the extreme left was again renewed with extreme vigor, and kept up until after dark. At 6 o'clock it gradually died away, and at 6 o'clock it had entirely ceased.

On the left as well as on the right the battle came short of our expectation. We gained some ground, but failed to

realize the main object of the day's work, namely, the dislodgment of the enemy from their entrenched position on the heights overlooking the plain, held by the left division. New efforts, new sacrifices of life, will be required to accomplish this object.

For the severest fighting occurred on the right. All the Generals that have participated in the battle of Antietam have been present on this occasion. The Rebels had our troops most decidedly at a disadvantage. Their infantry fought principally under cover, while their artillery had almost all their own way from its elevated position.

On the right it was found impossible to bring any of our artillery into action, for want of proper positions in the early part of the day, until late in the afternoon, when a single battery, Phillips', was employed in sections from high points of the streets of the town. At least sixty pieces played upon our right from the enemy's batteries during the greater portion of the day.

I found it impossible to obtain anything like a trustworthy estimate of our losses up to the moment of closing. I have questioned nearly all the corps and division commanders, but they were unable to give even approximate figures. The right suffered most heavily—probably two-thirds more than the left.

French's division lost the most. The Rebel loss is undoubtedly much smaller than ours.

Orders were issued this evening to prepare for a renewal of the attack along the whole line at 9 A. M., but when the hard usage nearly the whole of our right has experienced will become fully known to Gen. Burnside, the order will undoubtedly be countermanded. That portion of the army is certainly not fit to go again into action to-morrow.

From prisoners taken on the left it was ascertained that Longstreet's and Jackson's grand divisions were in the Rebel left in the early part of the fight, and Hill on the right, but in the course of the day, Hill finding himself hardly pressed by Franklin, was supported by a part of Longstreet's division.

The fatigue and exposure of the last three days has greatly told on the effectiveness of our troops.

**New York Recruits Declined.**

The army correspondent of the Philadelphia Inquirer furnishes the following items:

The 57th New York do not muster over fifty men. This regiment was cut up dreadfully. The New York 60th is commanded, this morning, by a lieutenant.

The enemy could not be dislodged, so strongly were they posted. The great bone of contention was the hill some distance back of the town. At the foot of the hill, or near the foot, is a high stone fence, inside of which the enemy have been posted. This stone fence is a capital place for defense, and the Rebels have taken advantage of it. If we take this stone fence, the Rebels have batteries so ranged that they can sweep both sides with grape and canister.

At the double pontoon bridge, on the upper bridge, the Rebels would open on it at long range, whenever troops or a crowd attempted to cross, without doing any damage.

Our total loss in killed, wounded and missing, will amount to at least 12,000 to 14,000 men. This is no way of telling the loss of the Rebels, as they were entrenched, and all Sunday night were busy in repairing and building new works.

**The Federal Losses.**

The whole number of killed, wounded and missing in Franklin's grand division, is five thousand nine hundred and thirty-two. The Tribune's correspondent makes the loss in Sumner's division fully nine thousand. The division of Hooker, tho' arriving late in the action, lost considerably.

In General Nagle's brigade, as far as known, the loss is 40 killed, 372 wounded. The Second Maryland regiment was in this brigade, and is reported to have lost one killed, (Lieutenant Taylor), and 14 wounded.

In General Ferrero's brigade the loss is set down at 83 killed, 430 wounded. Gen. Hancock, and three of his aids, Lieutenants Miller, Roberts, and Parker, were all wounded, the first two but slightly.

The 11th regiment Pennsylvania volunteers lost fifteen out of nineteen of its officers, and over one half of its men, in killed and wounded.

**Condition of the Army of the Potomac After Saturday's Battle.**

Special Correspondence of the N. Y. Tribune.

**FREDERICKSBURG, Dec. 14, 11 P. M.**—It is no pleasant task to cool ardent hopes—disappoint high expectations—predict the fulfillment of foul wishes. Yet stern realities can never be recognized too soon in order to enable us to prepare for their possible consequences; and hence, I trust, I will not be blamed for the revelation of the discouraging facts pertaining

ing to the condition in which the Army of the Potomac on this morning after yesterday's sanguinary, and all but fruitless struggle.

Undertakings of any kind are manured by the power employed to carry them out, and the result realized by it. This rule applied to yesterday's bloody work of our arms, one cannot help coming to the conclusion that they came short of success. The main object of this effort was the dislodgment of the Rebels from their entrenched position on the heights overlooking the plain, which gave them control of all the roads leading southward from the Rappahannock. But, although every means of which the character of the task admitted was used, neither the whole nor any portion of the line occupied by the enemy at the opening of the battle is today in our hands.

The causes of our failure are so plain that they cannot be mistaken by even the most unprofessional of observers. We had for the attack superiority of numbers and armament. The former was not only more than balanced by the strength of the enemy's position, but also as available to its full extent of momentum, owing to the unfavorable ground from which we moved to the attack. An individual, however strong in muscle, cannot successfully contend with an adversary, if confined to space so narrow as to prevent the free use of his arms. Our right, although sufficiently powerful in point of numbers for the work assigned to it, was precluded from a full and simultaneous display of its strength by being crammed into the streets of Fredericksburg. I doubt whether the history of wars affords another instance of an army attempting to combat from within a town with another enjoying the full freedom of motion given by abundance of space. The six divisions of the right grand division were crowded into three streets so thickly, that during Saturday night these troops had hardly sleeping-room. The corps of the centre grand division acting as their reserve, was separated from them soon after the battle had opened by the Rappahannock—another remarkable circumstance bearing obstructively upon the operations of the day.

As to our "preponderance in artillery," the impracticability of making it tell upon the fortunes of the day, deprived us of most wholly of the benefit of it on the right. During the entire struggle, tho' that portion of the lines, all but two of the batteries attached to the right grand division and Butterfield's corps stood employed on the lower streets of the town. Our batteries on the heights on the right bank of the river could also render no protection to our infantry, as their fire would have done as much damage to our troops as to the enemy, after the former had moved to the attack.

Our left did not suffer like the right, from the drawback of want of space, as it manœvered on a high place and bottom. Yet both wings labored under the disadvantage of fighting from low against the enemy on high ground.

The obstructiveness of the scene of the action on our right, in the form of walls, fences and houses, unavailingly confined the movement of our troops, as they successfully advanced to the front, to the streets, which were so constantly and completely blocked up during the afternoon, that it was impossible for the ammunition trains to reach the divisions of French and Hancock, after they were relieved by others, and supply them with cartridges. They were thereby virtually placed *hors de combat*, thereby weakening the force of our attack.

Whatever the result of the battle may be termed—check or repulse—it is certain that the failure to accomplish what we attempted is not the only evil fruit of yesterday. I have spent several hours this morning in visiting the field and the positions held by our troops, and I found the most unmistakable evidence everywhere that the expenditure of strength has been so great as to produce exhaustion to a degree that will render the resumption of the offensive on our part impossible, not only for to-day, but several days to come. The extent of our loss in killed and wounded is not ascertained as yet with anything like definiteness. I have seen enough, however, to satisfy me that it will be even greater than it was supposed last night. If 9,000 will cover that of the right grand division, I shall be gratefully disappointed. The fact that many of our men have been taken prisoners has only become known this evening. But it is not in the casualties alone that the army has been weakened. The fatigue and exposure of the last three days will also severely affect its capacity for work. For three nights the troops have enjoyed nothing like regular sleep, and for three days they have been standing under arms in mud and cold. Upon the whole it is my deliberate opinion, and I know it is shared by many of the general officers I have seen, that the army is not fit for the immediate renewal of hostilities, and that it requires rest imperatively.

It is likewise evident that the unsuccessful fighting of yesterday and the hardships endured, not only affected the bodies, but also the spirits of both officers

and men, and time for mental recuperation seems also to be required.

No one would be gladder to reflect the bright side of the situation and prospect of the Army of the Potomac than myself, yet a sense of truth compels me to state that it is not by any means unaccountable, if it has been ascertained this morning, by new batteries, with weakened numbers, that they would have had no better success than that of yesterday. To continue in the position now held cannot be thought of. An attempt to retreat to this side of the river by the precautions means of passage over a few frail bridges would undoubtedly bring the victorious hosts of the enemy at once to the attack, and might result in the worst calamity of the war. How the army is to be extricated from these predicaments I am unable to devise. I trust that those intrusted with its fortunes have the ability to do it.

**The Killed and Wounded.**

The New York Herald publishes the following special despatch from Fredericksburg:

**FREDERICKSBURG, Dec. 16.**—It is impossible to ascertain the names of the killed and wounded with any degree of accuracy. Many are reported killed or missing who have gone into their regimental hospitals on this side of the river more or less seriously wounded.

General Hancock's division of General Couch's corps lost twenty-seven commissioned officers killed, and one hundred and eight wounded, some of whom have since died. Out of the fifty-three hundred men taken into action three hundred and four hundred and sixty-eight are this morning reported as either killed, wounded or missing. The 57th New York and 60th New York lost severely.

The army correspondent of the New York Times says:

The loss in General Sumner's division will not, probably, exceed 9,000. About 10,000 are missing to-night, but it is thought 2,000 or 3,000 have managed to straggle off with the wounded.

Some of the cowards who get into our ranks from the large cities have been seen shamming wounded men with bloody bandages around their heads and arms. The divisions of Generals French and Hancock were so fearfully cut up, or rather so entirely scattered and dispersed, that but 1,200 in the latter answered the roll call this morning.

**An Editorial Battle.**—An editor out West thus talks to his non-paying subscribers and patrons:

"Hear us for our debts, so that you may pay; trust us, we are in need, and have regard for our need; as you have been long trusted, acknowledge your indebtedness, and dive into your pockets, that you may promptly fork over. If there be any among you—one single patron—that don't owe us something, then to him we say, step aside; consider yourself a gentleman. If the rest wish to know why we dun them, this is our answer: not that we care about ourselves but our creditors do. Would you rather that we went to jail, and you go free, than you pay your debts and keep us moving? As we agreed, we worked for you; as we have contracted, we have furnished our paper to you; but as you don't pay, we dun you. Here are our agreements, job work, contracts for subscriptions, promises for long credit, and duns for deferred payment. Who is there so green that he don't take a paper? If any, he need not speak, for we don't mean him. Who is there so green that he don't advertise? If any, let him slide, he shan't the chap either. Who is there so mean that he don't pay the printer? If any, let him shout, for he's the man we're after. His name is legion, and he's owing to us for one, two, three, four, five, six years—long enough to make us poor and him rich at our expense."

**A Congressional candidate** was interrupted by an inebriate: "My friend," said he, "I am proud to see around me to-night the hardy romany of the land; for I love the agricultural interests of the country; and well may I love them, my fellow-citizens, for I was born a farmer—the happiest days of my youth were spent in the peaceful avocations of a son of the soil. I'd I may be allowed to use a figurative expression, my friends, I may say, I was raised between two rows of corn! 'A pumpkin I by thunder!' exclaimed the inebriated Joe.

**This is a dangerous period** of the year for colds. People should be careful. Mrs. Partington says she has got a romantic affection in her shoulders, the neurology in her head, and the emargo in the region of the jocular vein; and all from opening the window to throw a bottle at a couple of belligerent cats on the shed.

**At Ardena Ward, in speaking** of the newspapers in his village, says "that the advertisements are well written, and the marriages and deaths are conducted with signal ability."