

## Hooker's Campaign

On the 27th of April, after more than five months of inaction, the main body of infantry comprising Gen Hooker's Grand Army, commenced its movement. Great preparations had been made. No army in the world was ever better armed, clothed or equipped. The force consisted of 120,000 men with not less than 300 pieces of artillery, <sup>Porter's</sup> Trains, <sup>Boyer's</sup> Batteries, Ambulance Trains, wagons and pack mules were in the greatest abundance. All the vast resources of the nation - intellect, money, skill, and everything which could be suggested to make an army strong and confident, was lavished without stint. All through the winter drills, reviews, schools and Military Boards had been kept up. The discipline of the troops & their general bearing was excellent. No one can dispute this.

The plan, evidently, was to make a strong feint on the enemy's left, & then to attack on their center and right. The 1st 6th <sup>9th</sup> & 11th parts of the 2d Corps remained to make the feint & center attack while the 8th, 11th, 12th ~~2d~~ <sup>3d</sup> & 2d Corps & a very large force of cavalry moved up the river to cross at Banks Ford, United States Ford & Kelley's Ford.



# Transcription:

## Hooker's Campaign

On the 27th of April, after more than five months of inaction, the main body of infantry comprising Gen. Hooker's<sup>1</sup> Grand Army commenced its movement. Great preparations had been made. No army in the world was better armed, clothed or equipped. The force consisted of 150,000 men with not less than 300 pieces of artillery, Pontoon trains; Engineers, Battalion ambulance trains, wagons and pack mules were in the greatest abundance. All the vast resources of the nation -- intellect, money, skill and everything which could be suggested to make an army strong, and confident, was lavished without stint. All through the winter drills, reviews, Schools and Military Boards had been kept up. The discipline of the troops & their general bearing was excellent. No one can dispute this.

The plan, evidently, was to make a strong feint on the enemy's left, & then to attack on the centre and right. The 1st 6th<sup>2d</sup> & a part of the 2d Corps remained to make the feint and centre attack while the 5th, 11th 12th 2d<sup>3d</sup> & 2d Corps & a very large force of cavalry moved up the river to cross at Banks Ford, United States Ford & Kelly Ford .

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<sup>1</sup>Major General Joseph Hooker, then commander of the Army of the Potomac. Kelly's Ford.

The 2d Corps, with the exception of Gen  
 Gibbons Division - marched out of camp  
 about sunrise on the morning of the  
 2<sup>nd</sup> <sup>8/16</sup> - the troops appearing in fine  
 spirits. I saw trace the 5th Regt was  
 never in better fighting conditions  
 Each man carried five days rations  
 of sugar, coffee bread & salt, in his  
 knapsack, and three days full  
 rations in haversacks. The weights  
 of the knapsacks averaged about  
 22 pounds. 60 mounds of am-  
 munition was carried by each man.  
 No wagons or tools were taken by Regts

# About 4 miles from the  
 camp the Corps halted. I was sent  
 out with my own Regt & the 81st Pa  
 to picket Moses and wads to United  
 States fort, in order to prevent infor-  
 mation going to the enemy in this way.  
 we kept up a constant communication  
 from Gibbons Division to United States  
 Fort - about 8 miles. My Command  
 after a severe march in rain, fin-  
 ished its position. My Regt occupied  
 27 dwelling houses, Col McKean's  
 Regt 14 houses & some wads. We  
 found the people very generally full  
 of smothered rebellion, but <sup>with</sup> ~~very~~  
 Civil. The 20th, 11th & 12th Corps  
 in the meantime pushed on. The  
 2d Corps sent out heavy details to  
 open and repair roads.

I remained with  
 my Command until the afternoon of the

## Transcription:

The 2d Corps, with the exception of Gen Gibbons<sup>1</sup> Division -- marched out of camp about sunrise on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> -- the troops appearing in fine spirits. I am sure that the 5th Reg't was never in better fighting condition. Each man carried five day's rations of sugar, coffee bread & salt, in his knapsack, and three days full rations in haversacks. The weight of the knapsacks averaged about 23 pounds. 60 rounds of ammunition was carried by each man. No wagons or tents were taken by Regts.

About 4 miles from ~~the~~ camp the Corps halted. I was sent out with my own Regt & the 81st Pa to picket houses and roads to United States ford, in order to prevent information going to the enemy. In this way, we kept up a constant communication from Gibbons Division to United States Ford -- about 8 miles. My command after a severe march in the rain, finished its position. My Reg't occupied 27 dwelling houses, Col McKean's Reg't 14 houses & some roads. We found the people very generally full of smothered rebellion, but ~~very~~ quite Civil. The 5th, 11th, & 12th Corps in the meantime pushed on. The 2d Corps sent out heavy details to open and repair roads.

I remained with my command until the afternoon of the

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<sup>1</sup>John Gibbon (1827-1896), once commander the Iron Brigade, rose to command of the Second Division of First Corps. After recovering from wounds received at Fredericksburg, he was transferred to command of the Second Division of Hancock's Second Corps. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 171-172.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Boyd McKeen was colonel of the 81st Pennsylvania. Walker, *History of the II Corps*, 144, 172.



3

30th when I received orders to move  
on after the Division which had crossed the  
river, and guard the corps supply train  
and ambulances. The day before two  
men came into my lines, saying they  
were spies of Gen Hooker. They stated  
that they had just come from the other  
side of the river - that the enemy were  
fully informed of our movements, &  
prepared for us; they also stated that  
Gen Hooker would find bivouaging in  
a "light place" - that no fight would  
be made until we were five or six  
miles from the river, and then Stuart  
would try to cut us off. These statements  
proved true.

# I reached the wagon train  
in the evening & was joined by the  
58<sup>th</sup> Regt New York - a portion of the Irish  
Brigade. I found the corps had moved  
on across the river, so my command  
bivouached. At 9 o'clock next day, May  
1 I started, crossed the river and  
made the best of the way to the front.  
The road was very bad - mostly through  
woods, & blocked by trains and artillery.  
About 4<sup>1/2</sup> o'clock fighting commenced  
& increased until 3 when it ceased  
sharply. My Command arrived in  
the ground about 4 o'clock - just  
as orders were given to the reserve  
artillery to move back and cover Banks  
ford. He found Hancock's position  
was in the front line & we at  
once <sup>rapidly</sup> marched to join him. After con-

## Transcription:

30th when I received orders to move on after the Division which had crossed the rivers, and guard the corps supply trains and ambulances. The day before, two men came into my lines, saying they were spies of Gen Hooker. They stated that they had just come from the other side of the river -- that the enemy were fully informed of our movements, & prepared for us; they also stated that Gen Hooker would find himself in a "tight place" -- that no fight would be made until we were five or six miles from the river, and then Stuart would try to cut us off. These statements proved true.

I reached the wagon in the evening & was joined by the 88th ~~66th~~ New York -- a portion of the Irish Brigade. I found the corps had moved on across the river, so my command bivouacked. At 9 o'clock next day, May 1 I started, crossed the river and made the best of the way to the front. The road was very bad -- mostly through woods, & blocked by trains and artillery. About 4 12 o'clock fighting commenced, & increased until 3 when it slackened. My command arrived on the ground about 4 o'clock -- just as orders were given to the reserve artillery to move back and cover Banks ford. We found Hancock's position was in the front line, & were at once marched to join him. After con-

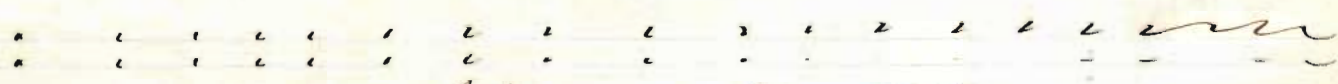


4  
 Considerable marching we halted to get  
 supper & instantly after marched  
 up to a road leading from Gen Hooker's  
 headquarters to Fredericksburg, & placed  
 in order of battle. General Sedgwick's Division  
 on my right had just repulsed a strong  
 attack of the enemy

I formed my line  
 with the 8<sup>th</sup> on my right & 1<sup>st</sup> in  
 the center & 5<sup>th</sup> on the left. The  
 enemy soon opened a complete sniping  
 fire on us, but fired too high. About  
 2 o'clock in the morning orders came to  
 move, we marched about 800 yards to  
 the right into an open field fronting  
 a piece of forest, & again formed  
 line of battle - this time the 8<sup>th</sup> on  
 my right. Our line then was as follows

Hill occupied by the enemy

woods woods woods

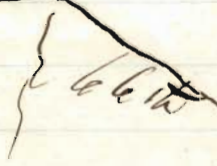


federal pickets

edge of the woods

open field, undulating

14<sup>th</sup> 61<sup>st</sup>  
 Gen Caldwell



8<sup>th</sup> | 81<sup>st</sup> | 5<sup>th</sup>  
 11<sup>th</sup>

Col Brown

Gen Sumner ordered me to drive

Gen Grant's  
 5<sup>th</sup> Corps

## Transcription:

siderable marching we halted to get supper & instantly after marched up to a road leading from Gen Hooker's headquarters to Fredericksburg, & placed in order of battle. General Geary's Division on my right had just repulsed a strong attack of the enemy.

I formed my line with the 88th on my right 81st in the centre & 5th NH on the left. The enemy soon opened a complete enfilading fire on us, but fired too high. About 2 o'clock in the morning orders came to move, we marched about 800 yards to the right into an open field fronting a piece of forest, & again formed line of battle -- this time the 5th NH on my right. Our line then was as follows

[Hooker diagram one]

Gen Hancock ordered me to throw



of a rifle pit & sent me 57 shovels &  
50 picks & one dozen axes - for about  
100<sup>0</sup> ~~men~~ men to work with. However, we  
went to work in earnest and com-  
pleted our fortification in just 40  
minutes by the watch! We were scarcely  
done when the rebel batteries opened, throwing  
shell, solid shot - iron wedges, and  
bundles of rapt! Several balls passed  
through our breastworks and two men  
were ~~badly~~ wounded.

The day wore away with  
occasional shelling, until about 3  
o'clock when Millicens Division  
of Slocum's Corps pressed into the woods  
in good style, but was soon driven  
out in disorder. Gen Slocum sat on  
his horse near where I was standing  
& as some of the 9<sup>th</sup> was troops came  
out, broken & scared. Slocum  
turned to an aid & said - "For  
God's sake send in some more good  
troops!" So the 7<sup>th</sup> Ohio & 28<sup>th</sup>  
Pa vols of Geary's Command were  
sent in. They remained until or-  
dered out. The 7<sup>th</sup> Ohio & 28<sup>th</sup>  
Pa vols of Geary's Command were  
sent in. They remained until or-  
dered out. The rebels followed but  
were checked by our artillery.

About five o'clock a furious  
attack was made on the 11<sup>th</sup> Corps  
(formerly Sigel's) by a command led by  
Maj Gen Howard. Now occurred  
out of the most disgraceful scenes of  
the war. The 11<sup>th</sup> Corps made only a  
feeble resistance - broke, and

## Transcription:

up a rifle pit and sent me 89 shovels and 50 picks and one dozen axes -- for about 1000 ~~600~~ men to work with. However, we went to work in earnest and completed our fortification in just 40 minutes by the watch! We were scarcely done when the rebel batteries opened, throwing shell, solid shot, iron wedges, and bundles of rasps! Several balls passed through our breastworks and two men were badly wounded.

The door wore away with occasional shelling, until about 3 o'clock when Williams Division of Slocums Corps pressed into the woods in good style, but was soon driven out in disorder. Gen Slocum sat on his horse near where I was standing and as some of the green troops came out, broken & scared, Slocum turned to an aid & said -- "for Gods' sake send in some three year troops!" ..So the 7th Ohio & 28th Pa vols of Geary's command was sent in. They remained until ordered out. The rebels followed but were checked by our artillery.

About five o'clock a furious attack was made on the 11th Corps (formerly Siegels) by commenced by Maj Gen Howard. Now occurred one of the most disgraceful scenes of the war. The 11th Corps made only a feeble resistance -- broke, and officers and men ran shamefully.





## Transcription:

A perfect panic took place and thousands of fugitives came back on my lines. I ordered my men to fix bayonets and drive them back, & we did stop & turn back more than 1000 officers, & men. Still, a vast number escaped into the woods. The shells of the enemy at this time came in from front and rear. At this moment the enemy attacked my pickets very briskly, but were driven off. So I had the rebels on my front and the rebels and our stragglers on my rear. The cowardice of the German troops was ludicrous. They hid in the woods -- forced their way into our rifle pit. In fact, they seemed half scared to death.

I have no hesitation in saying that had our line broke at that time the army would have been ruined! The commander of Knapps battery came to me and said "what are you going to do?" "Stay here, Sir," said I. ~~told him.~~ "Then I'll stay with you," said he. I tied my red silk handkerchief around my head & went along my lines, exhorting every man to stand firm, & the men answered with loud cheers, which had the effect to shame some of the fugitives & ~~then~~ & they halted. Sickles Corps -- the 3rd checked the rebels & held them though they several times attacked fiercely during the night, which



4  
was one of constant alarm. During  
the night Reynolds' Corp came up  
& occupied a position to hold our  
right & prevent the enemy turn-  
ing our right flank.

Early Sunday morn-  
ing the rebels attacked furiously  
front flank & rear — for about  
two hours the fighting was desperate  
but they finally drove us men  
slowly back. French's Division of  
the 2d Corps & Caldwell's Brigade  
& Brooks fought nobly driving back  
the rebels in disorder, until the  
latter came on in overwhelming num-  
bers while the battle in our rear  
was going on we had constant  
attacks on our front & flank. Sev-  
eral times we were taken out of  
our rifle pit to reinforce weak points  
in our line, & marched over the  
field under fire. The Brigade was  
perfectly cool and steady.

Our lines were now  
falling back along the whole line  
& the rebels came on shouting fu-  
riously. My command was again or-  
dered from its position. We faced by  
the rear rank, and marched back  
some 200 yards to the crest of a  
little hill. Tracy's Division was now  
on my right flank, engaged with  
the enemy. & in my front was  
two brass batteries & Peliti's  
battery of Co. J. P. Parrott's

## Transcription:

was one of constant alarms. During the night Reynolds Corps came up & occupied a position to hold our right & prevent the enemy turning our right flank.

Early Sunday morning the rebels attacked fiercely front flank & rear -- for about two hours the fighting was desperate but they slowly drove our men slowly back. French's Division of the 2d Corps & Caldwell's Brigade & Brooke fought nobly, driving back the rebels in disorder, until the latter came on in overwhelming numbers. While the battle in the rear was going on we had constant attacks on our front & flank. Several times we were taken out of our rifle pit to reinforce weak points in our line, & marched over the field under fire. The Brigade was perfectly cool and steady.

Our forces were now falling back along the whole line, & the rebels came on shouting furiously. My command was again ordered from its position; We faced by the rear rank, and marched back some 200 yards to the crest of a little hill. Geary's Division was now on my left ~~right flank~~, engaged with the enemy, & in my front was two brass batteries & Petits [illegible] battery of ten pd Parrotts



all firing rapidly except our Brass battery  
which was very badly officered. The rebels  
deployed from the woods in a line of  
double columns closed in mass. They  
halted, fronted & commenced to deploy  
but were driven back by a severe  
fire of grape & shell. I sighted  
one gun, after keeping show it to  
the front. In a few moments  
the enemy got a splendid rifle  
battery into position, which fired  
with wonderful accuracy. So heavy  
was the fire that Capt Pilot was com-  
pelled for the first time during the  
war to lie down & he was  
instantly ordered back. For about  
20 minutes my command was under  
the heaviest fire it ever experienced.  
Every instant some one in each  
Regt was hit. The air seemed full  
of bursting shell. From our rear  
from the left from the front came  
a storm of missiles. Three times  
I sent Lieut Fry to tell Gen Har-  
rison that our left was defeated  
Gen's Division being whipped  
out was retreating in disorder. All  
the others had gone, and our sit-  
uation was perilous in the extreme.  
The artillery limbered up & ran  
away and we sent a heavy line  
of the enemy, cheering and firing  
as it came on was within 300  
yards of my flank & already en-  
gaged with the 5th Regt died.

## Transcription:

all firing rapidly except on Brass battery which was badly officered. The rebels deployed from the woods in a line of double columns closed in mass. They halted, fronted & commenced to deploy but were driven back by a severe fire of grape & shell. I sighted one gun after helping shove it to the front. In a few moments the enemy got a splendid rifle battery into position, which fired with wonderful accuracy. So heavy was the fire that Capt Petit was compelled for the first time during the war to limber up & leave -- but was instantly ordered back. For about 40 minutes my command was under the heaviest fire it ever experienced. Every instant some one in each Regt was hit. The air seemed full of bursting shell. From our rear from the left from the front came a storm of missiles. Three times I sent Lieut Fay to tell Gen Hancock that our left was defeated. Geary's Division, being whipped out, was retreating in disorder. All the others had gone, and our situation was perilous in the extreme. The artillery limbered up & ran away, and not until a heavy line of the enemy, cheering and firing as it came on was within 300 yards of my flank and already engaged with the 5th Reg't did



9  
orders come to fall back, we faced  
to the right & marched off - but the  
fire of the enemy from three directions  
made a slight compression, but only  
for an instant. We marched steadily  
after reaching the woods, though our  
ranks were thinned and shat-  
tered by grape, cannon & rifle  
balls. Had we delayed five minutes  
more we should have been taken  
prisoners or cut to pieces.

I do not understand why  
Boony was not supported or re-  
inforced. The day was not lost  
if fresh troops & artillery had been  
thrown in. I had no idea that  
a retreat was advised. While lying  
under that awful fire my belief was  
that a fresh Division & some artillery  
would soon be up to aid us &  
I so stated to our men. The enemy  
might have been greatly injured if  
not entirely checked by a little vig-  
orous action, & Cos of the 27th Am &

The conduct of Maj Gen  
Leach was splendid. Both he and  
Gen Hancock remained until  
the batteries limbered up. Gen Leach  
was slightly wounded and Gen Han-  
cock's horse killed.

At night, in my  
opinion have fallen back on the Fred-  
ericksburg road & connected with  
Lodgwick. The 2d Corps formed  
the front line to cover the retreat

Jan 14 5th 1862  
Capt. [Name]

## Transcription:

orders come to fall back. We faced to the right & marched off -- but the fire of the enemy from three directions made a slight confusion, but only for an instant. We marched steadily after reaching the woods, though our ranks thinned and shattered by grape, canister & rifle balls. Had we delayed five minutes more we should have been taken prisoners or cut to pieces.

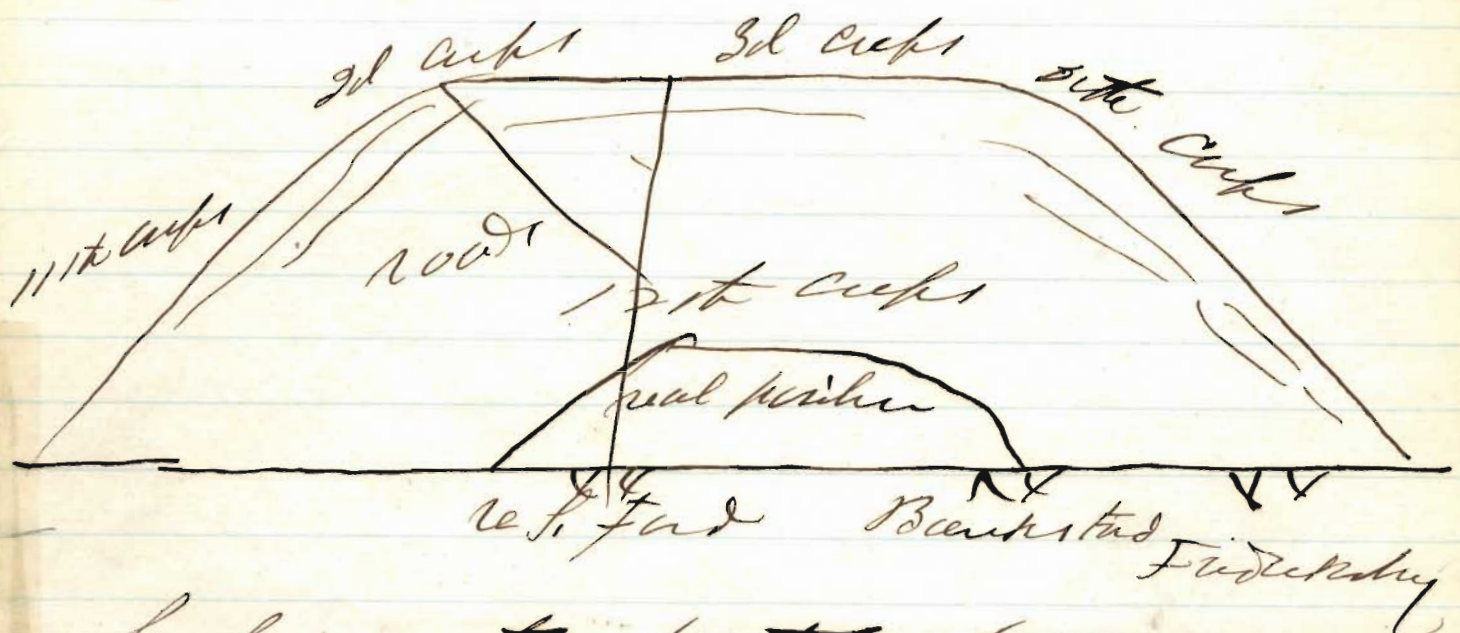
I do not understand why Geary was not supported or reinforced. The day was not lost if fresh troops & artillery had been thrown in. I had no idea that a retreat had been ordered. While lying under that awful fire my belief was that a fresh division & some artillery would soon be sent to aid us, & I so stated to our men. The enemy might have been greatly injured if not entirely checked by a little vigorous action.

The conduct of Maj Gen Couch was splendid. Both he and Gen Hancock remained until the batteries limbered up. Gen Couch was slightly wounded and Gen Hancock's horse killed.

We might, in my opinion have fallen back on the Fredericksburg road and connected with Sedgwick. The 2d Corps formed near the front line to cover the retreat



of the army, & only fell back about half a mile. The other corps were precisely in position showing that a retreat had been ordered early in the day - perhaps during the night. Our position was now as follows:



Such was the position but we -  
 so far down the river. We only held  
 from V.S. Ford to Bankstead - I have made  
 the Circle large to show the position  
 of the troops. We had barely found  
 line when the artillery of the enemy  
 opened upon us - throwing shell &  
 shrapnel. - doing great damage  
 Men sent for water were knocked  
 over, & the trees stripped of their  
 limbs over our heads. Our position  
 was too strong, however to be successfully  
 resisted by infantry. The instant the  
 shelling ceased we commenced to throw  
 up field works along the entire line,  
 & by dusk were well situated.  
 From this time until orders  
 came to fall back we were in line -

## Transcription:

of the army, & only fell back about half a mile. The other corps were previously in position -- showing that a retreat had been ordered early in the day -- perhaps during the night. Our position was now as follows:

[Hooker diagram two]

Such was the position but not so far down the river. We only held from ~~to~~ US ford to Banks [Ford] -- I have made the circle large to show the position of the troops. We had barely formed line when the artillery of the enemy opened upon us -- throwing shell or shrapnel -- doing great damage. Men sent for water were knocked over, & the trees stripped of their limbs over our heads. Our position was too strong, however to be successfully assailed by infantry. The instant the shelling ceased, we commenced to throw up field works along the entire line, & by dark we were well situated.

From this time until orders came to fall back we were in con-



Short alarms - picked firing and shelling every hour. Few hours, the enemy had excellent range, but fired to keep far the front line. The reserves however, in the woods back were greatly injured. Several strong attacks were made at different points but in each case taken off. About midnight on the 6th orders came to move. We did not get away until 4 o'clock, but when once in on the move pushed rapidly along. The mud was half leg deep most of the way. All along the forest which extended about 2 miles to the river were columns of troops looking dirty, fatigued & anxious.

Let me here record that on the operations of the 6th, during a furious shelling Big Tex & F. Meagher lay among the selected men of company G of my Regt - evidently badly scared. As soon as the firing ceased he ran as fast as possible to the left and rear where he had a private fortification constructed.

Thousands of troops were massed at the bridges over the Rappahannock. We crossed and marched the same night to our old camp - weary, sad and almost disencouraged.

## Transcription:

stant alarms -- picket firing and shelling every short few hours. The enemy had excellent range, but fired to high for the front line. The reserves, however, in the woods back were greatly injured. Several strong attacks were made at different points but in each case beaten off. About midnight of the 6th orders came to move. We did not get away until 4 o'clock, but where once ~~in~~ on the move pushed rapidly along. The mud was half leg deep most of the way. All along the forest which extended about 4 miles to the river were columns of troops looking dirty, fatigued and anxious.

Let me here record that on the afternoon of the 6th, during a furious shelling Brig Gen T. F. Meagher lay among the enlisted men of Company G of my regiment -- evidently badly scared. As soon as the firing ceased, he ran as fast as possible to the left and rear where he had a private fortification constructed.

Thousands of troops were massed at the bridges over the Rappahannock. We crossed and marched the same night to our old camp -- weary, sad and almost [illegible]. Our guard



had failed. Gen Hooker was  
completely outgeneralled - his magnificent  
army badly handled - his artillery not  
massed - not half of it used & could  
not be, on account of the woods. The  
9th & two yeoman troops whose time  
drew near a close could not be  
made to stand fire. They were  
broken - in some cases threw away  
their arms, in all cases the struggles  
broke the old lines - had they been all  
cut to pieces! The amount of struggle  
was fearful, especially in the 11th  
& 12th Corps

My own Reg't lost 27 in  
all. My' Cross was badly wounded -  
My Brigade lost about 200

Hooker has not the amount  
of brains necessary to manage a  
vast army. He Generalship me fall  
far behind the rebels & since McClellan  
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ganization has been extremely de-  
fective. Hooker's popularity lay  
chiefly in the soft bread, potatoes  
& mince he issued. The Army  
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Commander - never. His failure  
was predicted by thousands of offi-  
cers & soldiers - from the first  
day he started

I have indicated in the  
above narrative to state only facts,  
with as few opinions as possible

E. E. Ross

had not yet

## Transcription:

had failed. Gen Hooker was completely outgeneralled -- his magnificent army badly handled -- his artillery not massed -- not half of it used and could not be, on account of the woods. The 9 mos & two years troops whose time drew near a close could not be made to stand fire. They wavered, broke -- in some cases threw away their arms, in all cases the stragglers told the old stories -- that they were "all cut to pieces!". The amount of straggling was fearful, especially in the 11th & 12th Corps.

My own Reg't lost 27 in all, Maj Cross was badly wounded -- My Brigade lost about 200.

Hooker has not the amount of brains necessary to manage a vast army. In generalship we fall far behind the rebels, & since McClellan left the Army of the Potomac, its organization has been extremely defective. Hookers popularity lay chiefly in the soft bread, potatoes & onions he issued. The army never believed him to be a great commander -- never. His failure was predicted by thousands of officers & soldiers -- from the first day he started.

I have endeavored in the above narrative to state only facts, with as few opinions as possible.

E. E. Cross  
Col 5th NHV