

Head Quarters, 5th Brigade D. H. Hill's
Division, near Richmond July 11th 1862

Major -

I have the honor to report, that on the morning of the 26th of June, the Brigade under my command, consisting of the 1st and 3rd Regts - North Carolina Troops, and the 44th and 48th Georgia Volunteers, marched from its position near the Williamsburg road, about five miles from Richmond, to a point in the vicinity of the Batteries commanding the Bridge, over the the Chickahominy River, on the Mechanicsville turnpike. With other troops at that point, the Brigade lay waiting orders, until near four o'clock P.M., when it was ordered to cross the the Chickahominy, in the advance of the Division and effect a junction, with the troops of Maj. Gen. D. P. Hill's command, then moving down the Chickahominy, in the direction of Mechanicsville. The order was executed, and the infantry crossed at once, forming line of battle across the road, leading to the village, about half a mile in advance of the village.

Upon communicating with Gen. D. P. Hill, I was informed that the enemy had a strong, and well served battery and force, in position near Ellison's Mills, something over a mile on the east of the road, to attack which, he had sent Brig. ^{Gen.} Pender's Brigade by the right, and other troops to the left, and it was arranged, that my Brigade was to co-operate.

The enemy had opened on the Mechanicsville road, and was rapidly acquiring the range. My Brigade changed front and advanced to the brow of the hill opposite the enemies battery, expecting, if possible, to use Artillery in the attack.

While the troops were in motion, I received orders to assault the enemy, from Gen. Lee, and also from Maj. Gen. D. H. Hill, the latter of whom directed me to send two Regiments to support Gen. Pender on my right, and attack the battery in front, with the remainder of my force.

The 44th Georgia under Col. Robt. A. Smith, and the

1st North Carolina, under Col. Stokes, marched at once to the right, while the 48th Georgia under Col. Gibson, and the 3rd North Carolina, under Colonel Meares, moved to a position in front of the enemy. - in their left. Meanwhile, the passage of the Chickahominy by the Artillery, had been impeded by the broken bridges, and night coming on, and it being deemed important to attack the position at once, the Advance was ordered along the whole line. Genl. Pender's Brigade, and the two Regiments of my own, advanced rapidly on the right, while the remainder of my Command moved against the front, driving back the enemy from his advanced positions, and closing in upon their batteries and their heavy infantry supports, all of which poured upon our troops a heavy and incessant fire of shell, canister and musketry. The ground was rugged, and intersected by ditches and hedges, covered with a battis a short distance in front of the position to be assaulted. A mill race, with steep banks, and in some places, waist deep in water, ran along the front of the enemy, at a distance, varying from fifty to one hundred yards. To this position, our troops succeeded in advancing, notwithstanding the fire of the enemy was exceedingly heavy, and our loss extremely severe. Of the 44th Georgia, Col. Robt. A. Smith, and Lieut. Col. Estes fell wounded, the former mortally, besides two Captains and ten Lieutenants, killed and wounded. Of the 1st North Carolina, Col. Stokes was mortally, Lieut. Col. McDowell severely wounded, and Major Skinner killed, with six Captains and Lieutenants of the Regiment killed and wounded, including the Adjutants. The 48th Georgia and 3rd North Carolina, had a more advantageous position and suffered less severely than the former regiments, altho' the 3rd lost its Major, Savage, wounded. The loss of non-comd-officers and privates was heavy in the extreme, amounting in the 44th Georgia, to three hundred and twenty one, and in the 1st North Carolina, to one hundred and thirty three. Near dark, Capt. Burnet Rhett's Battery of Artillery, attached to my command, succeeded in crossing the broken bridges, over the Chickahominy and was located directly in front of the enemy at about 1200 yards distance. Capt. Rhett opened an effective fire, and soon relieved our infantry from the storm of shells and canister, which had been poured upon them. It was soon reinforced by another battery, and a fire was kept up on the enemy until late in the evening. Some time after night fall under cover of the cannonade, our

troops were withdrawn to a point of woods a few hundred yards distance, near the angle of our line of Battle, which position was held by the 3rd North Carolina and 48th Georgia, and a portion of Gen. Penders Brigade. The fragments of the 1st North Carolina and 44th Georgia, were scattered some distance in the rear, under some difficulty, owing to the loss of all their field and many of their company officers, who fell while gallantly doing their duty. During the night, the enemy was engaged in destroying and removing his stores, but the darkness, and intricacies of the position prevented an attack by our troops. At about twelve o'clock Col Colquitts Brigade advanced to within supporting distance of my command. At about half past two on the morning of the 27th, my own, and Col Colquitts Brigade, were relieved by Genl's Featherstone and Pryor, and moved to a position near and beyond Mechanicsville, on the turnpike, where they remained, under a fire of shot and shell from the enemies batteries, along that road, until the latter were turned by our troops in advance, or silenced by our Artillery.

The Brigade then moved forward with the Division on the road to Cold Harbor, and was held for a short time in reserve, after arriving at that point. It then consisted of the 3rd North Carolina and 48th Georgia, with a Battalion of the 1st North Carolina, under Capt H. D. Brown, and but a fragment of the 44th Georgia which had been sadly cut up. Some portions of both the latter regiments, were, as I have been informed, ordered by General Lee, to act as a guard, at the Chickahominy bridges on the Mechanicsville turnpike. In the afternoon, the Brigade was ordered to the front, to the position on the left of the line, which had been formed and moved to the point designated. The country was densely wooded, and in some places covered with morass, and the movement was executed with some difficulty. In searching for a position for the command, I found some portion of our own troops, already in front of the line which I was to occupy, and receiving a message from Brig. Genl J. H. Anderson, that support was required. I sent the 48th Georgia to the right of the position occupied by our Division, to act in that capacity. The 3rd North Carolina, and the Battalion of the 1st remained upon the left. During the various movements in thick woods and swamps, a certain portion of the 3rd North Carolina became separated from the body of the Regiment. During this while, the Brigade, as well as the rest of the Division was under a heavy

fire of Artillery, but suffered comparatively little, being sheltered from view and partially from fire. Before dark the masses of the enemy appeared in the vicinity of the command, apparently endeavoring to turn our left. In this, he was checked by the fire of our Artillery, and the charge made upon him by troops of different Divisions and Brigades in succession. These, from the nature of the ground, were, more or less, separate movements. The Battalion of the 3rd North Carolina, under Colonel Meares, and the 1st North Carolina, under Capt Brown, took part, doing good service. The 48th Georgia from its position, was massed by the troops in front, and did not get into close action. The loss in this Battle from the Brigade, was comparatively small. During the night the troops remained on the field and moved early the following morning, with the Division in advance towards the Grapevine Bridge, which had been destroyed by the enemy in his retreat, during the night. It bivouacked within a mile and a half of that point, during Saturday and Sunday. On Monday July 1st, it moved with the Division, early across the repaired bridge, and followed the route of the enemies retreat until he was found in position, on the further side of White Oak Swamp-Creek. Here it was brought to within supporting distance of the Artillery of the Division, which engaged the enemy until nightfall, driving him from his position and enabling the pioneers to repair the Bridge, over which we crossed on Tuesday morning and followed the retreat of the enemy until our Army came up with him in position at Melrose Hill.

Taking different positions during the morning, in the afternoon the Brigade advanced under orders from the Maj. Genl. Long Division, through a heavy fire of Artillery, to a dense wood, in close proximity of the enemy's position, where it lay for a time in reserve. At about five o'clock it was ordered to take position in a jungle near the Hill, upon which the enemy was established and to the left of Genl Anderson's Brigade, which it did in the following order. The 48th Georgia was on the right, the 3rd North Carolina, the 44th Georgia, about one hundred and seventy men of which had rallied and been brought up by Capt Beck and other officers - and the 1st North Carolina on the left under Lieut Col Bynum of the 2nd, who had been detached for the command of the 1st Regiment. In obedience to the orders of Genl Hill, I made a recon-

= visance of the enemy's position, and found him immediately in our front in strong force, with a battery well advanced towards us, and supported by strong lines of infantry. The number of his guns, could only be judged of, by the rapidity of his fire, owing to the nature of the country.

At about half past six or seven o'clock, an attack was made by the troops on our right, and we, were with the other Brigades in advance, ordered by General Hill to move forward at once and attack the enemy. Gordon's and Anderson's Brigades were on my right, and the Troops of the three, mounted the hill in a gallant manner. At its brow, our troops were met with a furious fire of Shot, Shell, and Musketry; Officers and men fell fast, but they maintained their ground, opening and keeping up a severe fire upon the enemy in return, before which his advanced battery fell back and his troops wavered. He pressed hard upon our left however, and while moving his regiment to its support, the gallant and accomplished Colonel Gaston Meares of the 3rd North Carolina Regiment fell. Meanwhile Garland's and Colquhoun's Brigades had been advanced and made good the action on the right. Darkness however was rapidly approaching, and not knowing the extent of the enemy's suffering, the troops fell back to the road, near the brow of the hill. Other portions withdrew to the cover of the rising ground, and the night coming on, there was much confusion from the loss of Officers and the nature of the country. Dense, dark and in many places marshy, observation could reach but a short distance; quick movement was impossible, and in the din of battle, the voice could be heard but a few yards. Fresh troops were ordered forward, and the troops of the Brigade were collected in parties, by such officers as they fell in with. A portion remained in the vicinity of the field during the night, and the remainder with portions of other Brigades of the Division having been collected, were retired a short distance on the Charles City Road. During the night, the enemy fell away from the hardy contested field. On Wednesday morning, the Brigade was reformed at the Church, in front of the battle field, and with the Division, whence it marched a short distance to the bivouac, at and near which, it remained, until the movement of the 9th. to their present vicinity. The movements and actions of the Brigade under my Command,

during the six days operations of the Army, being but a constituent portion of those of the Division and Army, a more detailed report is believed unnecessary. The Aggregate force which entered into the series of engagements on the 26th of June, was twenty three hundred and sixty six, including pioneers and Ambulance Corps. Of this, our loss has been forty five Officers, and eight hundred and forty four non-commissioned officers and privates, in killed, wounded and missing, the latter class numbering but thirty seven, out eleven field officers fell, killed and wounded, while leading on their regiments; and of the seven, four are dead. To the memory of these brave men, the country will give that meed of consideration, which is the reward of brave men, battling in such a cause as ours.

Three Colonels, of four, all brave and accomplished officers:— Col M. S. Stokes, of the 1st N.C.:— Col Gaston Meares of the 3rd N.C. and Col Robert A. Smith of the 44th Georgia, all have sealed their devotion with their lives. Their conduct on the field was beyond praise, and in their loss, their Regiments and the service, have suffered severely.

Major Skinner of the 1st North Carolina died in a like manner:—

Lieut Col McDowell, of the 1st N.C. and Lieut Col Eosta; the former severely the latter slightly, were both wounded in the front of the Battle.

Of the surviving Officers, Col Gibson and Lieut Col Caswell of the 48th Georgia, led their Regiments in the actions in which it was engaged. Lieut Col De Ruffet and Capt Houston, as Field Officers of the 3rd North Carolina, behaved with credit to themselves, and made good, to as full an extent as possible, the loss sustained in their gallant Colonel:— Capt. H. A. Brown, of the 1st, rallied the troops of this regiment, with other officers, after all the field officers had been lost, and led the Regiment, until relieved by Lieut-Col Bennum. Capts Beck Beck and Lumpkin of the 44th Georgia marched with the Brigade with the fragment of the regiment on the 27th and served through the subsequent actions. But one hundred and seventy nine of this Regiment were unhurt at the action of Ellison's Mills. I was attended during the engagements by my Staff:— Capt Lea: D. Walker A. S. Genl; and Lieut F. G. Ravenel Lieut-de-Camp. Lieut Ravenel after behaving with most dis-

- distinguished gallantry - at Ellison's Mills and at Cold Harbor, was killed, while leading on the troops of the right of the Brigade, in the very front at the battle of Malvern Hill. Of all who have fallen during this series of engagements, none braver, have sealed their devotion to our cause. Major Mitchell, Brigade Commissary, was also on the field and rendered valuable services. In conclusion, I beg to remark, that the troops of this Brigade arriving at Richmond just after the battle of Seven Pines, were ordered immediately to the front and performed picket and outpost duty, with slight intermissions until the march towards Mechanicsville. Two of the Regiments, the 1st and 3rd North Carolines, had been some time in service, but not in action. The 44th and 48th Georgia, were new troops, and it is perhaps to be regretted, as the whole were Brigaded for the first time, that some more opportunity could not have been afforded for perfecting their organization and discipline as a Brigade. Nevertheless, the mass of the troops did their duty well; and although there were exceptions, from respect to those gallant Officers and men, who upheld bravely the Honor of their Flag, those who strayed from the field of Duty, I leave to their own consciences, and the condemnation of their comrades.

I have the honor to be
Very respectfully,
R. S. Ripley
Br Genl Comdg

Major J. W. Ratchford }
A. A. Genl }