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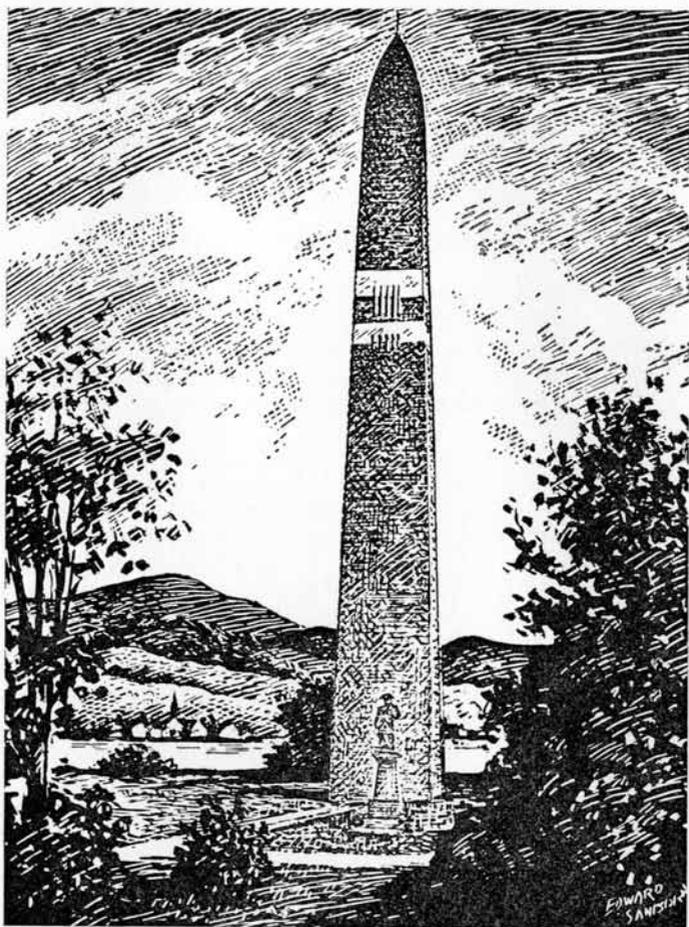
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THE BENNINGTON BATTLE MONUMENT
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“Crowned with the snows of countless winters; beautiful in the sunlight and shadows of unnumbered summers; companion of the mountains which look down upon it, whose height it emulates, whose strength it typifies, whose history it declares . . .”

From the Oration at the Dedication of the Monument, August 19, 1891, by U. S. Senator Edward J. Phelps.



VERMONT AT BULL RUN

By WILLIAM R. FOLSOM

Vermont has good reason for its pride in its contribution to the Civil War; and this informal, vivid, and sympathetic story of the famous battle, first in terms of its broad phases, and then the specific phase in which Vermont troops had a part, is a graphic picture based on close familiarity with the old battle scenes and the history of the actions fought. Other informal studies of other battles in which Vermonters were involved are in preparation. Editor.

THE Vermont troops which took part in the Battle of Bull Run consisted of the 2nd Vermont Volunteer Infantry. If you are inclined to be pessimistic concerning the future of America, it might be well to read the record made by these Vermont boys during four long years of war: the 2nd Vermont was longer in the Service than any other Vermont organization, save one; it fought in almost every battle of the war from Bull Run to Appomattox; it lost forty per cent of its aggregate strength; it was made up of recruits from Burlington, Brattleboro, Montpelier, Vergennes, Waterbury and South Hero; it was commanded by Col. Henry Whiting of Michigan, a West Point graduate, who had served five years on the Northwestern frontier; its Lieutenant Colonel was George J. Stannard of St. Albans; its Chaplain was the Rev. Claudius B. Smith, who had given up his position as Principal of the Literary and Scientific Institute of Brandon, to get into whatever ruckus was going on.

The regiment assembled at Burlington on June 6, 1861, where it remained two weeks; thousands of visitors came to the city to watch the men at drill.

On June 24th, 1861, the regiment started for Washington and the front. On that day Burlington witnessed one of the most stirring parades in its history; headed by a band of twenty-four brass pieces, the regiment swept down Main street, marching "Company front," the ranks filling the street from curb to curb—a flowing river of men, steel-tipped, every man wearing on his cap the Green Mountain Boys' badge, a sprig of evergreen.

Go back in memory to the Psalmist's four-score years, and see these

young Vermont lads (your ancestors) march past; the lean, tanned faces, a little pale, perhaps, as they glimpsed from the corners of their eyes the well-known buildings and the familiar faces of father, mother, sweetheart, friend and neighbor; but with heads erect and shoulders square, they kept step to the stirring rhythm of "John Brown's Body"—the battle hymn of the Union armies. The train shed echoed to the roll of drums and the heavy tramp of the column; 868 officers and men filed into the twenty-four waiting cars. With bells ringing, the two engines sent up clouds of smoke into the clear June sky; the long train drew slowly out of the station and was presently lost to view.

There were songs, jokes and laughter in those queer little cars: the war would be over in ninety days; they would hang Jeff Davis to a sour apple tree and be back home in time to do the fall plowing. They little realized the months of marching through choking, red dust under a hot southern sky; the months of rain, mud, lice and fleas; the furious rush across smoke-wreathed fields where Death touched friend or comrade on the shoulder; today, these thoughts were not for them; today was their Day of Glory—the first day of the Great Crusade! Yes, old John Brown, your body may lie mouldering in the grave, but your soul still marches on.

*Ask the tide why it rises with the moon?
My bones and I have risen, like that tide.*

The regiment reached Washington, crossed the Potomac, and went into camp near Alexandria, Virginia. In a few days the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Maine regiments arrived and were brigaded with the 2nd Vermont—all under the command of Col. Oliver O. Howard of the 5th Maine, a West Point graduate, thirty-one years old, subsequently becoming the father of Harry S. Howard of Burlington, well-known to the lawyers of Vermont.

At the end of June, the military situation was like this: a Confederate army of 22,000 men was concentrated at Manassas Junction, 35 miles from Washington, under the command of Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard; another Confederate army of 10,000 men was at Winchester, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley some 60 miles from Washington. As both these armies were threatening the Federal Capitol, the Government ordered Gen. Robert Patterson to occupy Harper's Ferry on the Virginia side of the Potomac—50 miles from Washington—to prevent the Confederates from crossing the river at that point and coming down on Washington from the north.

The Union army defending Washington consisted of five Divisions of Infantry—about 35,000 men, under Gen. Irving McDowell, a graduate of West Point and now forty-three years old. He had won honors in the Mexican War and took the place of the General-in-Chief of all the Union armies, Lieut. Gen. Winfield Scott, the hero of the Mexican War, now nearly eighty years of age and so infirm as to be unable to take the field.

Popular clamor in the North was for immediate attack on the Rebel forces, so near the capital city. "Forward to Richmond!" cried the *New York Tribune*. "The Rebel congress must not be allowed to meet there on July 20th." "Let us have no more fooling, no more child's play," chimed in the *New York Herald*. "Let us fight."

Unfortunately, both President Lincoln and Gen. Scott yielded to this foolish demand. Gen. McDowell was ordered to march against Gen. Beauregard at Manassas, while Gen. Patterson by threats and feigned attacks would hold the Confederates in the Shenandoah Valley and prevent Gen. Johnson, the Confederate commander, from joining Beauregard.

This scheme looked all right on paper, but it did not work out very well in practice. Gen. Robert Patterson, commanding the Union army at Harper's Ferry, had been a captain in the war of 1812, and was now sixty-nine years old. Naturally, he was slow and timid and quarreled and argued by telegraph with his Commander-in-Chief, General Scott.

"The enemy has stolen no march upon me," wired Grandfather Patterson to Grandfather Scott. "I have kept him actively employed." At that very moment the Confederate Gen. Johnston, a most able officer, was marching across the Blue Ridge mountains, having left a cavalry screen to amuse his ancient adversary. Gen. Johnston reached the railway on the other side of the mountains, piled his men into waiting cars, and reached Manassas just in time to decide the fate of the battle. However, it can be said that old Gen. Patterson had some excuse for his failure: his men were untrained; all were three-month recruits, whose term of enlistment had nearly expired; many were without shoes, and some, said their aged General bitterly, were without pants; surely this last statement would prevent any extended movement in a well-settled community.

At 3 P.M. on July 16th McDowell moved out from Alexandria, across the Potomac from Washington and marched on Centerville, a small hamlet seven miles from Manassas Junction. His orders were to attack the Confederates massed near that place under the command of

Gen. Beauregard. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard was no mean opponent—an able and experienced officer, second in his class at West Point and a friend of his classmate McDowell. He was Superintendent of West Point when the war broke out, but promptly resigned from the Union Army and was commissioned a Brigadier General in the Rebel army.

Straight west from Centerville—some 3 miles away—a narrow yellow stream, called Bull Run, flows between steep and rocky banks. The Warrenton Turnpike, the main road leading out of Washington, crosses the Run on a stone bridge. Between the stone bridge and the Manassas railway—a distance of about six miles—were six fords; along the west bank of Bull Run and defending these six crossings, lay the Confederate army.

From Washington to Centerville is twenty-two miles. It took the Union army two days to make the journey. The men had been recently organized in brigades, were strangers to each other and to their officers; many of the men had never fired the rifles issued to them.

The Warrenton Turnpike and the sideroads leading to Centerville were crowded with troops those two hot days in July. The march resembled a huge and colorful picnic rather than an army moving into battle; apparently every one in Washington who could rent or borrow a horse or carriage, went along with the army to see the show; Senators, congressmen, governors, ladies of high and low degree, newspaper men, gamblers and actors jammed the roads. As the hot July sun poured down on the marching men, discipline faded away; soldiers threw away their heavy blankets and knapsacks, cursed each other and their officers; at sight of a well or pond, the men promptly broke ranks and crowded and pushed each other to get a drink, while their officers yelled and threatened; others knocked apples off trees, chased chickens and pigs and made a bee line for every blackberry bush in sight. Col. William Tecumseh Sherman, who afterwards became famous in the North and infamous in the South, reported that one of his regiments, the Fire Zouaves of New York, seeing a burning house along the road, promptly told their protesting officers to go to hell and ran over to put out the fire.

As we have said, the Rebel army lay behind Bull Run, its left flank covering the stone bridge on which the Warrenton Turnpike crossed the stream. This was a very strong position and protected the Confederate base of supplies at Manassas Junction as well as the two railroads.

McDowell's plan of battle was an excellent one—on paper. Gen.

Sherman said of it that "it was the best planned but worst fought battle of the Civil War." McDowell knew that his raw troops could never cross Bull Run under fire and storm the Confederate lines. His plan was, therefore, to send one division of 12,000 men straight down the Warrenton Turnpike and threaten the Confederate left at the stone bridge. No real assault, however, was to be made at this point.

About two miles west of Centerville, a little stream, called Cub Run, crosses the Turnpike; just beyond the wooden bridge over this creek, a narrow, twisting country road runs northwest some three miles to a ford over Bull Run. After crossing Bull Run, this road runs south about two miles to the Warrenton Turnpike and continues on to Manassas Junction. This road was known as the Sudley Road and the ford as the Sudley ford.

While the Union Division under Gen. Tyler was threatening the Confederates at the stone bridge, McDowell would order his two other divisions (24,000) to march by way of the narrow, little-used Sudley Road, cross Bull Run at Sudley ford (which was not guarded), come down the other side of Bull Run, and take the Rebels in both flank and rear at the stone bridge. Gen. Tyler would then be able to cross on the bridge; the three Union divisions would be united on the battlefield. The whole Confederate line of battle could be rolled up and defeated, their base of supplies at Manassas captured, and the war would be practically over.

Unfortunately, the well-laid plan went astray. A mile and a half west of Bull Run on the Warrenton Turnpike is a stone house—it stands there to-day; just beyond this house, the little Sudley Road crosses the Turnpike; south of the Turnpike is a flat-topped hill, called the Henry Hill. This is the central point of the coming battle.

The left flank of the Confederate army at the stone bridge was commanded by Col. Nathan G. Evans with a force of 1500 men and two guns.

At 2 A.M., Sunday, July 21, McDowell started his army for Bull Run. All 3 divisions took the same road—the Warrenton Turnpike. There was much confusion in the darkness, and the regiments were slow in forming up. It was 6:30 P.M. before Tyler's division reached the vicinity of the stone bridge and opened fire with his artillery on the Rebels across the stream.

The turning column of two divisions, blocked by Tyler's men in front of them, was delayed nearly two hours; the men became exhausted from the heat, excitement, and loss of sleep. At last, the Turnpike was clear and the column, the men singing "John Brown's

Body," turned off on the narrow road leading north to Sudley ford. It was nine o'clock when the Union advance reached the ford, crossed the stream, and turned south to get in the rear of the Confederates at the stone bridge.

At nine o'clock Gen. Beauregard's signal officer, searching with his glass the woods on the other side of the Run, caught the glitter of bayonets and the flash of sunlight on a brass gun; then he saw batteries and the battle flags moving north toward Sudley ford. He notified Evans at once to look out, that the Yankees were turning his flank. Evans, known for some unexplained reason as "Shanks" Evans, was a little wiry man with a scraggly beard and hard eyes, but he was a quick thinker and instantly made the right decision. We hear little more of Col. Evans during the war, but his prompt action this day saved the Confederate army from destruction. A Confederate picket galloped up, yelling: "They're crossing up at Sudley, a whole mess of 'em, infantry and guns."

Evans had no time to lose. The Union columns were less than two miles away and marching straight down on his rear. He left four companies at the bridge to bluff Tyler, and with the rest of his force—some 1000 men and 2 small guns—moved at double quick and took position on a hill, called Matthews Hill, which overlooks the Sudley Road near the stone bridge on the Turnpike. Presently he saw the long, blue columns coming out of the woods and coming at him down the Sudley Road.

Catching sight of Evans' men in line of battle on the Matthews Hill, the Union advance, under Gen. Burnside, immediately deployed and advanced to the attack. For thirty minutes there was fierce action on the Matthews Hill. The Union soldiers, who had never fired a shot in battle, came on with great courage; the blue lines were half hidden by rolling clouds of smoke; the air was filled with the crash of exploding shells and the roar of rifles. Burnside's regiments charged up the hill, wavered, halted, fired, and fell back. The brigade was repulsed and retired across the Sudley Road to the shelter of the woods where it remained out of action during the rest of the battle.

Help, however, was near at hand. Evans, somewhat demoralized by the fierce fighting, saw the long blue columns of the other divisions coming, and coming fast down the Sudley Road—an overwhelming force with many guns. Among the Union guns were two splendid batteries of the old Regular Army—Griffin's and Ricketts'; they wheeled off the Sudley Road, unlimbered and plastered the Matthews Hill with canister. Evans, clinging desperately to the hill, sent back a

messenger for help. Gen. Bee of South Carolina, hearing the roar of battle upstream beyond the stone bridge, was already on his way toward the fight with his brigade. He took a strong position on the flat-topped Henry Hill, planted his batteries, and sent word to Evans to fall back and join him. Evans, still full of fight, suggested that Bee had better come across the Turnpike and support him on the Matthews Hill. Bee complied and the battle went on with redoubled fury. The Union army was constantly being reinforced; the regiments were still pouring down the Sudley road; battery after battery came galloping into position and opened fire; the little Rebel force became demoralized under the shells and bullets; finally, the men broke and ran, streaming down the hill and across the Turnpike toward the base of the Henry Hill. Gen. Bee, trying vainly to rally the retreating men, saw on the flat top of the hill above him a Confederate brigade in line of battle, supported by guns. "Look, men," he cried. "Look at Jackson, standing there like a stone wall." From this moment, the former college professor, Thomas Jonathan Jackson, became the immortal Stonewall Jackson of the Confederate army.

For a time there was great demoralization among the Confederate troops around the Henry Hill. The victorious Federals were still coming on, but more slowly now, for the men were becoming exhausted from the heat and their long march. The Confederate commander, Gen. Beauregard, galloped up from the lower fords, accompanied by Gen. Johnson, most of whose army had arrived from the railway at Manassas Junction.

Griffin and Ricketts, with their long-ranged, rifled guns, took position on the Matthews Hill and poured a tempest of shells upon the masses of Confederates on the Henry Hill. The Union army was now across the Turnpike; the stone bridge was open; the Confederate left flank had been defeated and rolled up; victory seemed assured; McDowell prepared to storm the Henry Hill. But all this takes time. Regiments were scattered and men out of ranks. Meanwhile, up from the lower fords of Bull Run Confederate reinforcements arrived, hurrying forward to support Jackson on the Henry Hill. That master strategist had at once sized up the situation. He did not form his line of battle on the northern crest of the hill, looking down upon the valley and the Federal army below. Instead he took position on the extreme south end of the Henry Hill, sheltered by a grove of pines; thus he had an open field of fire across the flat top of the hill—some 500 yards. Along the edge of the pine woods, Jackson placed his batteries and calmly awaited the coming assault.

At this point in the fight, McDowell made a fatal mistake: he did not attempt to get around either flank of the Rebel position; instead he chose to make a direct, frontal attack straight up the hill. The assault was made piecemeal, not with successive waves of infantry. Regiment after regiment would charge up the hill, stand and fire for a few moments on the crest, then fall back down the slope under a hail of bullets coming from the pine woods.

On that broad hilltop the blue and gray lines struggled fiercely for its possession, that sultry Sunday afternoon; the two Union batteries of the Regular Army came thundering down the Matthews Hill, crossed the Turnpike and took position on the Henry Hill. Presently they unlimbered again and moved closer to the smoke-wreathed pine woods; their position was exposed, and the men worked furiously to keep down the fire poured upon them. Suddenly, out of the woods a regiment came charging across the field at the guns. Captain Griffin prepared to give them a blast of canister, when an officer cried out to hold fire for they were Union men. This was a fatal error: the regiment was the 33rd Virginia, wearing blue uniforms. When only seventy yards away, the regiment halted and fired a single volley; every man at the guns was shot down and most of the teams killed. A terrible struggle now took place for the possession of these guns. Three times they were taken and retaken.

McDowell, however, was still full of fight; fresh regiments were crowding up the hill, and the Rebels were again driven to the shelter of the pine woods. "All were certain," said McDowell later, "that the day was ours." It is, however, one thing to capture a position and another thing to hold it. The Union infantry had been on its feet, marching and fighting since midnight; the men were getting out of control. At 4 P.M. it was estimated that there were 12,000 Federal soldiers on the battlefield out of ranks. At this moment loud cheers from the enemy announced that the rest of Johnston's army was coming on the field. Beauregard ordered a charge all along the entire line of battle; the long, gray lines swept forward; demoralization in the Union ranks increased; detachments began leaving the field, paying no attention to the frantic orders and appeals of their officers. McDowell still had Howard's brigade. He ordered it forward up the hill in a last, desperate attempt to save the day. Howard's men went bravely forward through the masses of retreating and demoralized men and reached the crest of the hill. After twenty minutes of fierce firing, they were outflanked and swept off the hill. The Rebels rushed forward, manned the captured guns and turned them on the crowded

mass of fugitives in the valley below. The retreat turned into a panic, and it was every man for himself. The army became a mob of frightened men. The fact that most of them fled along the Sudley Road, taking the six-mile detour to get across Bull Run, instead of following the Turnpike across the stone bridge, scarcely a mile away, showed something of the extent of the rout and panic. The Rebel cavalry pursued the fleeing army, taking many prisoners. A rebel battery was rushed forward and shelled the Turnpike, jammed with fleeing soldiers, sightseers, congressmen, baggage and ammunition wagons, and ambulances. A shell burst on the bridge over Cub Run, blocking the Turnpike. Here the Governor of Connecticut was caught in the underbrush and taken prisoner.

Among those who fled along the Turnpike towards Centerville were Senators Trumbull and Grimes. As they were finishing their lunch near a farmhouse, a great racket was heard; down the road came a mass of wagons, horses, men on foot, in full flight. They mounted their horses and galloped to the Turnpike. Here they were caught up in the flowing torrent and borne along to Centerville. "Many soldiers," said Trumbull, "threw away their guns and knapsacks. It was the most shameful rout you can conceive." "Thousands of axes, shovels and boxes of ammunition littered the road."

William H. Russell, the correspondent of the London *Times*, had driven from Washington to Centerville to see the battle. This is his vivid description of what he saw:

"My attention was attracted by loud shouts in advance and I perceived several wagons coming from the direction of the battlefield. The drivers of which were endeavoring to force their horses past the ammunition carts, going in the contrary directions. A thick cloud of dust rose behind them and running by the side of the wagons were a number of men in uniform. Every moment the crowd increased; drivers and men cried out: 'Turn back; turn back; we are whipped.' I got out of the road into a cornfield, through which men were hastily walking or running, their faces streaming with perspiration and generally without arms—the ground strewn with coats, blankets, fire-locks, cooking tins, caps, belts, bayonets.

"The scene on the road now assumed an aspect which has not a parallel in any description I have ever read. Infantry soldiers on mules or draught horses, with the harness clinging to their heels, negro servants on their masters' chargers, ambulances crowded with unwounded soldiers, wagons swarming with men who threw out the contents in the road—grinding through a shouting, screaming mass

of men on foot, who were literally yelling with rage at every halt, shrieking out: 'Here are the cavalry!'"

Russell reached Washington in safety and went to bed. In the morning this is what he saw: "I awoke from a deep sleep about 6 o'clock; the rain was falling in torrents with a dull thudding sound outside my windows, but louder than all, came a strange sound as of the tread of men—a confused tramp and splashing and a murmur of voices. I got up and ran to the front room. To my intense surprise I saw a steady stream of men, covered with mud, soaked through with rain, who were pouring, without any semblance of order up Pennsylvania Avenue—a dense stream of vapor rose from the multitude. Many of them were without knapsacks, cross belts and fire locks; some had neither great coats, nor shoes; others were covered with blankets."

Such, in brief, is the story of Bull Run. Let us now take up the part played by the Vermont troops in the battle.

The 2nd Vermont reached the vicinity of Centerville July 18th and went into camp. They stayed there two days while McDowell was feeding his army and examining the country. The delay was fatal, for it gave time for Gen. Johnston to join the main Confederate army at Manassas.

Food was scarce in the Vermont camp; men, wandering about off duty, caused some casualties among the chicken population on nearby farms (but we won't go into that).

The night before the battle the Vermont boys lay in their tents, but few of them, I think, were sleeping. There was a pale moon that night, and the grass about the tents wet with a heavy dew. Above them on the ridge, candles shown through the headquarters tent where McDowell and his officers were completing plans for tomorrow's battle. How would it feel to be under fire? How many boys would come back to these tents when night came? No one knew. Then came visions of home: father coming in from the barn with a pail of milk, mother busy over the stove, the girls setting the kitchen table while old Rover sat on his haunches at the gate, watching for some one who had not come home. All this seemed so far away—a different world from this queer country; dirty, yellow brooks, strange woods, not a maple or beech anywhere; long, low ridges with wide valleys between; tumble-down, wooden houses; no men folks around, only a few old women, who chewed tobacco and snarled at the blue uniforms, tramping by in the red dust; a bunch of negro children, running

frantically for the slave quarters, as the long column came round a curve in the road.

The moon sank behind a ridge; the black sky turned a dull gray in the East. Suddenly, all through the camps sounded the shrill notes of bugles—Reveille—it was half past two in the morning.

Too excited and impatient to cook breakfast, Howard's men formed ranks in the darkness; this was a slow job and caused much confusion.

It would seem, as has been suggested, that McDowell made a bad mistake at the start in attempting to move his three divisions on the same road at the same time. Tyler's Division, which was to lead the advance, was late in getting on the road, and the two divisions behind him became badly mixed and were forced to wait for hours until Tyler's men had passed beyond the narrow road, leading upstream to Sudley ford. It was 7 o'clock before the 2nd Vermont moved at all. They left their tents standing and with their rifles, equipment, and forty rounds of ammunition per man, started on the long detour to reach the battlefield. A burning red sun was pouring down its rays from a cloudless sky; heat, dust and excitement took their toll, and the men began showing signs of exhaustion.

Two or three miles east of Centerville, Howard's Brigade filed off the Warrenton Turnpike into the Sudley ford road. When the column reached a blacksmith shop about a mile up this road, the brigade was halted by orders of McDowell who feared the Rebels might cross the Run at the lower fords and strike the turning column in flank and rear.

For over four hours the Vermont men waited with growing impatience, listening to the roar of gunfire across the Run. It was between 12 and 1 o'clock when orders came to Col. Howard to march his brigade straight to the battlefield, but the officer guiding the column led them clear around by Sudley Ford an extra six miles.

It was midday and the heat terrific. McDowell's order read: "Have the men move at double time." Nothing could have been more senseless. Only the strongest could stand the pace in the heat and dust, loaded down with rifle, canteen, blanket and haversack. "When we reached the Run," said Col. Howard, "at least half my men were absent." Men fainted and fell along the road, bleeding at nose and ears.

The 2nd Vermont splashed across the Sudley ford (no time for a drink of the yellow water) and turned south on the Sudley Road straight for the flaming Henry Hill, only two miles away; there they met the backwash of a defeated army. It was 3 o'clock. Suddenly they found themselves in the midst of horrors: men with bloody

bandages around their heads; men with broken arms and legs, helped along by white-faced comrades; men bleeding and dying in the long grass; dead and wounded horses along the road, overhead the air filled with screaming shells from the Rebel batteries on the Henry Hill.

Under McDowell's orders to support Ricketts' battery on the Henry Hill, Col. Howard deployed his brigade in the shelter of a little ravine near the Dogan house—a farmhouse just off the Warrenton Turnpike. The 2nd Vermont and the 5th Maine formed the front line.

"When forming," said Col. Howard, "I stationed myself on horseback so that the men marching by twos, should pass me. I closely observed them; most were pale and thoughtful; many looked up into my face and smiled."

At their Colonel's command, the long blue line went forward up the slope of the Henry Hill. When they reached the summit, a broad, open field opened before them. The 2nd Vermont was the first regiment on the crest. Two or three hundred yards away at the edge of the woods and behind a rail fence was the Confederate line of battle. In front of the Vermont line Cap't. Griffin lay desperately wounded beneath his gallant guns. They were deserted now. Demoralized groups of Union soldiers were falling back over the hill. Shells fell here and there on the Vermont line (nothing is more terrifying and demoralizing than shell fire upon raw troops); there was blood and death where they fell; Cap't. Benjamin was instantly killed and nine or ten men were wounded. The 2nd Vermont opened fire.

"Enemy battery in front," said Col. Howard in his official report, "and some musket shots caused first annoyance; soon another battery, off to our right, increased the danger; worse than the batteries, showers of musket balls from the woods—200 yards away—made warm work for new men. Those unhit stood well for a time until they had delivered 15 to 20 rounds per man. We found no battery to support," he added bitterly, "but were thrust into an engagement against Confederate infantry and artillery. After the first line had been formed and was hard at work, I brought up the second line . . . the 2nd Vermont was ordered to withdraw and form a reserve. It was a hot place: every enemy battery shot produced confusion, and, as a rule, our enemy could not be seen.

"Soon the breakages were beyond repair. Many officers labored to keep their men together, but I saw could effect nothing under fire. At last, I ordered all to fall back to the valley and re-form. Our men, at the start, moving back slowly, soon broke up their company

formations and continued to retreat—not at first in a panicky manner, but steadily—each according to his own sweet will.

“Before many minutes, it was evident that a panic had seized all the troops within sight. A final Confederate fire came upon our right flank just before the retreat. This fire was from Kirby Smith, who had come from the cars . . . some of our men had glimpses of bright bayonets a few hundred yards away above the low bushes.

“Cap’t. Heath of the 3rd Maine walked for some time by my horse and shed tears as he talked to me: ‘My men will not stay together, Colonel; they will not obey me.’ Nothing influenced the fleeing crowds except panicky cries like: ‘The enemy is upon us—we shall all be taken.’

“Curiously enough, the unreasoning multitude—instead of taking the short road to Centerville, went back the long, seven mile route, exposing themselves every moment to death or capture. One foolish cry, ‘The Black Horse Cavalry are upon us,’ sent the men in disorder into the neighboring woods. Then I stopped all efforts, but sent out this message to every Vermont and Maine man within reach:—‘To the old camp at Centerville.’ No organization was effected before we reached camp. There a good part of my Brigade assembled and we remained in camp about one hour. Word was brought me that McDowell’s entire army was retreating toward Washington. It was some small satisfaction to march at the head of my Brigade, *in good order*, even though it was in retreat. We halted at Fairfax Court House and lay on our arms till morning. I continued the march at daylight toward the Potomac. Four miles out, we were met by trains and taken to Alexandria. It was, at least, 2 weeks after our Bull Run panic before much reliance could be placed upon our troops. The Brigade had 50 killed—115 wounded and 180 missing.”

Look back through the mists of eighty years: your hearts will beat high with pride and your eyes, perhaps, dim as you read how those raw, Vermont soldiers endured that dreadful day of disaster and defeat. It was a regiment of young men—most of them mere boys. They had known little of death, and then only the peaceful death of old age—inevitable and perhaps not unwelcome. Here on the Henry Hill, Death came in his most terrible form, where, in an instant, friend or neighbor was blown to pieces before their very eyes.

We learn from the lips of their own Colonel how these young lads, with faces pale and drawn, marched unflinchingly into the smoking inferno of the Henry Hill. General Howard—whose presence on nearly every major battlefield of the Civil War and the loss of an arm

in action, reflect his personal fearlessness—recalled in after years how his knees quivered against his horse's sides; how he whispered a brief prayer before riding out from the line and leading the way up the Henry Hill.

The 2nd Vermont maintained its organization (it was the only regiment of Howard's Brigade to do so) until after it had recrossed the Turnpike and reached the jumbled mass of guns, ambulances and wagons on the Sudley Road; here blind panic prevailed and it was every man for himself until the exhausted troops reached Centerville.

Thirty-one Vermont men were captured by the Confederate cavalry—21 of these were wounded—3 died of their wounds in prison.

The prisoners captured at Bull Run (numbering about 1000) were marched from the battlefield seven miles to Manassas Junction over a road choked with dust. When they reached the Junction, rain began to fall. They were herded into an open lot, where, in total blackness, and without blankets or covering, they passed the night. Arriving in Richmond the following night, they were marched through the streets to a large brick building, known as Liggon and Company's tobacco factory.

Two months after the Battle of Bull Run, the 2nd-3rd-4th-5th and 6th Vermont Regiments were formed into a brigade, known as the "Vermont Brigade"—the only brigade in the Union army permanently known by the name of its state.

If anyone feels doubtful of the ability of the present generation of Vermonters to meet the frightful conditions of modern, mechanized warfare, he should not lose sleep over it; men with the blood of the Vermont Brigade in their veins can be relied upon to do their duty on land or sea, under the sea, or in the air.

The 2nd Vermont took part in the desperate rear action in the swamps of the Chickahominy, where McClellan's great Army of the Potomac met crushing defeat; with fixed bayonets it swept through the fields of yellow corn at Antietam, where Stonewall Jackson's thin and valiant lines stood fast at the little Dunker church; it stormed the heights of Fredericksburg, where 12,000 blue soldiers died in front of the sunken road on Marye's Heights; it lay in line of battle in the woods about Chancellorsville that calm, spring evening, when the leaves hung motionless and the birds were still; they heard that peaceful quietude shattered by the crashing roar of guns, rolling volleys of rifle fire, and the wild yells of Stonewall Jackson's men, as they came like a tornado through the forest and crushed the flank of the Union army; all one hot July day it marched at terrific speed over

the rolling Pennsylvania hills (30 miles they marched that day) under a broiling sun and at nightfall reached a rocky ridge and saw below them the little town of Gettysburg; the next day they helped hold that ridge and save the Republic from destruction; from that ridge they saw their comrades of the 1st Vermont Cavalry ride to their death in a charge, matching in heroic sacrifice that of the "Light Brigade" of glorious memory.

The 2nd Vermont crouched in its smouldering trenches the morning after that first, fierce clash in the Wilderness. Grant was striving to break through Lee's lines to Richmond. Lee, waiting until the Union army was deep in the forest, made a fierce attack on the blue columns as they marched along the narrow, wood roads. A strange place for a great battle. Thick woods everywhere; jack pines and scrub oak, mingled with a great tangle of bushes, vines and creepers. Forcing their way through this snarl, the Union Divisions came face to face with the Rebel battle-line. The fighting lasted for days; Grant's losses were appalling—so frightful that he was termed "Butcher Grant." Look at the old Civil War Monuments on Vermont village greens, and you will realize how many men of the Vermont Brigade perished in the gloomy shades of the Wilderness.

On a spring morning in the year of '65, the 2nd Vermont lay in camp on a wooded ridge. Below them was a narrow valley, through which a small, swift stream flowed, its clear waters flashing and sparkling in the sun light. On their side of the river they looked down upon a tiny cross-road hamlet, with its Court House, jail and weather-beaten houses. It was a typical spring day in Virginia with showers and sunshine and sharp gusts of wind. It was good to be alive on a day like this; the woods and fields were gay with dogwood and azalea and up from the good earth came the smell of growing things.

Then, in the valley below, the bugles sounded; a long line of blue infantry took position along the road side—the ranks extending from the river up the slope to the Court House.

The 2nd Vermont had experienced hard marching and hard fighting before Lee's exhausted and starving brigades had been headed off and surrounded at this little village of Appomattox Court House.

Yesterday had been a great day: they had seen an old, gray-bearded, Confederate officer—he of the gentle heart and fine sense of honor—riding up the village street on his way to meet a little, brown-bearded man in a muddy blue uniform—with the stars of a Lieutenant General on his shoulders. Then the news spread like wild fire through the camps: General Lee had surrendered to General Grant. With this news,

however, came an order from Headquarters: "A brave enemy has surrendered; cheering and the firing of salutes are expressly forbidden."

Winding down the narrow, red clay road, on the farther side of the little river, the Vermont soldiers beheld the saddest, the most pathetic military parade their eyes would ever see—a long gray column—infantry and guns; it splashed across the Appomattox and came slowly up the road leading to the Court House.

As the head of the Confederate column reached the right of the Union line, deployed along the roadside, a trumpet broke the silence; the blue ranks flashed into action, as the men snapped their rifles forward to a "Present Arms"—the salute of honor to their ancient foe.

The Vermont Brigade looked upon the scene, but with no sense of exultation. There was nothing but pity in their hearts, as through the soft April mist, the ghost of the Confederate army drifted by: the shuffling, rag-bound feet; the torn and muddy uniforms; the white-faced, weary men; the gaunt and feeble horses; the tattered flags; the rusty guns.

The shadowy remnants of their old enemies filed past: Gordon and Longstreet; Anderson and Pickett; they turn off into an old field near the Court House and here the war-weary ranks lay down their arms.

We believe in our hearts that, to every Vermont soldier who witnessed this scene, that field was more than an ancient clearing, hewn by the hand of man from the surrounding forest. To them, it was a field of the Spirit—consecrated to courage; to patient devotion; to loyalty, even unto the end.

The great Civil War was over; the words of the Scripture fulfilled: "Every drop of blood, drawn by the lash, had been repaid by one drawn by the sword." With their duty done, the Vermont soldiers turned their faces north to their own beloved Hills.

Did these men in their later years—when the War was nothing but memories—wonder if the War had been, indeed, the triumphant victory in which they had rejoiced so long ago? The South prostrate and ruined; her great plantations weed-grown and desolate; her railways mere red streaks through the tall grass; the social system under which her people had lived so long and happily, dead at Appomattox. Graft and corruption had raised their evil heads with the coming of the "Carpetbagger" and the dishonest politician from the North.

Did the War settle the negro problem? Far from it; the negro people were bewildered and demoralized by their release from slavery. Freedom, to their primitive minds, was just a word—without meaning or comprehension.

Perhaps the men of the Vermont Brigade thought in their secret hearts, what was the use of all their blood and tears and suffering and sacrifice? When did war ever bring good to a Nation, or to a man's soul?

And now, when all bitterness and hatred and passion are gone and the great Civil War is but a fading memory, perhaps the good God, in his appointed time, will call these Vermont soldiers back from the earth in which they lie, that they may look upon the thousands of earnest, ambitious young colored men and women, going in and out of their great Institutions of Learning (Hampton-Tuskegee-Howard), eager to fit themselves to carry the torch of knowledge to the underprivileged members of their race; to give them, in turn, a place where the mind may be trained—the character broadened—the heart uplifted, through Science and Art and Music.

Perhaps the Great God may permit these spirits of a bygone war to hear the most glorious contralto voice in America—that of Marion Anderson—a negro girl; to listen to the haunting pathos of the matchless voice of Roland Hayes—a negro lad.

And then, at long last, to these Vermont soldiers, who fought the good fight, will come a realization that all their suffering and hardship were not in vain. To these men the old, marching song they sang so joyfully, as they tramped along the red clay roads of Virginia, will have a new and deeper meaning:

*In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the Sea.
With a glory in His Bosom that transfigures you and me,
As He died to make men holy—let us die to make men free.*

