

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

DECEMBER 23, 1862.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. WADE submitted the following

R E P O R T .

The joint committee on the conduct of the war beg leave respectfully to report, in part, as follows:

On the 18th of December, 1862, the Senate of the United States adopted the following resolution, which was referred to the committee on the conduct of the war:

“*Resolved*, That the committee on the conduct of the war be, and they are hereby, directed to inquire into the facts relating to the recent battle at Fredericksburg, Virginia, and particularly as to what officer or officers are responsible for the assault which was made upon the enemy's works; and also the delay which occurred in preparing to meet the enemy, and to report the facts to the Senate.”

In pursuance of the instructions contained in this resolution, your committee have the honor to report that they proceeded immediately to the headquarters of the army of the Potomac, and took the depositions of Major Generals Burnside, Sumner, Franklin, and Hooker, and Brigadier Generals Woodbury and Haupt.

On their return to Washington they took the depositions of Major General Halleck and Brigadier General Meigs.

All the facts relating to the movements of the army under General Burnside, the forwarding of pontoons and supplies, and the recent battle at Fredericksburg, are so fully and clearly stated in the depositions herewith submitted, that the committee report the testimony without comment.

DECEMBER 19, 1862.

Major General Ambrose E. Burnside sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN.

Question. You have seen the resolution of the Senate under which this committee is now acting. Will you now go on and in your own way, without questioning, give such an account of the matters embraced in that resolution as you may consider necessary and proper?

We do not want to go back to the time when you came into command.

Answer. In order that the whole matter may be entirely understood, it may be well to go back a little.

Question. Very well. Make your statement in your own way.

Answer. When, after the battle of Antietam, General McClellan decided to cross the Potomac, I said to him that, in my opinion, he would never be able to take this army on that route beyond the Rappahannock, unless he succeeded in fighting the enemy at some place on this side; that if he proposed to go to Richmond by land, he would have to go by way of Fredericksburg; and in that he partially agreed with me. After we had started we had another conversation on that subject, and several other officers were present. On the 6th of November, after this conversation, General McClellan gave an order to Captain Duane, his chief engineer, to have all the pontoon bridges at Berlin and in that neighborhood, that could be spared, taken up and sent down to Washington, with a view of getting them down to this line, in case he decided to go by way of Fredericksburg. The letter conveying that order was written on the 6th of November, but, as I understand, was not received until the 12th of November.

On the 7th or 8th of November I received an order from the President of the United States directing me to take command of the army of the Potomac, and also a copy of the order relieving General McClellan from that command. This order was conveyed to me by General Buckingham, who was attached to the War Department. After getting over my surprise, the shock, &c., I told General Buckingham that it was a matter that required very serious thought; that I did not want the command; that it had been offered to me twice before, and I did not feel that I could take it. I consulted with two of my staff officers in regard to it for, I should think, an hour and a half. They urged upon me that I had no right, as a soldier, to disobey the order, and that I had already expressed to the government my unwillingness to take the command. I told them what my views were with reference to my ability to exercise such a command, which views were those I had always unreservedly expressed, that I was not competent to command such a large army as this. I had said the same over and over again to the President and Secretary of War, and also, that if matters could be satisfactorily arranged with General McClellan, I thought he could command the army of the Potomac better than any other general in it. But they had studied the subject more than I had, and knew more about their objections to General McClellan than I did.

There had been some conversation in regard to the removal of General McClellan when he was bringing away his army from before Richmond. The first of these conversations with the President and Secretary of War occurred at that time. And then after General McClellan had got back to Washington, and before the commencement of the Maryland campaign, there was another conversation of the same kind. And on both of those occasions I expressed to the President the opinion that I did not think there was any one who

could do as much with that army as General McClellan could, if matters could be so arranged as to remove their objections to him.

After I had consulted with my staff officers, I went to see General McClellan himself, and he agreed with them, that this was an order which I, as a soldier, had to obey. He said that he could not retain the command, for he, as a soldier, would have to obey the order directing him to give up that command.

I then assumed the command, in the midst of a violent snow storm, with the army in a position that I knew but little of. I had previously commanded but one corps, upon the extreme right, and I had been upon the extreme right and in the advance since that campaign had begun. I probably knew less than any other corps commander of the positions and relative strength of the several corps of the army. General McClellan remained some two or three days to arrange his affairs, and came with me as far as Warrenton, and then left, having given me all the information he could in reference to the army.

General Halleck came down to see me on the 11th of November. On the 9th I made out a plan of operations, in accordance with the order of General Halleck, which directed me not only to take command of the army, but also to state what I proposed to do with it. That plan I wrote out on the morning of the 9th of November, and sent it by special messenger to Washington. I can furnish the committee a copy of that plan if they desire it. I do not have it here now.

Question. State the substance of it, if you please; that may do as well.

Answer. I stated, in substance, that I thought it advisable to concentrate the army in the neighborhood of Warrenton; to make a small movement across the Rappahannock, as a feint, with a view to divert the attention of the enemy and lead them to believe that we were going to move in the direction of Gordonsville, and then to make a rapid movement of the whole army to Fredericksburg or this side of the Rappahannock.

As my reasons for that, I stated that the further we got into the interior of Virginia the longer would be our line of communications, and the greater would be the difficulty we would have in keeping them open, as the enemy had upon our right flank a corps which at almost any time could, by a rapid movement, seriously embarrass us. If we were caught by the elements so far from our base of supplies, and at the same time in the enemy's country, where they had means of getting information that we had not, it might, I thought, prove disastrous to the army, as we had but one line of railway by which to supply it.

In moving upon Fredericksburg we would all the time be as near Washington as would the enemy; and after arriving at Fredericksburg we would be at a point nearer to Richmond than we would be even if we should take Gordonsville. On the Gordonsville line the enemy, in my opinion, would not give us a decisive battle at any place this side of Richmond. They would defend Gordonsville until such time as they felt they had given us a check, and then, with so

many lines of railroad open to them, they would move upon Richmond or upon Lynchburg, and, in either case, the difficulty of following them would be very great.

In connexion with this movement, I requested that barges filled with provisions and forage should be floated to Aquia creek, where they could easily be landed; that materials be collected for the reconstruction of the wharves there, and that all the wagons in Washington that could be possibly spared should be filled with hard bread and small commissary stores, and with a large number of beef cattle started down to Fredericksburg, on the road by way of Dumfries; and that this wagon train and herd of cattle should be preceded by a pontoon train large enough to span the Rappahannock twice. I stated that this wagon train could move in perfect safety, because it would be all the time between our army and the Potomac, or, in other words, our army would be all the time between the enemy and that train. But at the same time I said that if a cavalry escort could not be furnished from Washington, I would send some of my cavalry to guard the train.

On the morning of the 14th of November, feeling uneasy with reference to the pontoons, as I had not heard of their starting, I directed my chief engineer to telegraph again in reference to them.

Question. To whom did he telegraph?

Answer. He telegraphed to Gen. Woodbury or to Major Spalding. It subsequently appeared that that was the first they ever had heard of my wish to have the pontoon train started down for Fredericksburg, although the authorities in Washington had had my plan sent to them on the 9th of November, and it had also been discussed by General Halleck and General Meigs at my headquarters at Warrenton, on the night of the 11th or 12th of November; and, after discussing it fully there, they sat down and sent telegrams to Washington, which, as I supposed, fully covered the case, and would secure the starting of the pontoons at once. I supposed, of course, that those portions of the plan which required to be attended to in Washington would be carried out there at once. I could have sent officers of my own there to attend to those matters, and perhaps I made a mistake in not doing so, as General Halleck afterwards told me that I ought not to have trusted to them in Washington for the details. In reply to the telegram I had ordered to be sent, General Woodbury telegraphed back that the pontoons would start on Sunday morning, possibly, and certainly on Monday morning, which would have been on the 16th or 17th of November, and would have been in time. They did not, however, start until the 19th, and on that day it commenced raining, which delayed them so much, and the roads became so bad, that when they got to Dumfries they floated the pontoons off the wagons; sent to Washington for a steamer, and carried them down to Aquia creek by water, sending the wagons around by land. The pontoons did not get here until the 22d or the 23d of November.

On the 16th of November I started the column down the road to Fredericksburg, not knowing anything about the delay in the starting of the pontoons, because the telegram announcing the delay did

not reach Warrenton Junction until I had left to come down here with the troops, and that telegram did not reach me until I arrived here, on the morning of the 19th, when it was handed to me by an orderly, who had brought it down from Warrenton Junction.

After reaching here, I saw at once that there was no chance for crossing the Rappahannock with the army at that time. It commenced raining and the river began to rise, not to any great extent, but I did not know how much it might rise. There were no means of crossing except by going up to the fords, and it would be impossible to do that, because of the inability to supply the troops after they should cross.

General Sumner, with his command, arrived here in advance. He sent to me, asking if he should cross the river. He was very much tempted to take his own corps across to Fredericksburg by a ford near Falmouth, as there was no enemy there except a very small force. I did not think it advisable that he should cross at that time.

The plan I had in contemplation was, if the stores and those bridges had come here as I had expected, to throw Sumner's whole corps across the Rappahannock, fill the wagons with as many small stores as we could, and having beef cattle along for meats, then to make a rapid movement down in the direction of Richmond, and try to meet the enemy and fight a battle before Jackson could make a junction there. We knew that Jackson was in the valley, and felt that there was force enough on the Upper Rappahannock to take care of him. We felt certain that as soon as the enemy knew of our coming down here the force under Jackson would be recalled, and we wanted to meet this force and beat it before Jackson could make a junction with them, or before Jackson could come down on our flank and perhaps cripple us. I had recommended that more supplies should be sent to the mouth of the Rappahannock, with a view to establishing a depot at Port Royal after we had advanced to Fredericksburg.

After the first delay in starting the pontoons, I think they were sent as quickly as they could have been, and the supplies and quartermaster's stores have been always in as great abundance as we could have expected; for after the 19th of November the weather and the roads were particularly bad. Horses and mules, &c., were sent down to us, so that our cavalry and teams were in very good condition.

After it was ascertained that there must be a delay, and that the enemy had concentrated in such force as to make it very difficult to cross except by a number of bridges, we commenced bringing up from Aquia creek all the pontoons we could. After enough of them had been brought up to build the bridges, I called several councils of war to decide about crossing the Rappahannock. It was first decided to cross down at Skinker's Neck, about twelve miles below here. But our demonstration in that direction concentrated the enemy at that place, and I finally gave up the idea of crossing there. I still continued operations at Skinker's Neck by way of demonstration, simply for the purpose of drawing down there as large a force of the

enemy as possible. I then decided to cross here, because, in the first place, I felt satisfied that they did not expect us to cross here, but down below ; in the next place, I felt satisfied that this was the place to fight the most decisive battle, because if we could divide their forces by piercing their lines at one or two points, separating their left from their right, then a vigorous attack with the whole army would succeed in breaking their army in pieces.

The enemy had cut a road along in the rear of the line of heights where we made our attack, by means of which they connected the two wings of their army, and avoided a long detour around through a bad country. I obtained from a colored man from the other side of the town, information in regard to this new road, which proved to be correct. I wanted to obtain possession of that new road, and that was my reason for making an attack on the extreme left. I did not intend to make the attack on the right until that position had been taken, which I supposed would stagger the enemy, cutting their line in two; and then I proposed to make a direct attack on their front, and drive them out of their works.

I succeeded in building six bridges, and taking the whole army across. The two attacks were made, and we were repulsed; still holding a portion of the ground we had fought upon, but not our extreme advance.

That night I went all over the field on our right; in fact, I was with the officers and men until nearly daylight. I found the feeling to be rather against an attack the next morning; in fact, it was decidedly against it.

I returned to my headquarters, and, after conversation with General Sumner, told him that I wanted him to order the ninth army corps—which was the corps I originally commanded—to form the next morning a column of attack by regiments. It consisted of some eighteen old regiments, and some new ones, and I desired the column to make a direct attack upon the enemy's works. I thought that these regiments, by coming quickly up after each other, would be able to carry the stone wall and the batteries in front, forcing the enemy into their next line, and by going in with them they would not be able to fire upon us to any great extent. I left General Sumner with that understanding, and directed him to give the order. The order was given, and the column of attack was formed.

The next morning, just before the column was to have started, General Sumner came to me and said: "General, I hope you will desist from this attack; I do not know of any general officer who approves of it, and I think it will prove disastrous to the army." Advice of that kind from General Sumner, who has always been in favor of an advance whenever it was possible, caused me to hesitate. I kept the column of attack formed, and sent over for the division and corps commanders, and consulted with them. They unanimously voted against the attack. I then went over to see the other officers of the command on the other side, and found that the same impression prevailed among them. I then sent for General Franklin, who was on the left, and he was of exactly the same opinion. This caused

me to decide that I ought not to make the attack I had contemplated. And besides, inasmuch as the President of the United States had told me not to be in haste in making this attack; that he would give me all the support that he could, but he did not want the army of the Potomac destroyed, I felt that I could not take the responsibility of ordering the attack, notwithstanding my own belief at the time that the works of the enemy could be carried.

In the afternoon of that day I again saw the officers, and told them that I had decided to withdraw to this side of the river all our forces except enough to hold the town and the bridge-heads, but should keep the bridges there for further operations in case we wanted to cross again. I accordingly ordered the withdrawal, leaving General Hooker to conduct the withdrawal of our forces from the town, and General Franklin to conduct it on our left.

During that evening I received a note from General Hooker; and about 10 o'clock at night General Butterfield came over with a message from General Hooker, stating that he (General Hooker) felt it his duty to represent to me the condition in which I was leaving the town and the troops in it. After a long conversation on the subject with General Butterfield, I felt that the troops I proposed to leave behind would not be able to hold the town. I then partially decided to withdraw the whole command, which was a still more perilous operation. It commenced raining, which, to some extent, was an assistance to us, but a very bad thing in the moving of troops. I thought over the matter for about two hours; and about 1 o'clock I sent over an order to withdraw the whole force, which was successfully accomplished.

There had been a great deal of division of opinion among the corps commanders as to the place of crossing. But, after all the discussion upon the subject, the decision to cross over here I understood was well received by all of them.

While on his way here General Hooker, on the morning of the 20th of November, wrote me a note, which I received on the 21st, in which he suggested that he should cross his force over the Rappahannock at the ford nearest to him, (Richards's ford,) and move rapidly down to Saxton's Station and take position there. He stated that he had three days' provisions, and thought he could beat any force of the enemy in front of him. I replied to him that I was always very glad to take the advice of my general officers, and should always be loth to make a move without consulting them; but I could not approve of the move he had suggested, because, in the first place, he would have to march some thirty-six miles to get to Saxton's Station; it was then raining, and he would have to ford two rivers, which might rise and cut him off from the main body of the command, and as I had no means of crossing at Fredericksburg I would be prevented from sending him supplies and assistance; and, although he might reach Saxton's Station, and beat any force of the enemy he might meet at that time, yet it would be a very hazardous movement to throw a column like that beyond the reach of its proper support. This reply I sent to General Hooker by an aide-de-camp. He thanked me; said he had

only made it as a suggestion, and the weather, as it was then raining, of course rendered it impossible to make the movement he had suggested.

Question. What causes do you assign for the failure of your attack here?

Answer. It was found to be impossible to get the men up to the works. The enemy's fire was too hot for them. The whole command fought most gallantly. The enemy themselves say they never saw our men fight so hard as on that day.

Question. Were the enemy's works very strong?

Answer. Their works are not strong works, but they occupy very strong positions. It is possible that the points of attack were wrongly ordered; if such is the case, I can only say that I did to the best of my ability. It is also possible that we would have done better to have crossed at Skinker's Neck. But, for what I supposed to be good reasons, I felt we had better cross here; that we would have a more decisive engagement here, and that if we succeeded in defeating the enemy here, we could break up the whole of their army here, which I think is now the most desirable thing, not even second to the taking of Richmond; for if this army was broken up, though they might defend Richmond for a while, they could not make a very protracted defence there.

By Mr. GOOCH:

Question. Do I understand you to say that it was your understanding that General Halleck and General Meigs, while at your headquarters in Warrenton and before you commenced the movement of your army, sent orders to Washington for the pontoons to be immediately forwarded to Falmouth?

Answer. That was my understanding, certainly.

Question. In your judgment, could the pontoons have been forwarded in time for you to have crossed the Rappahannock when you expected, if all possible efforts had been made by those who were charged with that duty?

Answer. Yes, sir; if they had received their orders in time.

Question. Did the non-arrival of the pontoons, at the time you expected, prevent your crossing when you expected to cross, and interfere with the success of your plan?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Since you have assumed the command of the army of the Potomac, have all its movements been made by you according to your own judgment, or have some of them been directed by the general-in-chief, the Secretary of War, or the President of the United States?

Answer. They have all been made in accordance with my own judgment. In some cases I have submitted my views, which have been approved.

Question. Who did you understand was responsible for the forwarding of the pontoons to Falmouth?

Answer. I understood that General Halleck was to give the necessary orders, and then the officers who should receive those orders

were the ones responsible for the pontoons coming here. I could have carried out that part of the plan through officers of my own. But having just taken the command of an army with which I was but little acquainted, it was evident that it was as much as I could attend to, with the assistance of all my officers, to change its position from Warrenton to Fredericksburg. And I felt, indeed I expected, that all the parts of the plan which were to be executed in Washington would be attended to by the officers at that place, under the direction of the different departments to which those parts of the plan appertained.

Question. Did you or not understand that you yourself were to be responsible for seeing that those orders were carried out?

Answer. I did not. I never imagined for a moment that I had to carry out anything that required to be done in Washington. General Meigs told me distinctly several days ago, in Washington, that he never saw my plan of operations until I showed it to him on that day.

Question. Do I understand you to say, in your statement, that you expected General Franklin to carry the point at the extreme left of the ridge in rear of the town, and thereby enable our troops to storm and carry their fortifications?

Answer. I did expect him to carry that point, which being done would have placed our forces in rear of their extreme left, and which, I thought at the time, would shake their forces on the ridge to such an extent that the position in front could be easily stormed and carried.

Question. To what do you attribute his failure to accomplish that?

Answer. To the great strength of the position and the accumulation of the enemy's forces there. I expected the bridges would be built in two or three hours after they were unloaded, which was about daylight. Instead of that, those on the right were not built until three o'clock in the afternoon, and I had only the means of getting across one division over the bridges on the right. General Franklin's bridges were built about noon, and were held by our troops on the opposite bank. This gave the enemy time to accumulate their forces, which were stretched along the river from Port Royal up to the battle-field, before I was able to order the attack. Whilst the men here were unloading the bridges and putting them into the water, the enemy's sharpshooters opened a very heavy fire from the town, and our batteries opened upon the town with the view of silencing them. In this manner the bridges were built about two-thirds of their length, at which time the bridge-builders were driven off, and had to take shelter under the bank. Repeated efforts were made to get these bridge-builders out to the end of the bridges with the necessary material, but they all failed. It was then reported to me that it was impossible to build the bridges under that fire, and that the sharpshooters could not be driven out of town by the artillery. We had one hundred and forty-three guns in position, the larger portion of which were playing upon the town. I said to the officers who had reported to me that it was impossible to build the bridges, that

they must be built, and that some plan must be devised for getting these sharpshooters out of the way, so that our men could get to work. Upon consulting with General Hunt, chief of artillery, and General Woodbury, of the engineers, it was agreed to fill the boats with our own men, run them quickly across under fire, throw them on the bank, and let them go up into the streets and houses and drive the sharpshooters away. This plan was successfully carried out, and in fifteen minutes after the first detachment of troops had reached the opposite bank, our men began building the bridges, and in a half an hour more they were completed.

Question. What was the conduct of the officers and men during the attack?

Answer. With the exception of a single regiment, it was excellent.

Question. Will you state, as nearly as you can, the whole number of our troops that were engaged?

Answer. We had about one hundred thousand men on the other side of the river.

Question. What part of that number were actually engaged in battle?

Answer. Every single man of them was under artillery fire, and about half of them were at different times formed in columns of attack. Every man was put in column of attack that could be got in.

Question. Have you any knowledge as to the force of the enemy here?

Answer. It is estimated at all the way from one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand. I think myself it was less than one hundred thousand.

Question. What was the extent of the casualties on our side resulting from all the fighting?

Answer. It will not be far from ten thousand men—killed, wounded, and missing.

Question. What is the present condition of our troops here?

Answer. As far as my knowledge and information goes, it is good.

Question. Do you or not consider your troops demoralized, or the efficiency of your army impaired, except so far as it has been from the loss of so many men?

Answer. I do not. I would add here that although at the time I ordered the column of attack to be formed on the morning after the battle I thought the enemy's works would be carried, and adhered to that opinion during that day, I afterwards became convinced that that could not have been done, owing to the great strength of the enemy, the time given them for re-enforcing, and the belief also of our officers that it could not be done. I accordingly telegraphed to the President of the United States that I withdrew our army because I felt that the enemy's position could not be carried.

DECEMBER 19, 1862.

Major General E. V. Sumner sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Question. What is your position in the army of the Potomac?

Answer. I command the right grand division of that army, consisting of the second and ninth corps d'armée.

Question. Of how many men does your grand division consist?

Answer. Before the late action it consisted of about ——— men. It is being increased by new troops as they come up. It was originally intended to be something over ——— men.

Question. Would it have been better, in your judgment, to have crossed the river and engaged the enemy earlier than you did? And if so, why was it not done?

Answer. When General Burnside was ordered to take command of this army he told me what he proposed to do; that is, to march on Fredericksburg instead of on Culpeper. I thought that was the wisest plan for these reasons: If we had marched on Culpeper, according to the former plan, even if we had been successful we would have had to fall back for supplies, whereas by coming on this line, on reaching Fredericksburg I confidently expected to take the heights in rear of it before the army of the enemy could come from Culpeper, and I thought the chance of reaching Richmond was much better than by going the other way. Because if the pontoons had been here on my arrival, and in time for me to have crossed and occupied the heights in rear of Fredericksburg before the enemy could reach them, we should have kept pressing the enemy off from this line of railroad, keeping it in our own possession; and if we could not have preceded them into Richmond, we could have kept so close to them that they would have had no time to build fortifications. These were the reasons why I thought that it was a very judicious measure on the part of General Burnside to change the base of operations instead of advancing on Culpeper, which I believe General McClellan intended to have done.

On my arrival here, on the 17th of November, a battery of artillery on the other side of the river opened upon us the moment a portion of my troops appeared on the ridge back of Falmouth. I immediately put a battery into position, and, I think, in not to exceed fifteen minutes, they drove every man on the other side from the guns, and they ran off and left four guns on the field. My orders were to advance and hold Falmouth, not to cross. But the temptation was so strong to go over and take those guns the enemy had left that at one time I actually gave the order to cross the ford at all events and seize the guns and occupy the city. But on reflection I concluded I was rather too old a soldier to disobey a direct order; and there was another reason too: I had had a little too much experience on the peninsula of the consequence of getting astride of a river to risk it here. For these two reasons I revoked my order that night.

That same night I sent a note to General Burnside, who was some eight or ten miles distant, asking him if I should take Fredericksburg in the morning should I be able to find a practicable ford, which, by the way, I knew when I wrote the note that I could find. The general replied, through his chief of staff, that he did not think it advisable to occupy Fredericksburg until his communications were established, and, on reflection, I myself thought that he was right; that it was prudent and proper to have the bridges ready before we occupied Fredericksburg. I think I could have taken that city and the heights on the other side of it any time within three days after my arrival here if the pontoons had been here, for I do not think there was much force of the enemy here up to that time.

With regard to the delay in making the attack, I do not think that the movement could have been made sooner than it was made. It will be recollected that no preparations had been made at Aquia creek. When we came across here there were no means at Aquia creek for landing anything there. All those things had to be prepared afterwards. The railroad had to be completed before we could get up supplies for this great army. It takes an enormous amount of transportation to supply an army of 100,000 men, and I do not think the general could have made his preparations, done all that it was necessary to do, sooner than he did after the arrival here of the pontoons.

The first proposition to cross the river was to cross at Skinker's Neck. It seemed to me that you could scarcely cross a river in the face of an enemy of equal or superior force, except by surprise. Therefore, after the preparations were made to cross at Skinker's Neck, after a large number of wagons had been sent by the general down there in order to deceive the enemy, I was decidedly in favor of throwing the bridges over here and carrying the town as we did carry it, which was by surprise, as the enemy were marching their troops down below expecting that we were going to cross down there.

I was in favor of crossing the Rappahannock, because I knew that neither our government nor our people would be satisfied to have our army retire from this position or go into winter quarters, until we knew the force that was on the other side of the river; and the only way in which we could learn that was by going over there and feeling of them. I think it was necessary to have made the attack on that day; or Saturday; and it was necessary, therefore, to attack them in their strong works, and the repulse was what frequently happens in campaigns: the works were stronger than we believed them to be. I knew it was a very hazardous movement, but I did believe we could carry the enemy's works. The attack failed owing to the enemy's fortifications being much more formidable than we had supposed them to be.

Question. Will you describe those fortifications?

Answer. I cannot describe them any further than this: They were tier upon tier for two or three tiers. If we had carried the first tier, we could not have held it, because their next tier was a much more formidable row of fortifications, only a mile distant, and on a higher position still. And no doubt large masses of infantry were

between the two crests : and having got on the top of one crest, we would have been compelled to contend with large masses of fresh troops over whom their own batteries could fire. I was ordered by the general commanding to select the corps to make the attack. I selected the corps of General French and General Hancock, two of the most gallant officers in our army, and two corps that had neither of them ever turned their backs to the enemy. They made repeated assaults, but were driven back in spite of all the efforts that could be made by their officers. The principal obstacle that they found was a long stone wall, which was the outwork of the enemy. That wall was some 400 or 500 yards in length, as represented to me, and had been raised and strengthened. The enemy had artillery that enfiladed that wall on both sides ; they held their fire until our troops arrived at a certain point, when they rose up and poured a perfect volley over this wall, their artillery enfilading our column at the same time. No troops could stand such a fire as that. I do not think it a reproach to those two divisions that they did not carry that position ; they did all that men could do. I had General Howard's division in readiness to support those two, and one strong division of Wilcox's corps—the ninth corps, General Burnside's old corps—detached to keep open communication with General Franklin's right. That division was not under fire during the day. Some of the other divisions of the ninth corps were more or less engaged.

General Hooker had a part of his grand division in the town, and one of his corps, under General Humphries, was engaged. They made a gallant attack, but were driven back. The fight was continued on the left, but I was so remote from that that I cannot give any description of it at all.

The general commanding directed me to establish my headquarters at the Lacy House, so that I could superintend the operations of both my corps. I was there, while the general commanding was at the Phillips House during the action. During an action there is a constant running for orders, for re-enforcements, artillery, troops at different points, ammunition, &c.

I consider the crossing of the river, under the circumstances, a very creditable thing ; and I also consider the retreat, under the circumstances, as very creditable. There was not a gun or anything else lost. The entire army returned without an accident.

I would like to add here, because it was almost the only occasion where the general commanding and myself have differed in regard to any point, that I did not wish to relinquish Fredericksburg. I thought we could have held it with a single division by posting our batteries right. It would not have been giving up an expedition, but simply a change of tactics. That is the way in which I viewed it ; that we would just be drawing back a little in order to try it again. I was therefore strongly in favor of holding Fredericksburg ; others were not. Perhaps I was the only general officer of rank who was of that opinion. I thought it would present a better and a different appearance if we continued to hold the town. We could have commanded it at any time with our artillery, and we can do so now.

I do not think there was any danger or difficulty in holding it. But I may have been mistaken.

Question. Do you know any reason why the pontoon bridges did not arrive earlier?

Answer. I do not.

Question. You know nothing upon that subject?

Answer. I do not. I expected, as a matter of course, to find them here when I came, or very soon afterwards.

Question. If you had found them here, as you expected, what would, in your opinion, have been the result?

Answer. I should have taken the crest in rear of the town on that night or the following day. Not considering Fredericksburg as being of any consequence, except as being on the road to Richmond, I should have passed through the town and taken possession of the crest.

Question. Are there any fords above here which might have been crossed?

Answer. There are several fords on this river, and in the summer time two or three of them would be practicable, perhaps.

Question. I mean were there any practicable fords at the time you did cross; and if so, where were they?

Answer. There is a rough cavalry ford down by the upper bridge at Falmouth, where horsemen sometimes go over. But that ford depends upon the tide, which rises above this town. The tide was in when I arrived here, which was in the afternoon. The tide was then receding, and a citizen told me that it would not be possible to get anything over the ford until after dark. That ford is represented to me as being a deep ford, with deep holes in it. Men can skip from rock to rock—a few men at the time. But there are occasionally deep holes, from six to eight feet deep. Such a ford would never be considered practicable for marching troops over.

Question. What reasons do you assign for not crossing either above or below where the enemy have fortified?

Answer. The reason was this: we did not attempt to turn their left flank, because there is there a slack-water navigation taken out of the river some two miles above here, and brought into the basin at the upper end of the town. That runs along at a considerable distance from the Rappahannock. In making a movement to turn the enemy's left flank, if a force had been sent up between the river and the canal, the canal would have to be crossed, and to do so it would be necessary to bridge it. The only way to have made that movement would have been to have gone entirely on the left of that canal, and that would have exposed the troops all the way up to a fire upon their flank from the batteries, which had been erected all along up there, without ours being able to return the fire at all.

Question. In regard to the condition of the army since the battle, is it demoralized any more than by the loss of that number of men?

Answer. I think it is.

Question. To what extent, and in what way?

Answer. It is difficult to describe it in any other way than by saying there is a great deal too much croaking ; there is not sufficient confidence.

Question. What number of men, or about what number, do you suppose were engaged on our side on the day of battle ?

The WITNESS. Under fire, do you mean ?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir.

Answer. Do you mean to include the reserves ?

Question. I mean to include all who were really under fire.

Answer. I should think there were hardly 50,000 men under fire. When I say that 50,000 men were all that were under fire, I would say that I do not consider the reserves beyond musketry fire as being exactly troops under fire.

Question. What was the whole number of our forces over the river ?

Answer. I should suppose there must have been about —— men ; and the difference between that number and the number actually under fire was held in reserve.

Question. From the best light that you have, what do you estimate to have been the force of the enemy ?

Answer. I thought that our forces were about equal.

Question. At what do you estimate our loss to be, in killed, wounded, and missing ?

Answer. I think 10,000 will cover our whole loss. It has been stated as over that number ; but those things are always exaggerated.

Question. At what do you estimate the loss of the enemy ?

Answer. A great deal less than our own, from the fact that they were covered by their works.

Question. In your judgment, as a military man, were there any faults or mistakes in bringing on or conducting that attack ?

Answer. I think not. The general commanding conferred a great deal with me about it. If he made a mistake, I made one too ; for I certainly approved the steps, one by one, that he took. As regards the responsibility for ordering the attack, I do not know what orders the general commanding may have received from Washington. He, however, told me that he had received a telegram from the President that he did not wish the army sacrificed. I think myself I would have made but a single attack. Instead of making two attacks, I would have made but one, massing everything upon that. But that is a point upon which military men may differ.

By Mr. GOOCH :

Question. Did the commanders of the grand divisions concur, all of them, so far as you know, in the movement that was made ?

Answer. I do not know ; but I presume they did.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. What is your opinion of the general condition and efficiency of the army since the battle ?

Answer. I consider that within a few days, with sufficient exertion, this army will be in excellent order again.

DECEMBER 19, 1862.

Major General William B. Franklin sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. You have seen the resolution of the Senate under which this committee are now acting. Will you go on and state, in your own way, what you deem it necessary to state?

Answer. I do not recollect the precise time, but it was just before we moved from Warrenton, General Halleck and General Meigs came down there and had a conference with General Burnside. The result of that conference, as I understood it, was that General Burnside was to move this army from Warrenton and that vicinity to Fredericksburg, and so across the river here. As an important part of that movement, I understood from General Burnside that when the advance of his army arrived in front of Fredericksburg, a pontoon train, enough to build two bridges, was to meet him there. I know the advance of the army did arrive at Fredericksburg at the proper time, but there was no pontoon train to meet it there, and in consequence of that the army could not cross at the time we expected to cross. We were therefore delayed several days in consequence of the delay in the arrival of the pontoon train.

After arriving here we accumulated provisions for twelve days; then General Burnside called a council, in which it was the unanimous opinion, I think, of all the generals present that if this river could be crossed it ought to be crossed, no matter what might happen afterwards. The point of crossing was not then definitely determined upon; but I thought at the time that we were to cross several miles further down.

Afterwards General Burnside called us together again, and informed us that he had determined to cross at the two points at which we finally did cross. I had no objection to that, but thought they were as good as the point further down. I knew nothing at all, in fact, about the defences on the other side; it was not my business to know anything about them. I think the arrangements for the crossing were all well made. At the same time, I always doubted our power to cross; and I do not believe we could have crossed had the enemy chosen to prevent it. And I know, from what I have since seen and what I before suspected, that they could have prevented our crossing at those two points if they had chosen.

However, as the committee know, the crossing was successfully made under cover of a fog, and, as far as my wing was concerned, we got into position safely, with the loss of a very few men. Still we were in such a position that if the enemy had at any moment opened upon us with the guns they had bearing upon us, I think that in the course of an hour our men would have been so scattered that it would have been impossible to rally them. For some unaccountable reason they did not open their batteries.

On the morning of the 13th instant I made the attack according to the order of General Burnside. I put in all the troops that I thought

it proper and prudent to put in. I fought the whole strength of my command as far as I could, and at the same time keep my connexion with the river open. The reason that we failed was, that we had not troops enough to carry the points where the attack was made under the orders that were given. After we were pressed back, I directed that a position should be held as far in advance as it was possible to hold it, and I brought up all the troops I had in reserve to hold that position. I held that position until I was ordered to recross the river. And from what I knew of our want of success on the right, and the demoralized condition of the troops on the right and centre, as represented to me by their commanders, I confess that I believe the order to recross was a very proper one. We recrossed on the night of the 15th, without the loss of a man, and with no trouble at all at our wing.

By Mr. Gooch :

Question. Had the pontoons been here at the time of the arrival of the army, what would probably have been the result ?

Answer. The probable result would have been that the army—as much of it as General Burnside supposed necessary—would have immediately crossed the river, driving away the enemy here, perhaps 500 or 1,000 men; and they would have occupied those very heights which we have since been obliged to attack; and that crossing would have been permanent and successful.

Question. Do you know on whom rests the responsibility of the delay in the arrival of the pontoons ?

Answer. I do not, officially.

Question. What, in your opinion, is the number of your killed, wounded, and missing ?

Answer. I think it will amount to about ten thousand altogether.

Question. Have you any knowledge of the loss of the enemy ?

Answer. I have not, except what I saw incidentally in a Richmond paper.

Question. Do I understand you to say that you concurred in the movement to cross the river ?

Answer. It was not my opinion that we could cross at any of the points indicated.

Question. Will you state whether or not it is your opinion that if the movement of the army from Warrenton had been delayed until the time the pontoons arrived here the army could have then come here, and with those pontoons have made a crossing here and occupied the heights before the enemy could have reached here in sufficient force to have prevented it ?

Answer. Yes, sir; that is my opinion.

Question. Then it is your opinion that if it had been ascertained that the pontoons could not possibly be here at the time General Burnside expected them to be here, he should have been notified of the time when they could be here, so that he might make the movements of his army correspond with the time when the pontoons could be here ?

Answer. That is my opinion.

Question. What is the condition of the army now as to its efficiency? Is its efficiency impaired other than by the loss of so many men, or is it demoralized by the recent disasters?

Answer. I think it is not demoralized at all—that is, so far as my own wing is concerned, I know it is not.

Question. After the crossing had been made, was it possible, in your opinion, for our troops to have carried the heights, or to have held our position upon the other side so as to have derived any advantage from it?

Answer. It is my opinion that if, instead of making two real attacks, our whole force had been concentrated on our left—that is, our available force—and the real attack had been made there, and merely a feint made upon the right, we might have carried the heights. I think we could have carried them. Whether the army would have achieved a success by that I cannot say. I do not mean to say that the mere carrying of the heights would have secured our success. I do not know what was behind them, or how much of a force the enemy had there. I know that wherever we appeared we found a great many more men than we had. I would like to impress as firmly upon the committee as firmly as it is impressed upon my mind the fact that this whole disaster has resulted from the delay in the arrival of the pontoon bridges. Whoever is responsible for that delay is responsible for all the disasters which have followed. We were utterly astonished when we came down here to find that Sumner had been here for some days, and had not received the pontoon bridges. I think that is the main cause for this disaster.

Question. Do you know what the expectation was as to the pontoons being here on the arrival of the first army corps that should get here? Was it expected that the pontoons would be here?

Answer. Certainly it was expected that they would be here.

Question. What was that corps to have done if the pontoons had been here?

Answer. That corps was to have crossed at once and taken possession of the heights. If the pontoons had been here there would have been very little difficulty in doing that.

DECEMBER 19, 1862.

Brigadier General D. P. Woodbury sworn and examined.

By Mr. Gooch:

Question. What is your rank and position in the army?

Answer. I am brigadier general, and have charge of the engineer brigade, consisting of the 15th and 50th regiments of New York volunteers.

Question. Had you any connexion with the forwarding of the pontoons to be used in crossing the river from Falmouth to Fredericksburg? If so, state all the knowledge you have on that subject, what orders you received, what you did, and any conversations you had, if any, with General Halleck, Burnside, or any other officer your superior.

Answer. On the morning of November 13 I received the following telegram from General Halleck:

“WARRENTON, *November 12—7.10 p. m.*

“Call upon the chief quartermaster, Colonel Rucker, to transport all your pontoons and bridge materials to Aquia creek. Colonel Belger has been ordered to charter and send one hundred barges to Alexandria.

“H. W. HALLECK,

“*General-in-Chief.*

“Brigadier General WOODBURY,

“*Engineer Brigade, 19th and F streets, Washington.’*”

At that time there were only twelve serviceable pontoons in Washington, all the others being in bridges at Harper’s Ferry and Berlin, about six miles below Harper’s Ferry.

I immediately ordered Major Spaulding, 50th New York, detached from my command, and in charge of the bridges above referred to, “to take up all the bridges and return all the pontoon property immediately to the Eastern Branch.”

Major Spaulding himself arrived in Washington on the night of the 13th, in pursuance of another order, as will appear below.

On the 14th I received the two following telegrams from General Burnside, through Lieutenant Comstock, chief engineer:

“WARRENTON, VA., *November 14, 1862.*

“On November 6 Captain Spaulding was directed to move bridge material from Berlin to Washington, and mount at once one complete bridge train in Washington. Is that train ready to move, with horses and everything needed supplied? If not, how long before it will be ready?

“C. B. COMSTOCK,

“*Lieutenant of Engineers.’*”

“HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

“*November 14, 1862.*

“In addition to the bridge train which Captain Spaulding has been previously directed to fit out in Washington, General Burnside desires to have one more complete train mounted and horsed as soon as possible, and, with the other, sent with a company, at least, and Captain Spaulding in command, by land, to Fredericksburg, Va. * * * *

“Please advise me how long before they will be ready, and on starting advise me of that.

“C. B. COMSTOCK,

“*Lieutenant of Engineers.’*”

To these telegrams I returned the following answer:

“WASHINGTON, *November 14, 1862.*

“I have received your two telegrams to-day.

“Captain Spaulding has arrived, and 36 pontoons have arrived. Forty men are expected in the morning. Captain Spaulding received Captain Duane's order of the 6th on the afternoon of the 12th. One pontoon train can be got ready to start Sunday or Monday morning, (November 16 or 17,) depending somewhat upon the quartermaster's department. General Halleck is not inclined to send another train by land, but will allow it, probably, if General Burnside insists. A second train can be sent by water to Aquia creek, and from thence transported by the teams which carry the first.

“D. P. WOODBURY,

“*Brigadier General.*”

I received no further orders from General Burnside.

To fit out this train Major Spaulding had to draw from the quartermaster's department 270 fresh, untried horses, some of which had never been in harness; to put together 270 harnesses, taken in separate pieces from boxes; to fit these harnesses to the horses; to shoe the horses, and to look up teamsters, who could not be obtained in Washington, but were procured, with difficulty, in Alexandria.

With four companies of men he worked day and night, but was not able to leave Washington before 2 o'clock on the morning of the 19th instant. Finding the roads almost impassable, he sent for a steam-tug and sent all his pontoons by water from the Occoquan. With his empty pontoon wagons he arrived at Belle Plain, 10 miles from Fredericksburg, on the 24th.

With his train, complete, he arrived at the headquarters of the army, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Fredericksburg, on the 25th, one day after a train had come by water.

The order from General Halleck given above, and his verbal orders to me on the 14th, all looked to the transport of bridge material to Aquia creek by water, that place being then in possession of the enemy.

On the 15th I sent down three companies to build some temporary wharves. There were no pontoons to send with them, but some arrived towards night of that day. On the 16th eight companies started with forty-eight pontoons, which arrived at Belle Plain on the afternoon of the 18th, the transport having been aground twenty-four hours. On the 19th, fearing that the land train would not arrive in time, I had thirty pontoon wagons shipped for Belle Plain. These were delayed by rough weather, and did not arrive till the 22d. These wagons were loaded on the night of the 22d, and a pontoon train was taken to headquarters, as already stated, on the morning of the 24th, by means of teams which had come down with the army.

The advance of the army arrived at Falmouth on the 17th.

General Halleck's order to me of the 13th made it apparent that the army was preparing to march to Fredericksburg. As to the time

when the movement would be made I never received any information. Fearing, however, that the movement would be precipitate, I went to General Halleck's office and urged him to delay the movement some five days, in order that the necessary preparations might be made to insure its success. To this he replied that he would do nothing to delay for an instant the advance of the army upon Richmond. I rejoined that my suggestion was not intended to cause delay, but rather to prevent it.

In making this suggestion I had reference, not only to the pontoon train, but to the landings still to be created for the quartermaster and commissary departments. The quartermaster department was very scantily supplied with the means required for these landings—I may say almost totally destitute of means.

With the very short notice given to me there was only one possible way of supplying the army with a pontoon train in time.

Had the emergency been made known to me in any manner I could have disregarded the forms of service—seized teams, teamsters, and wagon-masters for instant service wherever I could find them. Then, with good roads and good weather, they might possibly have been in time. But I had no warrant for such a course, which, after all, could only have been carried out by the authority of the general-in-chief.

I had a conversation with General Meigs on the 15th, in which much was said about the work to be done at Aquia creek—not a word, so far as I can remember, about the land pontoon train.

The department of which General Meigs is chief cannot be justly blamed in this matter. My requisitions for horses and for transports were answered immediately.

DECEMBER 20, 1862.

Major General Joseph Hooker sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. What position do you hold in the military service ?

Answer. I am a major general of volunteers, and command one of what is called the grand divisions of the army of the Potomac.

Question. You have read the resolution of the Senate under which this committee is now acting. Will you please go on and state, in your own manner, what you consider necessary in order to give us a clear and concise history of the movements of the army of the Potomac since General Burnside assumed the command of it ?

Answer. I joined the army at Warrenton about the 10th of November. At that time General Burnside was in command. After I had been there a day or two, during which time there was some talk of transferring the line of operations from the line of the railroad at Warrenton to the line of railroad at Aquia creek, General Halleck and General Meigs visited General Burnside, as I was informed, to determine whether this transfer of the line of operations should be made. As near as I can recollect, that was about the 11th of November. That matter was discussed between those generals and General Burn-

side, and it was determined that that transfer should be made. Some one of the party remarked, either General Halleck or General Meigs, I do not recollect which, that they thought they could have everything ready on this line in three days. This was not a private consultation. I was present in the room at the time these things were discussed, and although my opinion in regard to them was not asked I heard the conversation. They said that they thought they could have the pontoons ready, the stores landed, and everything in readiness to advance in three days. I remember that I thought that was marvellous at the time; that it was not within the range of human possibility to do that. Soon after the movement to the Rappahannock commenced.

I will say here that I brought up the rear of the army in marching from Warrenton to this point. I mention this matter because I think it has an important bearing upon some matters which are to come afterwards. The rear of this movement was considered the post of honor.

After being upon the road for about three days, I stopped one day, with my command, at Hartwood. From that point I addressed a letter to General Burnside, requesting that he would permit me to cross the river with my grand division at one of the fords there, and come down on the south side of the Rappahannock. But, for reasons assigned in a communication from him, the request was denied me. I then marched to this place.

In the meantime I had received orders to have my command furnished with twelve days' rations, forage for three days, and the requisite amount of ammunition. At Hartwood I had three days' provisions with me. On reaching this point I found that the divisions which had preceded me, I presume in obedience to orders, had provided themselves with the prescribed preparations, rations, forage, &c., for a forward movement, and nothing was left for my division. For three days after reaching here I was on less than half rations. After a few days, however, provisions began to accumulate here, and after a week or ten days I was enabled to prepare for the advance, so far as related to food. When I reached here, which was on the 22d November, all the pontoons had not arrived, and I was told that the reason for the limited amount of supplies was the difficulties of landing and forwarding; there were not cars enough; there were no facilities at Aquia creek or at Belle Plain for landing them.

After the pontoons arrived, it became a matter of importance to determine where and in what way we should cross the Rappahannock. The officers commanding the grand divisions were called together to discuss and determine that matter. One of the first questions that were submitted to us was where we should cross the river. General Burnside proposed that a portion of the command should cross here, and a portion should cross about twelve miles below here. I objected, by my vote in the council, to crossing two columns so far apart, and stated my preference that the whole army should cross at what is called the United States or Richards's ford, about twelve miles above here. But I was overruled, and it was determined that the crossing should be here and about twelve miles below here, and the road was

corduroyed in the vicinity of the crossing about twelve miles below here, in order to facilitate the crossing.

About this time General Burnside intimated that I should take the advance in crossing. I said to him that I should be most happy to do it; but if my division should hold the advance when it was the post of danger, and cover the retreat when that was the post of danger, I would like to have that place assigned me in line of battle; and if he would give me the right of this army, I would vindicate my claim to it.

It was then that General Burnside changed the plan of crossing, and he also changed the place of crossing. He had three bridges thrown across at Fredericksburg, and two bridges about three or four miles below here; and it was determined that Franklin should cross on the lower bridges, and Sumner should cross in advance of me on the upper bridges. My position, if they succeeded, was to be to hold my division in hand to spring upon the enemy in their retreat.

About this time a council of war was held to determine in what manner we should attack the enemy after crossing the river. It was determined, as I supposed—for I left the council with that impression—that we should attack them without any separation or division of the army, attacking the enemy on their right, below here. That was what I advocated, the keeping the army together, and turning the enemy's right. I did not approve the attempt to pierce so strong a line at two points, when one would be as much as we would be likely to succeed in. A prisoner, a German, had been taken and brought into this very room, (General Sumner's headquarters.) This prisoner said he had no objection to communicating everything that he knew in regard to the rebel forces, provided the rebel authorities were not informed of it. He had been impressed into their service, and wanted to quit it. His appearance and his story were such as to carry conviction to the minds of every one who heard him. He told us precisely of the arrangements for defence they had made on the right, but in regard to the left he knew less. He said that it was impossible for us to carry this position. He informed us of the batteries they had, the positions they had taken, and the defences they had thrown up, and said that the rebels regarded it as an impossibility for them to be driven from it. But General Burnside said that his favorite place of attack was on the telegraph road. Said he, "That has always been my favorite place of attack." The army was accordingly divided to make two attacks.

The night before the attack, two of my divisions—and they were my favorite divisions, for one was the division which I had educated myself, and the other was the one that Kearney had commanded, and of those two divisions I knew more than of any others in my command—these two divisions were sent down to support Franklin. They left here under orders to hold the bridge head. At 10 o'clock on the day of the battle I was standing here on this roof with General Burnside, when word was brought that those two divisions had been ordered forward with Franklin. I said to General Burnside that when it came to my turn to act I would have nothing to act

with, and that I did not want General Franklin to fight my divisions; that the next report we heard would be that those divisions were under fire. He assured me that they should not cross the bridge down there; that they were ordered as supports to Franklin, to assist in defending the bridges, and were not to go into battle with him.

Soon after I received an order to send another of my divisions to relieve General Howard's division, in the upper end of Fredericksburg. My other three divisions were drawn up at the heads of the bridges on this side, ready to cross at a moment's notice. About 2 o'clock on that day I received orders to send another of my divisions to support General Sturgis, and about the same time I received an order from General Burnside to cross over my other two divisions and attack the enemy on the telegraph road—the same position we had been butting against all day long. As soon as I received the order my divisions commenced crossing.

I rode forward to see what I could learn from the officers who had been engaged in the attack—General French, General Wilcox, General Couch, and General Hancock. Their opinion, with one exception, was, that the attack should not be made on that point. After conferring with them, I went to examine the position to ascertain whether or not it could be turned. Discovering no weak point, and seeing that many of the troops that had been already engaged in the attack were considerably demoralized, and fearing that should the enemy make an advance, even of but a small column, nothing but disaster would follow, I sent my aide-de-camp to General Burnside to say that I advised him not to attack at that place. He returned, saying that the attack must be made. I had the matter so much at heart that I put spurs to my horse and rode over here myself, and tried to dissuade General Burnside from making the attack. He insisted on its being made.

I then returned and brought up every available battery in the city, with a view to break away their barriers by the use of artillery. I proceeded against the barriers as I would against a fortification, and endeavored to breach a hole sufficiently large for a "forlorn hope" to enter. Before that the attack along the line, it seemed to me, had been too general—not sufficiently concentrated. I had two batteries posted on the left of the road, within 400 yards of the position upon which the attack was to be made, and I had other parts of batteries posted on the right of the road, at the distance of 500 or 600 yards. I had all these batteries playing with great vigor until sunset upon that point, but with no apparent effect upon the rebels or upon their works.

During the last part of the cannonading I had given directions to General Humphrey's division to form, under the shelter which a small hill afforded, in column for assault. When the fire of the artillery ceased I gave directions for the enemy's works to be assaulted. General Humphrey's men took off their knapsacks, overcoats, and haversacks. They were directed to make the assault with empty muskets, for there was no time there to load and fire. When the word was given the men moved forward with great impetuosity.

They ran and hurrahed, and I was encouraged by the great good feeling that pervaded them. The head of General Humphrey's column advanced to within, perhaps, 15 or 20 yards of the stone wall, which was the advanced position which the rebels held, and then they were thrown back as quickly as they had advanced. Probably the whole of the advance and the retiring did not occupy 15 minutes. They left behind, as was reported to me, 1,760 of their number, out of about 4,000.

I may as well state here that Sykes's division was drawn up to support Humphrey's, so that, in case Humphrey's should succeed, I could throw forward all the force that I had left—Sykes's division, about 4,000 men—to hold the position in face of 30,000 men who were massed behind that wall. That was why I did not like to make the attack, because, even if successful, I could not hold the position; and I assigned that as the reason I did not think it advisable to make the attack.

It was now just dark. Finding that I had lost as many men as my orders required me to lose, I suspended the attack, and directed that the men should hold, for the advance line between Fredericksburg and the enemy, a ditch that runs along about midway between the enemy's lines and the city, and which would afford a shelter for the men.

I will say that, in addition to the musketry fire that my men were exposed to, the crests of the hills surrounding Fredericksburg form almost a semicircle, and these were filled with artillery, and the focus was the column that moved up to this assault. That focus was within good canister range, though I do not think any canister was thrown on my men that day. All these difficulties were apparent, and perfectly well known to me, before I went into this assault. They were known also to other officers. General French said to me that the whole army could not take that point, and I reported that to General Burnside.

After establishing my picket line, I returned and reported to General Burnside what I had done. He was dissatisfied with the line I had taken for my pickets, and said that they must be established at the advanced position that we had held during the day. We had had some men lying down on their bellies, about one hundred yards beyond this ditch, on the side hill which we could sweep with our artillery, and take possession of at any time. I immediately sent word for my pickets to advance to that place, and make that the line of the pickets, as General Burnside had ordered. General Burnside said that if we came back to the ditch I have spoken of, it would be a falling back of our army. I put General Sykes's division on picket duty. That day, while the men were lying there on their bellies, my loss, in General Sykes's command, was two hundred and four men, and my men were where they could inflict little or no injury on the enemy. Had the enemy occupied the ditch, there might have been a half a dozen casualties during the day.

That night, after seeing General Burnside, I returned to Fredericksburg, and took command of the forces there. I placed General

Butterfield in the upper end of the town, so that he could defend it in case of an attack by the enemy. At the south end of the town I placed General Couch. I requested of General Burnside that all of the troops over there, but two divisions, might be withdrawn to this side of the river, because, if the enemy should throw a shell into the city, it could not fall amiss with all those troops there. Many of the troops were in such a condition that they gave me no additional strength. It has been reported through rebel sources that great dissatisfaction is felt at our not having him shelled while our troops were in the city. And I have heard that court-martials are now being held among the confederates to examine into that matter; and that at one time they were actually heating shot in their furnaces to throw into the city while we were there.

We remained there until Monday night and Tuesday morning, when orders were issued, first, for General Sumner's command to be withdrawn; and afterwards, between three and four o'clock in the morning, for my own command to be withdrawn.

I ought to say here that the morning after we had made our attack, orders were issued for another attack to be made in the same place. But the officers who had already been engaged demurred to it, and the order was not carried into execution.

Question. Had you made any impression, in the meantime, upon their works?

Answer. Not the slightest; no more than you could make upon the side of a mountain of rock. On the day following the attack another council of war was held, and the question was submitted, how that place could be taken? When I think of it, the council was held on Monday, if I am not mistaken. It was composed of the generals commanding the grand divisions—all but General Franklin, who said he could not leave town, as he was expecting an attack—and some of the corps commanders. The opinion of most of the council was, that the place could not be taken at all. My own opinion was that, if there was any chance to take the place, it was by forming a heavy column of attack at night, when the enemy could not see to use their artillery.

By Mr. CHANDLER:

Question. What was there to prevent flanking them on our right, beyond their batteries?

Answer. Water—a lake and a mill-race, which was reported to me to be impassable.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Question. Was the strength of their position such as could be ascertained from this side of the river, before making the attack?

Answer. Yes, sir. We had precise information of their position from the well-informed German prisoner I have before spoken of, who told us where their batteries were, of the ditches and the stone wall; and the officers who made the attack in the forepart of the day told me the same thing before I made my attack; and the troops massed

behind had been seen from the balloon. But if I was ordered to make the attack, I was perfectly willing to make it; for it made no difference what became of me. I made the attack, and such an attack as I believe has never before been made in this war.

Question. What is the length of that stone wall?

Answer. I should think it was some 500 or 600 yards; and rifle-pits were continued all along, amounting to almost the same thing. This wall appears to be not simply a plain stone wall, but a support wall. Behind the wall were rifle-pits, and there was earth between the rifle-pits and the wall. To batter down that wall was like battering the masonry of a fortification. I thought at first that I could knock the wall to pieces, and drive the rebels from behind it. My batteries were served as gallantly as batteries could be served. They fired just as well as batteries could be fired. But their fire made no impression at all. I do not think one rebel ran from behind the wall, or from the rifle-pits. All I wanted to do was to make one hole through the wall, and I brought to bear all I could to do that.

Question. What prevented crossing the whole force at the upper fords, some twelve miles from here—crossing the river there, and getting into the enemy's rear?

Answer. I do not know that anything prevented it, except that whenever a move of that sort should be attempted, the enemy would know of it as soon as we commenced it, and the fords there are of such a character that a few hours' work with so many men as they have would make those places very formidable. But I think that that would have been a much better move than either of the others were.

I have not seen the works down below here. But it has always been my impression that Franklin, who was down there with ——— men, his own grand division, and ——— of mine, could have swept everything before him. He represented the position down there as very formidable. But I have no idea, although I have never seen it, but that ——— men could have carried everything down there. I do not know the fact, but I have understood that a large portion of Franklin's force was not engaged at all.

Question. After the fight, what prevented the enemy crowding you into the river, if they had made an attack?

Answer. All that I had there to prevent it was this one division of 4,000 men that had not been engaged, and another division of mine in the upper end of the town that had been sent there to relieve General Howard's division. I had full confidence in those two divisions, because they had not been engaged.

Question. What was the number, all together, of our forces that were engaged?

Answer. I should think there must have been between ——— and ——— men under fire.

Question. What was the number of the whole army that we had across the river?

Answer. Franklin had nearly ——— men. I should think that we must have had altogether over the river well on to ——— men.

Question. What is your estimate of the rebel forces over there?

Answer. I think they had about 80,000 men. The German prisoner said that they claimed to have a hundred thousand men. Once in that position they are a great deal stronger to resist than we are to attack. In an open field, in my opinion, they would not be a match for us if our army was in good condition.

Question. How did the men behave during the attack?

Answer. They behaved well. There never was anything more glorious than the behavior of the men. No campaign in the world ever saw a more gallant advance than Humphrey's men made there. But they were put to do a work that no men could do.

Question. What do you know about the delay in making the attack after the army arrived here?

Answer. There was a delay in the arrival of the pontoons; and there was also a delay in getting the provisions up here.

Question. Do you know at what time the pontoons were expected to be here?

Answer. As I have before stated, I heard General Meigs, or General Halleck, assure General Burnside that they would be here in three days.

Question. Would that have been as soon as the army could have arrived here?

Answer. That would have been just as soon as the army could march here. They got ready fully as soon as I thought they could. When we had possession here before, the government built a valuable wharf which would have answered every purpose to land stores for an army of 100,000 or 200,000 men. But when the army left here that wharf was burned, although the enemy had no vessels on the river, and the wharf could not have been used by them. I knew at Warrenton that a transfer of the line of operations of this army could not be made in three days, or in three times three days. There were wharves to be built before the stores could be landed, for even if the stores were brought here they could not be landed until the wharf was built, except it was done by lighters. Then there were bridges to be built. I think it must have been ten days after I got here before the bridge over Potomac creek was built.

Question. Had this wharf been burned when the conversation between General Halleck and General Burnside took place?

Answer. It was burned long before that.

By Mr. GOOCH:

Question. From the conversation to which you have referred, who did you understand was responsible for having the pontoons and the other necessary supplies for the army sent here?

Answer. I supposed that was the quartermaster's business.

Question. As the matter was left at the time of the conversation, did you understand that the responsibility of having the pontoons and supplies here rested upon General Burnside, or upon General Halleck and General Meigs?

Answer. I think it necessarily rested upon General Halleck and

General Meigs, because it was beyond the control of General Burnside, who was not where he could control it.

Question. Then, as I understand you, General Burnside, from that interview, had a right to expect the pontoons and supplies here as soon as he could reach here himself?

Answer. That impression was left on my mind.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Question. If they had been here, what would have been the result?

Answer. When Sumner's advance column reached here there were only some 500 of the rebels in Fredericksburg. I do not know why they did not take possession of Fredericksburg. But the feeling seemed to be that they could take possession of Fredericksburg at any time; only a few days before Lieutenant Dahlgren, of the cavalry, with fifty-five men, crossed the river and took possession of the town. When I was at Hartwood I heard that there was going to be a delay of three or four days in getting the pontoons here, and that was one reason why I asked permission of General Burnside to cross at the ford there, and come down on the other side of the river. When we got here we should have been in condition to march right forward without stopping a day anywhere. But the same mistake was made here that has been made all along through this war. I think it would have been better to have held the line where we were, by retaining a sufficient force there to threaten the enemy and keep them up to their works at Culpeper and Gordonsville. But instead of that, we withdrew every man, and even burned the bridges, thus exposing our plan to the enemy the very moment we did so. If General Sumner's corps had come down here and left me up there threatening to advance on that line, or had them to believe that we were going to advance on both lines, it would have been better. But the enemy saw at once what we were at, and came right down here, and they were nearer here than we were; and this country is such that wherever you give them two or three weeks to fortify, 100,000 men can make any place impregnable to any other 100,000 men.

By Mr. GOOCH:

Question. What was the strength of your command at Hartwood?

Answer. It was ——— men.

Question. Would there have been any difficulty as to supplies in your moving down the other side of the river, as you proposed?

Answer. I had three days' rations then; I was preparing to march down through Caroline county, where the people had just gathered their crops, and I could have got plenty of forage and provisions enough for a week or a fortnight. At the time of the conversation between General Halleck, General Meigs, and General Burnside, there was some talk of forwarding some supplies up the Rappahannock. I said that at Bowling Green I could draw my supplies from Port Royal as easily as I could get them when I was at Hartwood. I knew that I could take a position with 40,000 men that the whole rebel army could not move me from.

Question. Would that movement have been a safe one in view of the fact that this army had not the means of crossing here?

Answer. Yes, sir; because I could take the heights there with my command, and put them in a condition of defence. If I had gone there not a man of the enemy would have come to Fredericksburg, but they would have gone to some other river and fortified there, if we had given them time, as effectually as they have here. I regard the rebel position on the Rappahannock as a strong one; I mean the one they retired to from Manassas. They had the advantage of two railroads—one to bring their supplies to them from the west, and the railroad from Richmond to bring their troops up from there. It is the strongest position they had in Virginia. The advantages of this position, to hold against a force seeking to cross the river and attack it, are such as I have never before seen.

Question. How far apart are the bridges at the two points where our army crossed here?

Answer. About four miles.

Question. You speak of the telegraph road; will you state more definitely what that road is?

Answer. The telegraph road leaves Fredericksburg from Hanover street, and runs through a depression in the hills in the direction of Bowling Green.

Question. How do you explain the fact that the enemy did not shell the city when our troops were crossed there?

Answer. I cannot explain it. It is inexplicable to me that they did not do so. As I have before stated, it is reported under flag of truce that they had at one time shot heating with which to fire the city, and that would have made a terrible time of it.

Question. Was our recrossing made unbeknown to the enemy?

Answer. I think it was here; how it was down below I cannot say. It was late when I got the order to withdraw my command—between three and four o'clock in the morning—and it was between eight and nine o'clock when the last of the troops were withdrawn. The enemy did not seem to realize but that there were troops in the houses. I withdrew my exterior line of pickets last of all, and they were not followed by the enemy.

Question. Had they discovered that our troops were to be recrossed, what could they have done?

Answer. I do not think we should have suffered much from their artillery fire on such a night as that was, as it would have been but random firing.

MONDAY, *December 22, 1862.*

Major General Henry W. Halleck sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. By a resolution of the Senate we are instructed to inquire into the recent assault on Fredericksburg, and the reasons for the delay in attacking the enemy's works. There seems to be a misunderstanding as to whose duty it was to furnish the pontoon boats. It appeared to be material that they should have been there at the same time that the army got there. The army got there first, and the pontoons did not get there till some time afterwards, through mistake or delay. That is a matter of inquiry. State, in your own way, anything you think material which will throw light upon the subject of our inquiry, and especially as to the delay.

Answer. I will state that all the troops in Washington and its vicinity were under the command of General McClellan when he was relieved, and he issued his orders directly to the commanding officer of Washington, with one single restriction, that no troops should be moved from the command of Washington until I was notified by General McClellan or the commanding officer here. In all other respects they were all under his direction. General Burnside, when he relieved him, was told that they remained precisely the same as before. On my visit to General Burnside at Warrenton, on the 12th of November, in speaking about the boats and things that he required from here, I repeated to him that they were all subject to his orders, with that single exception. To prevent the necessity of the commanding officer here reporting the order for the boats here, the order was drawn up upon his table and signed by me directly to General Woodbury, on the evening of the 12th, I think, the evening that I was there. I saw General Woodbury on my return, and he told me he had received the order. I told him that in all these matters he was under General Burnside's direction; I had nothing further to give him, except to communicate that order to him. In conversation with him and General Meigs, it was proposed that the train of pontoons should go down by land, as they could be gotten down sooner in that way, without interfering with the supplies which had to be sent to Aquia creek. I gave no other order or direction in relation to the matter than that. All other matters were under General Burnside's direction. He also informed me while at Warrenton, that Captain Duane, chief of the engineers, had already sent an order to Harper's Ferry for the pontoon train there to go down. The order had been issued. They being under General Burnside's immediate and direct command, I did not interfere at all in relation to them.

Question. Do you know whether there was any delay in starting them, or in their progress there?

Answer. I heard that there was a delay from the steamers getting aground with the pontoons, and there was a delay, as I understood,

in the train going down by land, on account of the difficulty of the roads and the inexperience, perhaps, of the officer in command, and it had to be taken by water part of the way ; it could not get through by land. I considered, from the reports I received, that these delays resulted mainly from accident and the elements, that no man had any control over. General Burnside telegraphed to me in relation to General Woodbury, thinking that he had not used due diligence, but afterwards told me he was perfectly satisfied with what General Woodbury had done, and that he did not know but that the commanding officer of the train that went down had done his duty also ; that he was disposed to make no further investigation of that matter ; that he was pretty well satisfied.

Question. Was there any request for you to delay the advance of the men until the boats arrived, or anything of that kind ?

Answer. No, sir. I remember this, that General Woodbury, in conversation with me, said that General Burnside could not get down for several days after I told him, and that he could not land the boats until General Burnside arrived. I think I remarked to him that I did not know exactly the day when General Burnside would move ; that I could not tell him, as the general did not know himself. While I was at Warrenton he proposed this movement, and he was directed to make all preparations for it, but not to begin it until the President was consulted. I returned on the afternoon of the 13th, and, I think, on the morning of the 14th I had an interview with the President, in which he consented to General Burnside's plans, and I immediately telegraphed to him to go ahead as he had proposed. I understood that there was considerable delay in getting the boats from Aquia down to the Rappahannock river on account of the bad roads, difficulty of transportation, &c., but no other delay than that which would naturally occur over a rough country like that, and accidental delay in laying the bridges was reported to me from the inexperience of the pontoniers who laid the upper bridges ; there was considerable delay in that. We could not commence the repair of the railroad until General Burnside took possession of it, as it was all in the possession of the enemy. That was understood between him and General Haupt in my presence. General Haupt went out with me to make the arrangement for repairing the roads as early as possible. I remember the conversation ; he could not land anything, but would have everything down ready as soon as he could, and when he found General Burnside was in possession he would commence.

By Mr. GOOCH :

Question. When you were at Warrenton, General Burnside had just assumed the command of the army of the Potomac ?

Answer. Five days before, I think.

Question. Was there, or not, any agreement or understanding between you and General Burnside when you were at Warrenton that the pontoons and army stores, or either of them, should be furnished to him by the authorities here without his looking after them himself ?

Answer. No, sir.

Question. I will say army stores necessary for him to cross the river and move forward from Fredericksburg.

Answer. No, sir. I requested General Meigs, as chief quartermaster, and General Haupt, in charge of the railroads, to go with me to consult with General Burnside, and told him that everything was at his disposition; he must make his own requisitions and give his own orders; that I would not interfere except to assist in carrying his views out as much as I could; whenever anything was reported to me as not being done, that I would render all the assistance in my power, and just previous to that time, with reference to a requisition which he had sent me, I told him not to send me any requisitions, but to make them on the proper heads of departments, and if they did not do their duty, then immediately report it to me, but that I could not attend to any requisitions at all.

Question. When you were there was the time considered that it would take to move the army from where it was to Falmouth, opposite Fredericksburg?

Answer. No, sir; for it was not determined at that time that the movement should be made.

Question. Was it not determined that it should be made provided the President assented to it?

Answer. Yes, sir; and he was immediately to commence his preparations as though it had been assented to until telegraphed to the contrary, but not to make any movement.

Question. Was, or was not, the time requisite for the movement of the army from where it was to Falmouth considered at that time?

Answer. It may have been spoken of in conversation. We had a long conversation of three or four hours, and it may have been alluded to; nothing definite was decided upon in relation to the time it would take. Indeed, I remarked when I left him that he was of opinion that he would cross a portion of his forces at the fords above the junction of the rivers. That was the opinion that he expressed before I left.

Question. And the residue at Falmouth?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Do you recollect whether or not there was any discussion when you were there as to the point that it was necessary that the pontoons and the army should arrive at Falmouth at the same period of time, so that the enemy should not know the point designated for the crossing?

Answer. I do not think that was mentioned. This matter, I know, was mentioned, that the pontoons should be there as soon as they could after he had got possession of the road, so that they could be taken down.

Question. At any time did General Woodbury go to you and suggest to you that it would be impossible to get the pontoons or stores at Falmouth so soon as was expected, and that for that reason it would be

advisable that the movement of the army of General Burnside should be delayed?

Answer. Not to my recollection. General Woodbury, in conversation—I think a part of the time General Meigs was present—spoke of the difficulty of getting instantly sufficient transportation to go down, and therefore that the train should go by land. The transports were required to get down provisions, and it was suggested that as few as possible should be used for moving the pontoon train.

Question. Since General Burnside has been in command of the army of the Potomac, have all its movements been made according to his judgment and direction, so far as you know?

Answer. Yes, sir; entirely.

By Mr. WRIGHT :

Question. I understand you to say, general, that the delay in the bridges, you think, was caused by the elements and the inefficiency of men, and that there is nobody to blame that you know of?

Answer. I will not say inefficiency of men; but I will say this, that General Burnside reported to me that the officer in command of the land train had not been as efficient as he ought to have been, but he afterwards modified that report. I told him to arrest any person who had neglected his duty and send him to Washington immediately, and he said to me that he did not think it necessary.

By the CHAIRMAN :

Question. One more question is suggested to me, which I will put. It is whether you were requested to repair that road before the army left Harper's Ferry?

The WITNESS. Before General McClellan's army left Harper's Ferry?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes, sir; before they left there were you requested by General McClellan to have that road repaired?

Answer. Not that I remember. I was told that one of his staff officers had requested it to be repaired, and the answer was immediately made by myself, "We cannot do anything there until he takes possession of the road;" and, moreover, I did not know that he was going there, for he had not informed me as to where he intended to go. If at any time any suggestion of that kind was made to me, it was made with reference to some future time, and not as to any immediate action. No request was made, according to my recollection. I will add that if any paper came to me in which an allusion was made to that being done, it was referred by me immediately to the head of the department having charge of it—either to General Haupt or General Meigs.

Question. But you do not recollect any such request?

Answer. No, sir.

DECEMBER 22, 1862.

Brigadier General M. C. Meigs sworn and examined.

By the CHAIRMAN:

Question. In your own way give your own explanations of anything that occurs to you to be material to the inquiry we are directed to make as to the battle at Fredericksburg.

Answer. As I presume this inquiry arises principally from the excited state of the public mind and the public press on this subject, and as the statements which have been published show a misapprehension of the true facts of the case—and I see that the press, in some degree at least, holds me responsible for certain failures connected with the pontoon train and supplies, and also that this committee is called upon by the press to extend its investigation to the desire of General McClellan to have the railroad from Aquia creek repaired some time before the army marched from Harper's Ferry, and the quartermaster's department has been held responsible by the public press for not having done this—I think I had better begin at that point.

Before the army of the Potomac left the vicinity of Harper's Ferry I received a telegram from Colonel Ingalls, chief quartermaster, dated 6th November, which I have read within a few days. Though I have not got it here, I can remember its substance: He requested me to direct that all the cars that could be obtained should be loaded with commissary and quartermaster's supplies, and placed in convenient positions on the railroad west of Alexandria, so as to be sent over the Manassas Gap road, and over the other railroads radiating from that point, to meet the army on its march. He also requested, in the last sentence of his despatch, that I would cause the road from *Aquia creek to Richmond, via Fredericksburg*, to be put in repair. I wrote on the back of that telegram, as is my habit, directions to give the orders which I thought were necessary. I sent copies of the telegram to the principal agents of the supply departments, to the commissary general in regard to commissary stores, and to the chief quartermaster of this depot, whose duty it is to provide quartermaster's stores, and provide the transportation for them, and to those who had charge of the repairing and running of the military railroads—General Haupt and Colonel McCallum. I inquired what preparation had been made for repairing these roads, and directed those under my orders to be ready to meet the requirements of the despatch. I knew the matter was in good hands, and I took it for granted that all proper preparations had already been made; and I learned on inquiry that they had been—that they were ready.

I remember writing on the back of the telegram that, of course, the repair of the railroad to Richmond would depend upon its being occupied by troops of the United States. It was at that time in possession of the enemy, and it would have been as easy at that time for me to provide barracks in Richmond as to repair the road to Richmond. I saw General Halleck, and mentioned this to him. I do

not remember exactly what reply I made to Colonel Ingalls, but on seeing him afterwards I spoke of it, and I understood that this was a despatch written at his own instance, not specifically directed by General McClellan; but in that I may be mistaken. I have not spoken to General McClellan on the subject, and I derive this impression from what I remember of Colonel Ingalls' statement. We had then, I believe, everything nearly ready to repair the road whenever we should be able to get possession of it. We had built there last spring a very large wharf, about a thousand feet in length. There were requisitions on the quartermaster's department to build still larger wharves—one about 1,800 feet long—at the time the corps of General Burnside landed there and went forward to the Rappahannock and Rapidan. I remember at that time advising the authorities that by the time I could get a vessel load of lumber to the place it would be abandoned; and the fact was, that before any progress could be made in building the 1,800 feet additional wharf, the work already constructed there was destroyed, besides the cars and a considerable quantity of stores; and the bridges were burnt, to my great regret. I endeavored to prevent it, but heard of the intention too late. The next time this matter came to my attention in any way, was when General Halleck informed me that General Burnside had taken command of the army of the Potomac, and desired to change his base of operations, and requested me to accompany him to Warrenton to see General Burnside. I went with him on the 12th of November; and with us went General Haupt, the director and superintendent of military railroads appointed by the Secretary of War, who acts in connexion with the quartermaster's department. We furnish the funds, and he is supposed to be under the direction of the department. He is a very able and competent man. There was a good deal of conversation with General Burnside that night which I did not hear. I left General Halleck and himself to discuss the project of campaign, and I entered into it only late in the evening. I was informed that the general-in-chief would refer the matter to the President for his approval, and that General Burnside was to carry out his own plans if the President should approve.

I do not think that anything was said to me about pontoons then, but General Burnside asked me how soon I could have supplies ready for his army. I think he asked me how many days it would take to get the supplies to Aquia creek. I told him it could not be done in a day; that we could do a good deal, but that it took time to accomplish so great a movement. Here was an army of over men, the population of a great city, suddenly to be whipped up to break off from its lines of communication and be transferred to a new position, and their supplies to be landed from a narrow channel, a contracted harbor, with very shallow water; that to supply them with all the necessaries of life was like undertaking to supply Boston without any previous provision being made. I said it could not be done except with great labor, and that the army must do its own share; that I would collect all the suitable vessels I could and have them employed in the work. We had a number of vessels, barges, and canal-boats

already in the river. Our canal-boats were principally up the canal between here and Harper's Ferry. I said that we would collect them as rapidly as possible, and I would promise to have the supplies at Aquia creek by the time he got there, but that he had three or four thousand wagons with his army, and when he got to Falmouth, opposite Fredericksburg, he must send his wagons down to the Potomac and let them haul the supplies to the camps; that the railroad could not be repaired in a day; that we did not know the condition of the bridges. He was under the impression, I think, that the bridges had not not been burned; they had been burned, however.

I understood that there was not a large force at Fredericksburg. Captain Dahlgren, of General Sigel's staff, had made a dash into Fredericksburg a few days before, and had driven out what little force was there, and I was told by General Heintzelman that in this dash he had burned some bridges. I had the impression that he had burned these very railroad bridges; that they were burned then, and not before; but what were the facts in that matter I do not know. On our way out to Warrenton General Haupt had consulted me as to the best mode of organizing a corps of workmen for the railroad repair and wharf building. I told him there were two regiments of engineer soldiers here under the charge of General Woodbury, already organized; that they were composed principally of mechanics and workmen; that he could get no more intelligent, no more skilful, no better disciplined men, and they would serve both as guards and workmen; and I advised him to ask General Halleck to place a portion of them at least at his disposal, and to order them to Aquia creek. The idea struck him favorably. He requested it, and subsequently orders were given to send down this engineer brigade under General Woodbury.

I did not see at that time General Burnside's letter containing his plan of campaign. When he last visited this city, in conversation with me on this subject, he expressed some surprise that I had not seen it; he thought I had; and he then read it to me. I do not remember how the question of his pontoon train came up at Warrenton. My own recollection of the circumstances is that it occurred to me that if he was going to Fredericksburg he would want pontoons, and I remember that I wrote in pencil an order to General Woodbury to call on the quartermaster at Washington for transportation for his pontoons to Aquia creek. Being under the impression at the time that the bridges were up near Harper's Ferry, and that they would have to be transported from that place, I thought he might need canal-boats, and perhaps horses, to tow them down the canal, and steamers to take them from Washington to Aquia creek. I handed this order to General Halleck, saying, "General Woodbury is an engineer; he is under your orders, not under mine, and it is not proper, therefore, for me to sign this order. If you think it right, I advise you to sign it." He signed it, and it was sent off to the telegraph office. I also wrote a despatch myself to the quartermaster in Baltimore, who was under my orders, directing a copy to be handed *in transitu* to the quartermaster here, calling on him to send a hundred barges as soon as possible to Washington for the purpose of taking

supplies to Aquia creek and Belle Plain. These barges draw but little water and are available in the river where larger vessels cannot approach the shore. General Haupt was with us. He required no directions, for he was in consultation with General Burnside and General Halleck. He had everything ready. It was perfectly well understood by him and myself, and I think also by General Halleck and General Burnside, (though I do not think it was a subject of special conversation,) that nothing could be done at Aquia creek until we had possession of it. The supplies, under protection of gunboats, could lay off in the harbor, but could not land. I thought the engineer brigade might be able to drive off the enemy's pickets and land, and that, I believe, was done. I think the engineer brigade landed at Aquia creek before General Burnside reached Falmouth, and that on their landing the enemy's pickets ran away, and then operations commenced. I was of opinion, and I suppose I expressed it to General Halleck, that the best way to get pontoons and pontoon trains from Washington would be to pack the flooring, and ropes, and anchors, &c., of the bridges in the pontoon boats and tow them down the river by steamer, while the wagons, on which they are ordinarily transported when moving by land, with their horses and harness, should march, under a guard, from Alexandria to Aquia creek, there to take up the pontoons and transport them to Falmouth by the common road. By this means I supposed the wagons would go light, and would get through more rapidly, and with less wear and tear to the horses.

I returned to Washington on the 13th, with General Halleck, and I do not think I had any discussion with him on that subject after I returned. I do not think I saw General Halleck again, or spoke with him about the transfer of the pontoon train. I did see General Woodbury. He called at my office, and we had some conversation. He did not, as I remember, ask me to give any orders or do anything, and I presumed everything was going on satisfactorily. I asked him when he would go down, and he said he would go down on Sunday; I do not remember the date, but it was the Sunday following our visit to Warrenton, (16th November.) He and Colonel Ingalls, and I think General Haupt, went down in a steamer on Monday to look at the place. A small portion of the engineer brigade had gone before, as I understood. I have since asked the chief quartermaster here, since the complaint which has been made on this subject, what was done by him, and he tells me that he received one evening a request from General Woodbury to have two steamers ready to take six companies of the engineer brigade to Aquia creek, I think, and some to Belle Plain, and to tow down some pontoons the next morning. He answered that the steamers should be in the Eastern Branch ready for him by daylight next morning, and they were there at the time appointed. The preparation of the train and getting the boats into position, I am told, occupied all that day, and the night was dark or foggy, so that the steamers did not sail, I think, until the next morning. One of them got aground at the mouth of the river and lay there for some time before they succeeded in getting her off, and that was the one which towed this fleet of pontoon boats. I have

since inquired whether he had heard anything in regard to the march of the pontoon train and wagons, and he told me that the wagon train had started across the country, but a rain coming on in the mean time, had raised the streams; the roads were crooked and narrow and deep; the wagons were long, unwieldy, and difficult to turn, and they failed to get through; and that the wagon train finally returned to the shore somewhere, and took a boat to Aquia creek. That is all hearsay, but I presume it is correct. The supplies were sent down. Barges were sent here from Baltimore and Philadelphia, (we could not get enough in Baltimore,) and I believe the army has not suffered from the want of any supplies. As soon as the army reached Falmouth and protected the line, and I think even before it opened communication with Aquia creek, work was commenced on the railroad, and the railroad was repaired. The large wharf of a thousand feet in length has been entirely reconstructed, and we have made preparations for building other wharves, extending the railroad down along the shore, and giving increased facilities for landing. When General Burnside showed me his plan of campaign I found, as I remember now, that there was provision that the pontoons themselves should march by land to meet him, exactly at what time I am not able to say; but any expectation that a pontoon train should be at Falmouth when the army arrived there would necessarily be disappointed, in my opinion. No pontoon train could go to Falmouth without a sufficient guard to drive out the enemy's pickets, and if it got there before the army, the enemy would have captured it. What the army itself did not do, it was not to be expected that the guard of the pontoon train should do. Hearing, when General Burnside was last in the city, that there were complaints on this subject—and here allow me to say that the quartermaster's department, which does a great deal for the army, is apt to be held responsible for everything that is not done—hearing that it was blamed for the failure to get the pontoons to Falmouth by the time the army reached that place, I replied to my informant, who was connected with the press, that the quartermaster's department was no more responsible for the march of a pontoon train than for the march of a battery of artillery or of a regiment of infantry; that its business was to provide material for the transportation of the army, and it had done so; had filled every requisition, and I have heard no complaint on that point. General Burnside came to see me a few minutes after this gentleman left my room, and I mentioned to him that I had just been told that public opinion was censuring the department. He laughed, and said he not only had no complaint to make against the officers of the quartermaster's or commissary's department, but he was surprised that they had been able to accomplish so much.

Question. Who would be responsible for that particular duty of getting the pontoons over there—General Woodbury?

Answer. If General Woodbury had orders from General Burnside, he was responsible for carrying them out or making him understand that it was impracticable to carry them out. The march of an army is to be managed by its commander. When a general undertakes to

make a movement he must give his orders himself, as General Halleck has told you. Every order that General Burnside requested from me, every requisition that was made upon me, he says himself was fully and promptly satisfied. If you want my opinion, I have an opinion on the subject, not as to anybody's being to blame, but as to what the facts were. I think there was a mistake made in expecting pontoons, which, I believe, at the time were at Berlin to be got to Falmouth while the army made two and a half days' march. I do not think it practicable. A march of 100 miles for a pontoon train is a serious matter, whether the march be made by land or by water. The march across from Warrenton, after the army was fairly under way, ought not, I suppose, to have taken over two days and a half, and I do not think it did. I think they marched rapidly, and crossed over to Falmouth in two days and a half. From what little I heard of the discussion between General Halleck and General Burnside—I only heard a part of it—I expected that a portion of General Burnside's army would cross above Fredericksburg, and I think he used the expression that within twenty-four or forty-eight hours, I do not remember which, after he got permission to move, his cavalry would be in Fredericksburg, the main body of his army, however, not crossing above, but crossing at Falmouth.

List of casualties in the army of the Potomac during the battle of Fredericksburg, Va., December, 1862.

	Wounded.	Killed.	Missing.	Total.
Centre grand division	2, 469	327	748	3, 548
Left grand division	2, 430	338	1, 531	4, 679
Right grand division	4, 159	480	855	5, 494
Engineers	43	7	100	50
Total	9, 101	1, 152	3, 234	13, 771
Treated in hospital				1, 630
Killed				1, 152
				<u>2, 782</u>

There is little doubt that the aggregate of cases returned as treated in hospital and the returns of killed will cover the whole amount of disabling casualties occurring at the battle of Fredericksburg, December 14.

The return of killed may be too small, but the other amount (to wit, 1,630) is, without doubt, sufficiently liberal to compensate any such deficiency.

THS. F. PERLEY,
Medical Inspector General.