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# Cornelius L. Moore: A Northern Soldier's Perspective on the Civil War

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# CORNELIUS L. MOORE: A NORTHERN SOLDIER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE CIVIL WAR

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ABSTRACT

CORNELIUS L. MOORE: A NORTHERN SOLDIER'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE CIVIL WAR

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This is a study of the Civil War through the letters of Cornelius L. Moore, a New York soldier in the Army of the Potomac. His letters span the years between August 1861-August 1864 and reveal a typical Union soldier's attitudes and experiences. Moore discussed such topics as the draft, the use of black soldiers, army leadership, and soldier life. His insight and frankness about these and other subjects make this story more than simply another account of a Civil War participant.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Civil War offers a valuable opportunity to study the life of the American soldier through his writings. Vast numbers of men were away from home; for many the war offered their first opportunity to travel beyond their county limits. As a result of their loneliness, caused by the separation from loved ones, and their excitement in new surroundings, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank wrote many informative letters and diaries recording the scenes around them. Unlike later wars, censorship was practically nonexistent during the Civil War. Thus, the letters and diaries of these homespun warriors are treasure houses of social and military history.[1]

In order for the serious historian to receive a complete picture of an event, he should not only consult the official reports, but also the accounts of those who witnessed the event. Such accounts may be obtained through letters, diaries or interviews. Important clues about how such factors as attitudes, fatigue, supplies, topography and the weather played a role in shaping the outcome of events

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[1]Bell I. Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), p. 13.

can be found in these personal narratives. Certainly, not all eyewitness accounts can be relied upon to reveal totally accurate or complete information, but they always add color, often frankness, to the serious nature of official reports.

The letters of Cornelius L. Moore represent the plethora of soldiers' letters and diaries that survived to record the events of the "late unpleasantness." There are one hundred thirty-eight letters which span Moore's three years of army service, August 1861 - August 1864. Only recently did the Moore family make these letters available to the Civil War historian. They reveal much more than the daily boredom of soldier life, covering the full gamut of subjects from family concerns and political topics to problems with officers and battle strategy. The letters offer an interesting, insightful, often sensitive look at our great national struggle through the eyes of one Union soldier.

Cornelius L. Moore, "Cornie" to his friends, was born on November 26, 1842, in Rochester, New York, and grew up in the small village of Greenport, Long Island.[2] He was the son of a small town proprietor and the second of seven children. Although the extent of his education is uncertain, incomplete evidence indicates he did not finish high school. Before the

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[2]The only biographical information which exists is found in surviving correspondence, War Department Muster Rolls, and the Department of the Interior Bureau of Pensions. A fire destroyed the early family records, and his descendants know little about his immediate family, his education, or other information about his youth.

outbreak of hostilities, Cornie served as a printer's apprentice, a job which brought him into constant contact with the written word. Although he never developed into an accomplished author, he enjoyed writing. In addition to his frequent letters to his family, he contributed several articles to his county newspaper, The Suffolk Weekly Times. These dealt with the activities of his regiment in the war. He also served as the third brigade editor for his division newspaper, and as company clerk. Apparently, his military colleagues recognized both his interest and his ability as a war correspondent, and provided him with the opportunity to write.

Motivated by a sense of patriotism, Cornie answered the call for volunteers on June 29, 1861, and was mustered into service on August 14, 1861.[3] He enlisted for three years, a term during which he would participate in most of the major battles in Virginia. Cornie enlisted in a small, newly formed unit of only two companies. Albert C. Ramsey was the commanding officer of this unit, known as "Colonel Ramsey's Regiment," and described by its members as the "United States Voltigeurs."[4] The unit trained at Camp

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[3]It is not clear why there was such a delay between the dates of enlistment and muster, but Cornie does mention receipt of payment for that six-week interlude.

[4]Voltigeurs were a form of French light infantry. Because of the popularity of French military units among Americans, units such as the Voltigeurs and the Zouaves were commonly organized during the Civil War.

Leslie, Dobb's Ferry, New York, approximately twenty-four miles north of New York City. Cornie, along with other men from his native Suffolk County, was a member of Company B. Generally, companies were raised within an individual city or county. As time passed recruitment became increasingly difficult. According to one officer of the regiment, Lieutenant Josiah M. Favill,

> we soon found a great change had come over the spirit of the people since the departure of the militia regiments, in April. Then, everybody wanted to go; now, apparently, most people wanted to stay at home. . . . Recruitment proved very slow.[5]

Because of this difficulty recruiting officers did not limit themselves to a single area, but enlisted recruits in all parts of the state. Even state boundaries apparently proved no obstacle to recruiters. Men from five states were represented in Cornie's company and regiment.[6] This recruitment procedure which was quite unusual reflected the North's feeling of shock and depression following the defeat at Manassas.

Due to continued recruitment problems statewide and in accordance with the State of New York General Orders No. 78,

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[5]Josiah M. Favill, The Diary of a Young Officer Serving With the Armies of the United States During the War of the Rebellion (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and Sons Company, 1909), pp. 42-43. Favill enlisted as second lieutenant of Company E.

[6]New York City, Utica and the counties of Kings (Brooklyn), Lewis and Dutchess were the principal areas of recruitment. A large number of men were also recruited from the states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Vermont.

the "United States Voltigeurs" and four other independent units were consolidated, on October 19, 1861, to form the 57th New York Volunteer Infantry. This was done to hasten the movement of soldiers to the front and to transfer the cost of maintaining the troops from the state to the federal government.[7] The other units which formed the regiment were: the "National Guard Rifles," the "Clinton Rifles," the "Manhattan Rifles" and the "Washington Zouaves." As a result of the consolidation, these different units lost their nicknames and the 57th regiment became simply the "National Guard Rifles," commanded by Colonel Samuel K. Zook. The new regiment rendezvoused at Camp Lafayette, New Dorp, Staten Island, before proceeding to the seat of war. Here the various components were molded into one fighting unit by constant discipline and drill. On November 12, the 57th received orders to proceed to Washington, D.C.

The story which follows is taken primarily from Cornie's letters. Other letters and diaries from soldiers belonging to the 57th regiment have been used for comparison and clarification of information. Cornie served as a member of the hard-fighting Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac. He advanced by ranks from private to lieutenant and was in command of his company at the time of his discharge on August 13, 1864. Though he participated in many hard-fought battles, he rarely gave graphic details about the fighting,

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[7]Favill, Diary, p. 43.

preferring to discuss camp life or family matters. Since his sister, Adeline, was his main correspondent, he probably wanted to spare her any unnecessary anguish which detailed descriptions of the battlefield might have caused. He constantly reassured her that he was both well and unharmed. Cornie had much to say about war, politics, and army life. His insight and frankness about these and other subjects make this story more than simply another account of a Civil War participant.

# CHAPTER I

## 1861

On August 8, 1861, Cornie Moore arrived at the induction center in New York City. It was located at Jackson Hall on the corner of Greenwich Avenue and West 13th Street. At eighteen years of age, he was like most young people away from home for the first time, eager but uncertain. Homesick and alone in a strange city he wrote home to assure his anxious parents that he was doing well. Cornie went to New York filled with romantic notions of military life and patriotism for the Union. His romanticism suffered a setback because of the disorganization he experienced. The first night he and the other recruits were forced to sleep as best they could in the Hall without a bed or cover of any kind. They were given no information about their time of departure for the training camp. These frustrations, however, would seem minor compared with the problems to come.

The next afternoon the recruits left the induction center and embarked on a steamer bound for their training camp at Camp Leslie, Dobb's Ferry, New York. Cornie eagerly looked forward to a great military camp filled with soldiers in colorful uniforms. Upon his arrival, he was outraged to

find only two small companies of recruits who had not even been sworn into service. "Nothing that recruiting officers, or what the city papers say in regard to regiments organizing in or about New York," he wrote his father, "can be relied upon in any particular--they seem to consider that they have to misrepresent things."[1] Cornie felt justified in his anger toward the recruiters because they had promised that he would join an organized fighting unit. Instead, he found the companies totally unprepared for combat. Only half of the men wore uniforms and not one had a weapon. The reality of the situation was quite a shock and a disappointment to the impressionable recruits. Frustrated and angry, Cornie and the others talked of leaving, but decided to remain for the night.

The situation improved overnight as the soldiers became better acquainted. When Cornie and the new recruits arrived, the older soldiers met with them to induce the new men to join their companies. He found Company A to be a rough group of men from Buffalo, New York, who called themselves "Tigers." Conversely, the men in Company B seemed to be more congenial, composed mostly of "Green Mountain Boys" from Vermont. He was pleasantly surprised to find men in this company from the neighboring towns of Riverhead and Patchogue in Suffolk County. This discovery proved the major

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[1]Cornie to Father, 19 August 1861, Cornelius L. Moore Papers, Old Dominion University Archives, Norfolk, Virginia.

reason for his decision to join Company B. The fact that this company was housed in barracks while Company A slept in tents may also have influenced his decision.

After Cornie settled in to his new surroundings, he began to write informative reports for the Suffolk Weekly Times. His first news article was entitled, "Suffolk County Boys In Camp." He gave a detailed account of camp life and provided a list of those men in his regiment who enlisted from Suffolk County. Even though the regiment had grown to four companies he was concerned about the slow arrival of new recruits. If the regiment waited to fill its ranks with a thousand men, he feared it would be several more months before they could leave for Washington. He considered the camp conditions comfortable; the rations good. Also, the men had the opportunity to attend Sunday worship services. Frequent drills and dress parades drew large numbers of the curious public. Young boys sold pies, cakes, candy, cigars and tobacco in camp helping to supplement the soldiers' rations. The camp really became a village in itself. Strict discipline was not enforced as the soldiers reveled in their new occupations.[2]

The regiment continued on very good terms with the people of Dobb's Ferry. Unlike other regiments in the area, Cornie's unit did not plunder the farmers' crops, orchards

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[2]"Suffolk County Boys In Camp," Suffolk Weekly Times, 2 September 1861.

or livestock. In contrast, the 1st Regiment Fire Zouaves, encamped at Scarsdale about seven miles from Dobb's Ferry, angered the local inhabitants. They often robbed cornfields, hen roosts and orchards without restraint. Once they even took control of a train car, collecting the fare for themselves.[3] The people of Dobb's Ferry showed their appreciation for the regiment's good conduct by providing many home-cooked foods for the soldiers. Respect for life and property certainly had its rewards.

Cornie expressed his patriotism and loyalty to the United States in many letters. He voiced contempt for the South's rebellion and believed it was the duty of all Americans to support the government during that critical time. He soon discovered that not all Northerners were as loyal to the Union. While on leave in New York City he wrote:

> I have just seen a living curiosity--a real secessionist. A young lad at my elbow, hearing some gentlemen speak of the reported death of Jeff Davis says he wished it was Lincoln who was killed instead of Jeff Davis. He is a ludicrous specimen of humanity, you may believe--skin and bones being the component parts of his nature, with a scarcity of brains, I should suppose, if he has any. How long will such

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[3]This regiment was the 1st New York Fire Zouaves, organized in April 1861 from volunteer firemen in New York City, by the famous Zouave drill-master Elmer Ellsworth. While in Washington in May 1861, the Fire Zouaves became famous for their rowdy conduct, so their rambunctiousness at Scarsdale was not uncharacteristic for this group. Mark M. Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976), p. 594.

characters be tolerated![4]

This was Cornie's first introduction to the fact that the rebellion transcended regional boundaries.

Cornie found much to satisfy him in camp life. But there was another side to the army which occasionally caused feelings of regret. On August 17, during a heavy rain storm, the First Lieutenant of his own company pulled off three boards from the side of the barracks causing the men inside to become quite wet. A unanimous vote was cast by the drenched recruits to "secede" and return to New York City to join another regiment. They were all packed and ready to leave when Colonel Ramsey, commanding the regiment, arrived to calm the men. As a result, the barracks was repaired, fresh tobacco was distributed and the tempest passed. Ironically, Cornie ended his letter about this incident by praising his officers, calling them gentlemen and telling of the great respect the soldiers had for them. He certainly could not have had much affection for the lieutenant.[5]

Later, he wrote a letter sharply criticizing all he had once praised. The dullness of camp life began to affect him. He complained of the confinement, the food, the drills, the tents, and especially the boredom. Cornie's anxiety about the regiment's inactivity was the major cause for this outburst. It was uncharacteristic for him to grumble about

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[4]Cornie to Adeline, 3 September 1861.

[5]Cornie to Adeline, 17 August 1861.

his situation, but like most green troops, he did not realize how much time was required to properly train and equip a regiment for service. His unit also faced the additional problem of the lack of troops. As a result, extra time was needed to continue recruitment. Cornie soon resigned himself to the state of affairs. Two days later he wrote home as calmly and contentedly as before, saying, if his family had gotten the impression that he was unhappy they were mistaken. Such was the fickleness of the common soldier.[6]

As time passed, the regiment finally moved. On October 16 or 17 it advanced to Camp Morgan at Willett's Point, Queens, Long Island. There the soldiers learned of their consolidation as the 57th New York Infantry Regiment. Accordingly, Cornie's Company B was redesignated Company I. Proceeding across the bay to Staten Island, the regiment continued to Camp Lafayette on the outskirts of New Dorp for its final encampment before moving south.

Camp Lafayette proved to be as uncomfortable for the soldiers as previous encampments. The troops were housed in clapboard barracks where they slept on bunks made of wooden planks. Bed ticks filled with straw served as a mattress with only one blanket for a cover. Rations were starchy and tasteless.[7] Drills, inspections and dress parades consumed

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[6]Cornie to Adeline, 22 September 1861.

[7]Charles Hamlin to Sister, 17 October 1861, Charles Hamlin Papers, New York State Library, Albany, New York. Hamlin served as a hospital steward in Company B of the 57th New York.

most of the daylight hours. Yet the soldiers, eager to get to the front, endured without complaint or a dampening of spirits, in what they had come to accept as an interrelated part of army life.

Shortly before their departure for the front, the men of the 57th received their first regimental colors. Chester A. Arthur, later President of the United States, presented them as a gift from the New York City Chamber of Commerce. Lieutenant Favill remembered:

> The colors were very handsome: from the city, a large blue silk, gold fringed, and embroidered flag, with the arms of the city, two blue silk guidons also embroidered and fringed, and a plain United States flag, from the Government.[8]

Following this ceremony, the Brooklyn Gray Cadets said farewell to their old teacher and drill master, who was a captain in the regiment. After the formalities the captain said goodbye to each cadet. Cornie watched from the sidelines and described the emotional scene:

> As he [the captain] took in turn each of their hands and shook it they burst into tears as did many of the lookers on. . . . How pretty the picture! It was deeply affecting and I felt like crying myself as I stood and saw the feelings of the little fellows.[9]

As the ceremonies ended, final preparations for the regiment's departure began. New uniforms and Enfield rifles were issued to the regiment giving the soldiers their first unified appearance. Cornie faced the future with mixed

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[8]Favill, Diary, p. 48.

[9]Cornie to Adeline, 9 November 1861.

emotions. He hoped the 57th would give a good account of itself when called on to fight. He asked his family to pray for him and to join him in praying for a speedy end of the war.

The regiment broke camp on the afternoon of November 12 and marched four miles to Vanderbilt Landing where they embarked on the steamer Kill-Von-Kull bound for /Perth/ Amboy, New Jersey. There they boarded a train en route to Washington. They arrived in Philadelphia at 4 o'clock in the morning on the 13th where breakfast was served by the ladies of that city. After breakfast, they continued by rail through Baltimore and arrived in Washington about midnight. Upon arriving, the soldiers ate a prepared meal of salt pork, dry bread and coffee and then spent the night at the Soldiers' Rest.[10] Early the next morning Cornie set out to see the sights of the Capital city, a trip he found quite disappointing. The streets were unpaved and dusty while many of the houses and shops were little better than shanties. The Capitol dome was still under construction and debris littered the grounds. "The great city is a humbug," he wrote his sister, "the Capitol itself looks more like a mass of ruins than anything else."[11] Later that day, the

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[10]Both the Soldiers' Rest and the Soldiers' Retreat, located near the railroad depot, effectively fed and lodged newly arriving troops. When the troop trains neared the capital, hot meals were prepared and ready to eat upon their arrival. Margaret Leech, Reveille In Washington, 1860-1865 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941), pp. 185-186.

[11]Cornie to Adeline, 15 November 1861.

57th marched to Camp Wilder on the Bladensburg turnpike, northeast of the Capitol, where they were assigned to a provisional brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Silas Casey. The eager recruits soon learned that additional instruction and discipline were considered necessary before they would see the battlefield.

Washington took on the appearance of an armed camp with thousands of troops within and around its borders and more arriving daily. These troops were not the flamboyant and fanciful three-month militia of the previous summer, but sober, disciplined, more determined soldiers who were aware of the grim business ahead. Previously, camp life had been rather free and easy. Now, orders were issued regulating the conduct of the men. Drills occupied six to eight hours of each day. General and fatigue duty was abundant and a pass was required to leave camp. Offenders of any rules were punished with extra duty or fines.

Soldiers' wages did not last very long in Washington because there was so much to buy. A constant stream of peddlers invaded the camp with a varied assortment of wares. Although their prices were exorbitant, they found a good market. Cornie noted that apples which had cost one cent back home sold for four and five cents each. A newspaper which cost two cents in New York went for five cents in Washington. Unlike many of his fellow soldiers, Cornie endeavored to save his money and sent a portion of his earnings home regularly.

On November 1, 1861, Major General George B. McClellan replaced the aging Winfield Scott as General-in-Chief of the United States Army. After his victory at Rich Mountain, West Virginia, McClellan was considered by many to be the best general to lead an aggressive war and crush the rebellion quickly. Yet, his experience in field command was limited. He had proven to be a brilliant organizer and administrator, but had never led forces greater than a few thousand men. This cocky, flamboyant, young officer, hailed as the "Young Napoleon," thrived on and encouraged the flood of public attention he received. Lieutenant Favill, however, was unimpressed with the McClellan publicity. He candidly wrote:

> We are led to believe he is a great man, but most of us discount the ridiculous panegyrics that the daily papers are loaded up with every day. Outside of the fact that the general is an excellent organizer, nothing else is known of his abilities in the field, as he has never had any experience on such a scale, and cannot know himself what he will do.[12]

Despite the doubts of officers and politicians in McClellan's ability to command, he enjoyed undying support from the enlisted men in his army. He brought order from chaos and molded a tremendous fighting machine.

The 57th regiment and its provisional brigade were ordered into Virginia on November 28. As the brigade crossed the Potomac over Long Bridge, the men began to sing "I wish I was in Dixie," as they made their way through Alexandria

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[12]Favill, Diary, p. 52.

to Camp California. The camp was located two miles west of Alexandria along the Little River Turnpike near the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Although the soldiers enjoyed the change of scenery, there was little to break the monotony of camp life. To help raise their spirits a glee club was formed by some of the officers. Everyone enjoyed music, especially with the approach of Christmas. At this time of year the soldiers received Christmas packages from home filled with food and gifts. While other men in the regiment talked of having duck or turkey, Cornie humorously looked forward to his Christmas dinner of "fried stake." On Christmas day he visited Alexandria and saw the famous Marshall House where the Union's first martyr, Elmer Ellsworth, was killed. He noted that the hotel had been vandalized by souvenir hunters and was being guarded by soldiers to prevent further destruction.[13]

On December 26, the regiment was ordered out of camp to help form a picket line around the perimeter. Cornie's first combat operation came when his company went on a scouting expedition. They moved toward Burke's Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, trying to locate enemy

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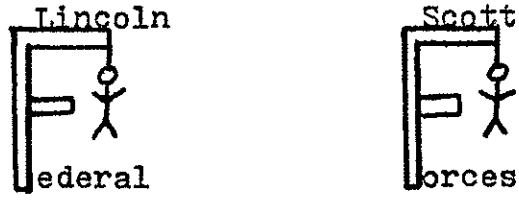
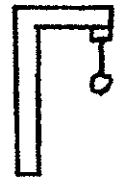
[13]Cornie to Adeline, 15, 21, 29 December 1861. Colonel Elmer Ellsworth led the 1st New York Fire Zouaves in the Federal occupation of Alexandria on May 24, 1861. He was killed, that day, by James T. Jackson, proprietor of the Marshall House hotel, after he removed a Confederate flag from the roof of that building. A national sensation of grief occurred following the death of the country's first hero. Boatner, Dictionary, pp. 263-264.

troops. Stumbling on to some Confederate cavalry near the station, the Federals fought a small skirmish which resulted in the cavalry's withdrawal. No casualties were reported. What Cornie remembered most during the expedition was not the enemy cavalry, but rather some curious graffiti found in the station house. He said the walls were filled with the scribblings of Union and Confederate soldiers. Some of the graffiti were illustrated and he provided his sister with two examples:

> In one place is pencilled the following, the F.F., standing for I suppose for the "First Families" but whether "of Virginia" or not I could not say:
>
> 
> 
>
> Opposite to this and a good contrast is this which sounds a little more pleasant:
>
> 
>
> The latest style of "necktie" intended especially for Jeff Davis.[14]

Cornie mentioned that members of his company added their sentiments on the walls, but did not say whether he did the same. It is quite evident by reading the letter that this minor action meant more to him than any previous day of his

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[14]Cornie to Adeline, 29 December 1861. Since "F.F." was filled in as "Federal Forces" he must have discovered its meaning.

young army career. The skirmish and the anticipation of more action made him feel a part of the war for the first time. He closed his last letter of 1861 with the desire to remain on picket duty longer, instead of returning to camp for more drills.

The year 1861 was a time of adjustment for Cornie. He had matured by learning to accept some discomfort living outdoors. The romantic life of a soldier which he idealized had been little more than a monotonous series of drills, inspections and roll calls. He had not yet fought a major battle and he had only seen a handful of Confederates at a distance. The year ended with Cornie several hundred miles from home on a cold field in Virginia. No end of the war was in sight. Yet, his loyalty to the Union and his belief in its justice remained strong.

## CHAPTER II

## 1862

January began snowy and cold. With the approach of winter the Army of the Potomac settled down for the long encampment. Wintertime afforded few opportunities for active operations. The inclement weather turned the dirt roads into a sea of mud which were a hindrance to all movement. During this lull, soldiers were engaged in some drills, but they usually had plenty of free time for personal pleasures. One such pastime was the construction of a home using logs and mud. The men took pride in their rude log huts and tried to make them comfortable.

Winter quarters were built in different styles. One of the most common was called "stockading a tent." By this method, a wall of logs was built with the soldier's tent raised over it for the roof. The floor was dug one to two feet below ground level for added warmth. A fireplace was added in the middle or at one end of the hut depending on the location of the entrance. Although Cornie lived in a hut of this type, he made one alteration which added to his comfort. For two dollars he bought a stove in Alexandria, a substitution which provided a more satisfactory

source of heat than a fireplace. Cornie and his tentmate chose to bunk together, a practice common among the soldiers. This allowed them the additional warmth provided by sharing the woolen and rubber blankets issued to each. The rubber blankets proved especially useful when it rained, since the canvas tent roofs proved to be far from waterproof. Cornie had a methodical arrangement for spreading out his covers.

> One of our India rubber blankets is spread upon the floor, and this and our overcoats comprise our bed. Our other India rubber blanket, with our two woolen blankets and one extra one, we contrived to smuggle into our tent, acts for the covering. And so we keep as warm and sleep as comfortable as you please.[1]

Rubber blankets thus proved as useful in the huts as they did in providing protection when the soldiers found it necessary to sleep on moist ground during summer campaigns.[2]

The soldiers often passed the long winter days serving on picket duty or, as weather permitted, engaged in regimental and brigade drills. Brigadier General William H. French, Third Brigade commander, had a passion for drills and ordered many rigorous marches. Picket duty was a job everyone experienced, but no one enjoyed. The picket, or sentry, was assigned to guard an isolated area against intruders. It was a lonely, sometimes frightening job when the imagination took control and made every sound seem like

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[1]Cornie to Adeline, 15 January 1862.

[2]John Billings, Hardtack and Coffee (Boston: George M. Smith & Co., 1887), pp. 49, 54-56, 78-79.

the advancing enemy. Cornie served as "Corporal of the Guard" one evening. When his sister congratulated him on his promotion he replied modestly that it meant nothing to him. He was appointed corporal by his company commander and served as the company clerk. He was not desirous for nor excited about his promotion because he did not consider himself better than anyone else.[3] Later, as he continued to advance in rank, Cornie became much more appreciative of his increased pay.

During the winter months several plans were devised in Washington for the capture of Richmond. Lincoln favored a direct advance south, keeping the army between the Confederates and the capital. McClellan, however, favored a water route with the Army of the Potomac landing at Urbanna, southeast of Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock River. From that point the Federals could advance on Richmond before the Confederate army at Manassas could intercept them. General Joseph E. Johnston, commanding the Confederate forces, anticipated such a flanking maneuver and made a strategic withdrawal behind the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg. This movement completely frustrated the plan for the Urbanna landing. Thus thwarted, McClellan moved his army out to the deserted Confederate camps around Manassas to give the young army some field experience.[4]

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[3]Cornie to Adeline, 4, 9 February 1862.

[4]Maurice Matloff, American Military History (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969), pp. 219-220.

With the coming of spring, the army made preparations for an advance. The Army of the Potomac was organized into five corps totaling approximately 98,000 men. The 57th New York was attached to the Third Brigade, First Division, Second Corps, commanded by Brigadier General Edwin V. Sumner. Early on the morning of March 10, in a torrential rain, the regiment began to move toward Richmond. The column marched some sixteen miles, down the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, along dirt roads which the tramping of many feet transformed into knee-deep mud. The first night, they camped at Brimstone Hill, two miles south of Fairfax Station. Cautiously, the troops proceeded the next morning to Fairfax Station, fully expecting a surprise attack. Continuing southward, the regiment camped, the following day, on the hills overlooking the deserted Confederate positions at Manassas.

On the afternoon of March 12, the 57th entered the Confederate fortifications. The earthworks extended for miles with a battery on every hill. This was quite a strong position by all appearances. Yet, the Confederates suffered from a lack of artillery and tried to cover up the fact with a clever ruse called "Quaker" guns. These were hollow logs which when painted black at one end and placed behind earthworks, gave the appearance of artillery. When the Federals discovered the hoax they were amazed at the ingenuity of their opponents. Well behind these fortifications, on a level plain, were huts built by the former defenders. The

Confederate design of log huts varied little from their Union counterparts. They were generally twelve feet square built of rough logs, with split shingle roofs and fireplaces made of wood and mud. Much to their surprise, the Federals found an abundance of clothing, cooking utensils and food in the huts. Such items as crackers, pork, rice, dried apples, peanuts, and sugar, as well as coffee pots, kettles, frying pans and cups, were at their disposal. The troops looked forward to relaxing from the week's exertions, eating "Secesh" food and sleeping in "Secesh" quarters, but they were disappointed.

The following morning, the 57th regiment marched with a brigade of cavalry, commanded by Brigadier General George Stoneman, on a reconnaissance to Cedar Run, a distance of ten to twelve miles. Once again the line of march followed the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, but progress was impeded by the destruction of the bridges over Broad and Kettle Runs. Enemy scouts were spotted during the day and as the column neared Catlett's Station Confederate cavalry appeared on the opposite bank of Cedar Run. The Confederates commenced a brisk fire which the Federals returned with vigor, resulting in three Confederate casualties. Five Union casualties also resulted from the skirmish, three of which were self-inflicted wounds. Two Pennsylvania cavalrymen received foot injuries from the accidental discharge of their carbines and one infantryman clumsily stabbed himself with his bayonet. After this

skirmish the entire command returned to Manassas Junction, where the men of the 57th regiment received the compliments of General Stoneman for their bravery under fire.[5]

With Manassas under Federal control and the Urbanna landing abandoned, McClellan offered an alternative plan. He advocated a seaborne move to Fort Monroe, in Hampton Roads, followed by an overland advance up the Peninsula between the James and York Rivers. He believed the army could cover the seventy-five miles to Richmond before Johnston concentrated his forces to protect the Southern capital. The new plan had merit, since the U.S.S. Monitor had succeeded in neutralizing the threat to Federal supply lines from the C.S.S. Virginia (Merrimac). It offered a direct route to Richmond with fewer river barriers than the overland route from Washington, and the Federals could take advantage of their control of the seas by sending gunboats up the James and York Rivers.[6]

President Lincoln approved the new plan, on the condition that McClellan left a sufficient number of troops

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[5]Cornie to Adeline, 17 March 1862; The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 70 vols. in 128 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I Vol. 5, pp. 550-551. Hereafter cited as O.R. All references are to Series I unless otherwise indicated; Gilbert Frederick, The Story of a Regiment: Being a Record of the Military Services of the Fifty-seventh New York State Volunteer Infantry in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865 (Chicago: Fifty-seventh Veteran Association, 1895), pp. 41-44.

[6]Matloff, Military, p. 220.

to defend Washington. McClellan ordered the army to withdraw to Alexandria. After one final night at Camp California, the 57th regiment and its division marched to Alexandria and boarded a steamer for Fort Monroe. With a brief delay in Hampton Roads, the steamer moved to the York River and disembarked the troops at Ship Point, on April 7, some eight miles from Yorktown. Almost immediately, rain hampered the movement. The heavy baggage wagons and artillery which passed along the poorly drained roads often sank to their axles in mud. This forced the army to construct corduroy roads.[7] Cornie's regiment was engaged in building some of these roads.

By now McClellan had decided to lay siege to the small Confederate garrison at Yorktown. A mere fifteen thousand troops, led by Major General John Magruder, were all that stood between McClellan and Richmond. These troops could have been easily swept aside and surrounded by both land and sea, but because of his unfailing tendency to overestimate his opponent, McClellan decided not to force a passage. As a result, both armies began a build-up for siege operations. Joseph E. Johnston slowly transferred his army to the Peninsula, increasing the Confederate forces to approximately 55,000 men. McClellan's army numbered nearly twice that of the Confederates, but still

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[7]A method by which logs and branches were laid side by side to give extra stability and traction across muddy ground.

he did not launch an assault. On the evening of May 3, with a major Union attack imminent, Johnston ordered a withdrawal from the Yorktown line. The Confederates delayed the Union advance for over a month and bought precious time for the defense of Richmond.

The Federals discovered the evacuation early on May 4. A delighted McClellan ordered the Third and Fourth Corps to pursue the retiring Confederates, while the rest of the army entered Yorktown. At a nearby farm, Cornie met an interesting old man who was an inhabitant of the area. While talking with him, Cornie received some candid insights. He explains:

> Upon my asking him how he voted upon the question of Secession, he said he did not vote at all, for had he voted against it he would not have gone five rods from the spot where the vote was deposited. The Rebel forces on the peninsula here were under command of General Magruder, who he represents as an old grey haired man, more than half crazy, a big coward, who loved [sic] his whiskey as he does life itself.[8]

Soon Cornie's division, commanded by Brigadier General Israel B. Richardson, went in support of the column pursuing the Confederates. A stiff rear guard action erupted at Williamsburg. The Confederates fought from behind prepared earthworks to delay the Federal advance. Richardson's division arrived too late to participate, but the engagement had been severe. Thirty-nine hundred casualties resulted from what was reported as a minor action.

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[8]Cornie to Adeline, 1 May 1862.

The next day the division returned to Yorktown. Cornie believed the scenery along the road rivaled that along the Hudson River. Yorktown's harbor was filled with many types of vessels waiting to transport the troops up river. By taking advantage of the waterways, the Federals would quicken their approach up the Peninsula and possibly outflank the retreating enemy. The division soon boarded its transports and sailed to Eltham, some five miles above West Point, on the Pamunkey River. Continuing their march from Eltham, the division passed through New Kent County and camped near the historic St. Peter's Church. This ancient building, erected in 1710, was reputedly the location of George Washington's wedding. Little acknowledgement was given to either the sanctity of the structure or to its historic value, as the soldiers stripped the edifice of all its furniture and converted it into a stable. Richardson's division soon reunited with the army which formed an arc around the northern and eastern sides of Richmond. The army, however, was precariously divided by the Chickahominy River. The Second, Fifth, and Sixth Corps stood to the north of the stream while the Third and Fourth Corps lay to the south. Although this small stream normally was little more than a swamp, excessive rainfall raised the water level to flood stage. The rising water caused serious problems in supporting the two corps south of the river.

When Johnston discovered the weakness in the Federal line, he decided to attack the isolated Third and Fourth

Corps. He struck on May 31 near Fair Oaks. The initial shock of the assault forced the Federals to yield to overwhelming numbers. Disaster seemed certain unless reinforcements arrived. General Sumner, the old war horse, led the Second Corps toward the Chickahominy anticipating orders to relieve the threatened left flank. The timely arrival of his corps enabled the Federals to repulse the southern forces and reestablish their line.

French's brigade and the 57th regiment were not engaged until June 1 when the Federals attempted to recapture lost ground. The regiment positioned itself in the woods near Fair Oaks Station on the Richmond and York River Railroad. About 6:00 A.M., the Confederates commenced a heavy fire upon French's brigade. After nearly two hours, General French ordered the 57th and 66th New York regiments to slip around the enemy's right flank. Since the Confederates were in the woods, they did not notice this maneuver. When in position, the two regiments fixed bayonets and charged the woods. Surprised and outflanked the Confederates withdrew ending the fighting in that area. The 57th performed well in its first battle. Both the 57th and the 66th regiments received a commendation from General French in his report. Casualties were moderate with 242 for the brigade and only 18 for the 57th regiment.[9]

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[9] O.R., Vol. 11, part 1, pp. 42, 766, 783, 786-787; Frederick, Story, pp. 53-55.

Cornie did not participate in his regiment's first major action. When marching orders were received on May 31, he was on duty at the Brigade Commissary until nightfall. By the time he reached his regiment the fighting was over. He did not express any feeling of regret for missing the fight, but rather a feeling of sickness over the death and suffering around him. As the regiment settled into camp he spoke of the many rumors that were circulating. Some believed the summer's campaign was over, while others declared that the capture of Richmond would end the war and the soldiers could return home. Most of the men, however, considered the unnatural quietness of the battlefield an indication of another Confederate retreat. Cornie also subscribed to this opinion, but he left open the possibility of another fight. He said either Richmond would be evacuated or "a desperate battle will be fought in which the Rebels stake their all."[10] The latter prediction proved accurate.

On June 26 Confederate forces, now under the command of Robert E. Lee, struck the Federal Fifth Corps on the north side of the Chickahominy at Mechanicsville. That night General Porter withdrew his corps to a stronger position at Gaines Mill. The fighting continued in earnest on the 27th and ended with a Confederate breakthrough at nightfall. As the shattered Federals streamed across the Chickahominy, French's and Meagher's brigades arrived in

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[10]Cornie to Adeline, 14, 19 June 1862.

time to prevent a route. By another miracle elements of the Second Corps helped avert disaster as the Fifth Corps retreated across the river burning its bridges. The 28th brought a welcomed respite to both armies as they regrouped to continue the contest. French's brigade camped briefly at its old position at Fair Oaks. The brigade later rejoined Richardson's division at Savage Station where the fighting erupted once again. Richardson's division was part of the rear guard for the army as it continued to retreat through White Oak Swamp and Frazier's Farm to Malvern Hill. McClellan concentrated his army on this commanding plateau. It was a naturally strong position with clear fields of fire and flanks secured by streams. Gunboats on the James River were also able to give fire support. The Confederates were at a disadvantage because they had to pass through swampy woods and attack uphill across open ground. Still, the Confederates attacked, only to be bloodily repulsed by massed Federal artillery. This battle climaxed the Seven Days' fighting around Richmond. The Federal threat to the capital was eliminated as they retreated one last time to another strong position at Harrison's Landing on the James River. Lee and Johnston took the initiative from McClellan and forced him into a defensive posture. The "Young Napoleon" saved his army by skillfully directing an intricate retreat and a remarkable change of base in the face of the enemy. But he had fallen short of his objective--Richmond. Beaten and discouraged, the weary army recuperated on the

banks of the James.

When Cornie arrived at Harrison's Landing he sent a letter to his sister, reassuring her of his safety. Characteristically, he did not give any details of the battles except that he was a part of the rear guard which received the brunt of the attacks. At that time morale was naturally low, but reinforcements began to arrive which brightened the situation. Digging entrenchments and erecting batteries were the orders of the day as the army worked feverishly to secure its position. Soon confidence was restored and there was talk of another attempt on Richmond.

While the soldiers languished in the heat of a Virginia summer they discussed many political topics. One subject was particularly sensitive, the plight of the Negro slaves. The status of these people had a direct effect upon the commencement of the conflict. Now, after a year of warfare, the United States government had not taken an official position on their behalf, except to consider them contraband of war. A dramatic change in this policy occurred when Congress, in July 1862, authorized the acceptance of Negroes for labor and military service. There was little problem in accepting them as laborers, but the overwhelming majority of Union soldiers opposed arming the blacks. Many considered this measure a threat to white supremacy, while others argued

that Negroes were deficient in soldierly qualities.[11]

Cornie also strongly opposed the use of blacks as soldiers.

> The soldiers are greatly in favor of a motion made in Congress of giving this particular branch of the service over to the attention of the numerous contrabands. But there is one other little thing they are not so much in favor of--arming the blacks! The foul traitor who dared to speak of it in the halls of our National Congress deserves to be hung higher than Davis or Floyd! If such characters as him /sic/ had long ago become /sic/ an inmate of Fort Lafayette or Warren this War would have been ended now. It is these Negro elevators that have ever tried to overthrow the plans of our noble leader, and caused him, by dividing his army and refusing reinforcements, to evacuate his position along the Chickahominy, thus delaying for months what could have been speedily accomplished with a few thousand additional men and the cooperation of the Government.[12]

In this rare display of anger, Cornie aimed his fury at the Radical Republicans, who not only suggested arming the Negroes, but also opposed McClellan. Most of the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac were devoted followers of the "Young Napoleon." Cornie, like many others, stopped subscribing to the New York Tribune because Horace Greeley's editorials expressed enmity towards their general. The Negro question and everything else came second to defending

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[11]Some regarded the Emancipation Proclamation and the calling of Negroes to arms as evidence that the radical element was corrupting the government and converting the war into an abolitionist crusade. Wiley, Billy Yank, pp. 119-120; E. B. Long, The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 241, 708; J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2d rev. ed. (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath & Co., 1969), p. 391.

[12]Cornie to Adeline, 15 July 1862.

their commander from criticism.

The soldiers did not spend all their time in political discussions. One warm August day they participated in division drills. General French continued these proceedings until 8:30 that evening. Hardly had the men reached their tents when they received marching orders. The division marched by moonlight to within a few miles of Malvery Hill and halted for the night. Cornie discovered the next morning they were camped on a hill overlooking a beautiful unspoiled countryside. He found the scene before him "breathtaking." He described the winding roads flanked by fields of corn and wheat; the farmhouses were nestled in groves of shade trees with wells of sparkling cool water surrounded by rolling plains of green grass. Nothing distrubed the serenity of that day as the soldiers rested under the shade of the trees. An attack had been anticipated the night before, but with the danger past, French's brigade remained as pickets while the rest of the division returned to Harrison's Landing. The solitude continued through the night as the soldiers played cards, sang or conversed with one another. Shortly before noon on the following day, the brigade began the return journey to camp, a march made increasingly difficult by the intense heat. Cornie observed his comrades fall beside the road overcome by sunstroke in the 110° temperature. He made it back, but immediately sank beside the nearest tree, exhausted. He bathed his temples and wrists with the warm water in his

canteen, reviving his strength. Others had no water. In desperation, one man offered three dollars to anyone who would share a cup of water, but no one came forward. Soldiers were often required to endure such unnecessary hardships. Cornie was very critical of General French for ordering a march in such heat. Later, he reported that General Sumner arrested French for his harsh treatment of the men.[13]

The camp at Harrison's Landing soon became only a memory as the armies began to move. Lee shifted his forces northwest of Richmond to meet the new Federal Army of Virginia under John Pope. McClellan responded by moving his army down the Peninsula to Newport News and from there by steamer north to Aquia Creek. The two Federal armies hoped to join forces and destroy Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Cornie's regiment arrived at Aquia Creek on August 26 only to sail immediately for Alexandria. He and several others remained behind to guard the regimental baggage until it could be sent forward. When he landed in Alexandria, the regiment was at Fairfax Station guarding against a Confederate advance. Pope had suffered a disastrous defeat in the fields around Manassas leaving Washington exposed to attack. The Army of the Potomac moved in quickly to assure the capital's safety, but no one knew what the Confederates' next move would be.

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[13]Cornie to Adeline, 9 August 1862.

General Lee did not tarry long in Northern Virginia. He quickly led his victorious army into Maryland. Confederate authorities hoped to win a decisive victory on Northern soil, believing this would lead to the intervention of Great Britain and France. Such a development would hasten the end of the war and establish the Confederacy as an independent nation.

The Army of the Potomac carefully paralleled the Confederate advance. Not knowing when the enemy might turn and strike, the Federals had to position themselves to protect both Washington and Baltimore. While the armies maneuvered for position, Cornie remained behind with the baggage. He was gratified to see the care and attention wounded soldiers were receiving in the hospitals around Alexandria and Washington. Even the soldiers fit for duty were treated royally. This provided a welcome contrast to the cold reception they had received on the Peninsula. Rockville, Maryland, was the closest Cornie could get to his regiment. Baggage simply had low priority in obtaining transportation to the front. The Federal push through the passes of South Mountain, before the battle of Antietam, started many rumors about the fighting. Cornie reported that the Confederates were effectively surrounded and could not recross into Virginia without great loss of life. Once, declared one rumor, the Southern army attempted a crossing and had been cut down by the thousands with "grape and cannister" [sic]. The grandest story of all was that

General Lee was a prisoner in Union hands. Though grossly exaggerated, these stories were all the intelligence Cornie and his comrades could obtain on the eve of the battle along Antietam Creek.

The Confederate forces were widely scattered during their northern advance. Several divisions were sent to capture the Federal garrison at Harper's Ferry, while the rest moved freely about central Maryland. McClellan learned of the dispersed nature of the opposing army when a Southern dispatch, giving the details of their routes, was captured. The lost dispatch was soon reported to General Lee who quickly ordered his army to assemble at Sharpsburg. While Federal forces pushed Confederate defenders through the passes of South Mountain, east of Sharpsburg, Lee positioned his army. It was arranged in a northeasterly arch around the town with its flanks resting on the Potomac River and Antietam Creek. Lee barely had time to gather his forces, but the vacillating McClellan awarded the Southern commander an extra day to shore up his defenses. Still, General Lee was in a precarious position. His back was to the river, he was outnumbered two to one, and three of his divisions remained at Harper's Ferry. Thus situated, the Southerners braced themselves for the desperate battle ahead.

Fighting began at daylight on September 17 when Hooker unleashed his corps against the Confederate left flank. Stonewall Jackson's veterans recoiled under the Federal onslaught. Brigade after brigade of Confederates

was driven back in confusion, but John B. Hood's Texans arrived to check the retreat and restore the line. By 7 o'clock the fighting became general as the battle lines surged back and forth. As each side committed more divisions to the fray, it became impossible to determine who was winning. Losses were enormous as regiments melted into the blue musketry smoke which covered the fields. The battle on the left ended after five hours of vicious fighting during which six Federal divisions failed to break the stubborn Confederate line.

The second phase of the battle began as fighting shifted southward to the Confederate center. This area spotlighted the Second Corps' attack upon the "Bloody Lane" (Sunken Road). Sumner received word to move his corps forward about 7:30 A.M., but only the divisions of Sedgwick and French moved out together.[14] Because of staff problems it was 9:30 A.M. before Richardson's division was ordered to follow. When Richardson arrived on the field, Sedgwick was heavily engaged against the Confederate line while French assailed the "Bloody Lane" alone. The Confederate brigades of Rodes and G. B. Anderson stoutly defended the lane for hours, but the added weight of Richardson's division soon captured the position for the Federals.

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[14]General French was promoted, on September 10, to command the newly created Third Division of the Second Corps. Colonel John R. Brooke, of the 53rd Pennsylvania, replaced French as the Third Brigade commander.

General Richardson deployed Meagher's and Caldwell's brigades to the left of French, holding Brooke's brigade in reserve. Meagher's "Irish" brigade incurred great loss and withdrew to replenish its ammunition. While Caldwell shifted his troops, Rodes launched a counterattack splitting the two Federal divisions. The Confederates advanced several hundred yards to the Roulette farm threatening the rear of the Union lines. Fortunately, Brooke's brigade was nearby. The 57th New York and two other regiments were dispatched to dislodge the Confederates. Rodes' troops quickly reeled from their exposed position and the 52nd New York healed the breach that remained. This done, the 57th and 66th New York regiments joined with Caldwell and led the charge that penetrated the "Bloody Lane," driving the Confederates into the cornfield beyond. During the charge Lieutenant Colonel Parisen, commanding the 57th regiment, was killed.[15] General Richardson spurred his division forward as it pursued the enemy through the cornfield near the Piper house. The Confederates rallied and made several unsuccessful attempts to stop the Federals. Finally, several well-aimed batteries were able to stem the blue tide, forcing it back to the lane. As a result of this artillery fire, General Richardson fell mortally wounded by a shell fragment. He was quickly carried from the field and taken to McClellan's

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[15]Colonel Zook was on temporary leave in Washington. Lieutenant Colonel Parisen was ill the day of the battle, but refusing to remain behind he bravely rode into battle on horseback.

headquarters, at the Pry house, where he died on November 3, 1862. This marked the end of the fighting for the Confederate center as the Federals withdrew their line to the "Bloody Lane" along which they prepared a defensive position.

The two Federal divisions paid a high price for their victory. Three thousand casualties and the loss of Richardson drained the strength from the attackers. The 57th distinguished itself by leading the final successful charge and capturing the colors of the 12th Alabama, but at a cost of 101 men including many good line officers. This was the highest numerical loss the regiment sustained during the war. Cornie deeply regretted being away from the regiment during this time of victory and suffering. Happily, he rejoined his comrades four days after the engagement.[16]

After the great battle of the 17th, the two contending armies faced one another for twenty-four hours without further fighting. On the night of the 18th, General Lee decided to abandon his position and recross the Potomac into Virginia. McClellan offered no pursuit until his opponent had safely crossed the river. Then, the Army of the Potomac began a series of movements to secure the

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[16]Although Cornie was absent during the battle, other members of the regiment, Gilbert Frederick, Josiah Favill, and Charles Hamlin, were participants in the fighting and their accounts aided in telling of the 57th regiment's participation. O.R., Vol. 19, part 1, pp. 59, 192, 278, 281, 299, 302; James V. Murfin, The Gleam of Bayonets: The Battle of Antietam and the Maryland Campaign of 1862 (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965), pp. 243, 251, 254-258, 265; Frederick, Story, pp. 87-97.

northern Shenandoah Valley. Sumner's Second Corps was sent to Harper's Ferry. Soon after its arrival, President Lincoln and General McClellan reviewed the troops. Cornie noted that the cheers which greeted the two men were intended especially for McClellan who had recently led the army to victory at Antietam. He spoke in glowing terms of the soldiers' affection for their "idol." "'Napoleon's old Mustachios' never bore stronger love and respect for their General than do the soldiers of the Army of the Union for Geo. B. McClellan. 'Long may he wave!'"[17] On October 16, Richardson's division, now led by Winfield S. Hancock, marched to nearby Charlestown on a reconnaissance. An engagement ensued for possession of the town resulting in the withdrawal of the Confederate forces. In December 1859, the abolitionist John Brown had been convicted of treason and hanged at Charlestown. The Federals discovered that the gallows were still standing so all joined in singing the Northern marching song "John Brown's Body."[18] On October 29, the army was again on the move to secure the passes through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Second Corps crossed to the east side of the Shenandoah River and moved up the Valley to Snicker's Gap, seventeen miles west of Leesburg, Virginia. There a footrace began between the Federals and the advancing Confederates. The

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[17]Cornie to Adeline, 4 October 1862. "Napoleon's old Mustachios" refers to the famous "Old Guard" in Napoleon's army.

[18]Frederick, Story, p. 105.

57th reached the summit of the Gap first. After an exchange of shots the enemy relinquished possession without further incident. The next day, after being relieved by Sykes division, the Second Corps moved ten miles south to Ashby's Gap which was already in control of the Union forces. The corps then proceeded eastward to unite with the army at Warrenton.

While at Warrenton, General McClellan received a Presidential order, on November 7, relieving him of command of the army. He was replaced by a reluctant Ambrose E. Burnside. Lincoln made this decision after many months of dissatisfaction with the dilatory general. McClellan's excessive attention to details, his failure on the Peninsula, and, finally, his snail-like pursuit of the Confederates after Antietam, all foiled Lincoln's hopes for the destruction of Lee's army. News of the change in command stunned the worshipping army. Cornie merely acknowledged the fact of McClellan's removal, probably too shocked to say more. Large numbers of soldiers threatened to mutiny, causing the General to remain for several days to quiet the men. When the time came for him to leave, the soldiers uncoupled his railroad car refusing to let it go. McClellan, however, asked the soldiers to "stand by General Burnside as you have stood by me, and all will be well."[19] He continued to retain

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[19]Warren W. Hassler, Jr., Commanders of the Army of the Potomac (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), p. 94.

the admiration and respect of the soldiers after his departure. Succeeding commanders' abilities and appeal were always measured in comparison to McClellan's, with few making the grade. Entering politics, the General, in 1864, suffered defeat as the Democratic candidate for President, but he remained the unmistakable favorite in the Army of the Potomac.

While the emotions of the army cooled, Burnside began forming his plan of action. The Confederate army was assembled at Culpeper. If the Federals could march quickly to Fredericksburg and advance south along the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad, they would cut Lee off from that base and threaten Richmond. To achieve greater command control over his army, Burnside created the Right, Center, and Left Grand Divisions under Major Generals Edwin V. Sumner, Joseph Hooker, and William B. Franklin, respectively. Sumner's forces led the movement toward Fredericksburg. On November 17 the troops arrived at Falmouth, a few miles up river from their objective. The 57th New York and the 53rd Pennsylvania entered the town as an advance guard, but no one opposed their entrance. There was occasional skirmishing with Confederate troops across the river, but no attempt was made to cross over to Fredericksburg.

Sumner's forces far exceeded those of the Confederates presently in Fredericksburg. But because all bridges over the Rappahannock were destroyed, the Federals were content to wait for their engineers to bring up pontoon bridges. The

river probably could have been forded, but sound military tactics forbade an army to fight with its back to a body of water which lacked a suitable crossing. Unforeseen difficulties delayed, for weeks, the arrival and construction of the pontoons. As each day passed, the Confederates were gradually able to eliminate the North's advantage gained by speed of movement as they concentrated on the heights south of town.

In the meantime, the 57th made camp at Falmouth. Colonel Zook, commanding the Third Brigade since Antietam, was appointed military governor of the town. Although the citizens were strongly pro-Southern in sympathy, they were happy to trade with the soldiers. Fresh bread was exchanged for salt and coffee, rare commodities in that region. Rabbits also abounded throughout the countryside. Each night the men would flush out hundreds of them and Cornie compared the scampering which followed to school boys just turned loose from a hard day's study.[20] While the soldiers relaxed from their recent marches, they performed their daily duties seemingly unaware of the terrible struggle that would soon begin.

At 1:00 A.M. on December 11, the 57th and 66th New York regiments were detailed to protect the long-awaited pontoon construction. Shortly after daylight, a signal rocket was released and Mississippi sharpshooters inside

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[20]Cornie to Adeline, 19 November 1862.

Fredericksburg opened a deadly fire upon the engineers. The engineers and soldiers had very little cover from the bullets, causing heavy casualties. The 57th regiment suffered the loss of thirty men including the commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Chapman, who received a near-fatal wound. At eight o'clock the regiment was relieved by the 7th Michigan and returned to camp.

Early on the 12th, Zook's brigade crossed the Rappahannock into the city. Camping along the river, it waited all that day for the remainder of the army to cross and deploy. The battle began on the morning of the 13th after the fog lifted. Franklin's Left Grand Division assailed Jackson's veterans on the Confederate right flank with only limited success. As the morning passed, the fighting crescendoed up the line until Sumner's Right Grand Division moved forward. About noon, Zook's brigade filed out of the town with great difficulty, victims of a murderous fire from Confederate artillery. The brigade finally formed a line of battle directly opposite the formidable Stone Wall. Behind this wall ran a narrow sunken road which provided a natural defense for the Confederates. The road ran along the bottom of a high ridge called Marye's Heights giving excellent artillery positions. Between the Federals and the Stone Wall lay an open plain of 1700 yards, broken by fences and ditches. The obstacle of moving across open ground in the face of massed, entrenched, infantry and artillery proved too great for the blue infantry to overcome.

Brigade after brigade were shattered against the impregnable Confederate line. When the order was given to attack, Zook's veterans sprang forth with a shout. Bravely the troops advanced through the hail of lead and iron blazing from the ominous heights. As the brigade crested a small knoll, it reached the limit of human endurance and advanced no further. Vague reports place this point from twenty-five to sixty yards away from the enemy line. Nevertheless, Zook's brigade was recognized for advancing the closest to the enemy. The brigade held its position for over three hours and acted as a beacon for others to form beside it. Casualties were frightful. The 57th regiment alone suffered nearly a fifty percent loss. Finally, after being relieved by Syke's division, the brigade withdrew to the shelter of the town. During the next two days it remained in Fredericksburg on picket duty. Since neither army wanted to continue the contest, the brigade withdrew across the river, taking up its bridges, and returned to camp at Falmouth.[21]

The Federal assaults at Fredericksburg provide a textbook example of the useless waste of human life in attacking an entrenched enemy. Due to a lack of self-confidence and imagination, General Burnside utterly failed in making intelligent tactical decisions. He stubbornly hurled a dozen attacks upon the fortified Confederates,

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[21] O.R., Vol. 21, pp. 130, 226-227, 230-231, 253-255, 258; Charles Hamlin to Father and Mother, 16 December 1862; Frederick, Story, pp. 116-121.

believing victory could be achieved by sheer perseverance. As General Lee watched the massed lines of blue infantry advance to their death, he remarked grimly, "it is well that war is so terrible--we should grow too fond of it!"[22] Burnside himself knew that he was incapable of commanding such a large army. He had refused two earlier offers to take command before being pressured into accepting. Therefore, he cannot be totally to blame for the army's ruin. The General was not indifferent toward his soldiers' lives. Carl Russell Fish noted that "there was no such intention to sacrifice but, if stupidity be culpability, few generals of ancient or modern times rank with Burnside in the guilt of manslaughter."[23] Unfortunately, Burnside did the best he could do.

As the first full year of the war drew to a close, the 57th New York remained encamped at Falmouth. The troops served as the provost guard for the town and were quartered in vacant houses and barns. Uncertainty prevailed among the soldiers about their next move. Rumors circulated about either another advance across the Rappahannock or transport north to Washington for the winter. The regiment suffered greatly from the exertions of the past year. Once worried

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[22]Douglas S. Freeman, R. E. Lee: A Biography, Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 462.

[23]Hassler, Commanders, pp. 252-254; Carl Russell Fish, ed. by William E. Smith, The American Civil War (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1937), p. 281.

that they would never see action, the soldiers participated in ten major battles and three minor engagements with an aggregate loss of 250 men. The men fought well in every instance receiving official commendation for their efforts. Nevertheless, they served in a defeated army racked by incompetent leadership and political intrigue. A prevailing depression and lack of confidence overcame the Army of the Potomac on the eve of 1863 as few soldiers could see any future change in the success of Confederate arms.

# CHAPTER III

## 1863

After Burnside's disastrous repulse at Fredericksburg, the morale of the Army of the Potomac sank to its lowest point of the war. Frustration and despair replaced the optimism and high hopes felt by the soldiers at the beginning of their march on Richmond. They had lost McClellan, the battle, and faith in their new commander. The generals bickered over who was to blame for the defeat. Some complained directly to Congress and the President that Burnside should be removed from command. Camp conditions were unhealthy; rations were meager. Disease and desertion overcame the once proud army which stagnated on the banks of the Rappahannock. This was truly the "Valley Forge" winter for the Army of the Potomac.

Cornie best expressed the army's despair:

> We have learned no longer to look upon the Army as <u>invincible</u>, and a serious lesson taught. With all the changes that have taken place during the past twelve-months--the "reverses" we have met with--do you wonder, Martha, that the Army, as a mass, do not look forward upon the New Year with the same confidence and hope they did one year ago? Tis true, they have lost all confidence and since the defeat at Fredricksburg [sic] I have heard hundreds

say earnestly that they "would never fight" again.[1] In spite of Cornie's evaluation, however, the morale of his regiment was much better than the majority of soldiers in the Army of the Potomac. Their life in town proved more pleasant than did that of the soldiers living in the field. Living quarters were warm and comfortable and a more varied diet was obtainable from the townspeople, including fresh bread. Cornie, now a sergeant, was busy with company paperwork and had little time to worry about the recent defeat. He was disappointed with the army's leadership which caused so many reverses, but he never lost hope for victory.

Several weeks of mild weather in January encouraged General Burnside to attempt another crossing of the Rappahannock. This time he planned to cross at the fords several miles upstream and attack Lee's flank. The army started in motion on January 19 toward United States Ford, about ten miles above Fredericksburg. Everything went well until a rainstorm buffeted the area. After twenty-four hours of incessant rainfall the army became hopelessly bogged down. It was impossible to move; both men and equipment were stalled in the mud. The Federals' helplessness was quite amusing to the Confederates who taunted them by placing signs along the river bank which read: "Burnside

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[1]Cornie to Martha, 4 January 1863.

stuck in the mud!"[2] Thus, the weather defeated this second Federal attempt to cross the river. The storm continued for a week. Finally, the ill-famed "mud march" was abandoned. Wet, hungry, and dispirited the army crawled back to its winter quarters at Falmouth.

Dissension and quarreling among the officers increased after the return to camp. The dismal "mud march" only deepened the soldiers' frustrations. In an attempt to escape the blame for the problems, Burnside asked President Lincoln for the removal of Generals Hooker and Franklin. Hooker had openly criticized Burnside's plans; while Franklin was accused of "foot dragging." This inner turmoil was equally disturbing to the rank and file soldiers. To Cornie, "there is such a feeling of despondency existing among the soldiers . . . such a lack of confidence, that they will never work with the same unison as heretofore." He was convinced that the Army of the Potomac would soon be disbanded. Richmond was not worth the lives being wasted for its capture. In his opinion, a force should be left to protect Washington, while the remainder was sent to other points. There were many other Southern strongholds, the capture of which would speed the end of the war. The time had arrived to try a new strategy.[3]

President Lincoln put an end to the discord on

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[2]Cornie to Adeline, 26 January 1863.

[3]Ibid.

January 25, when he relieved General Burnside of command. He was replaced by Joseph Hooker, who allegedly wanted the job and who was known as a fighter. The outspoken Hooker was chided by the President for his ambitious attempt to overthrow Burnside. Lincoln's desperate need for a successful commander overcame his reluctance to appoint a general who had called for a dictator as the answer to the war's current problems.

The new commander immediately set to work improving his army's appearance and morale. Old pigsty camps and quarters were relocated and regulations were enforced to assure cleanliness. Rations were improved with the addition of vegetables, potatoes, and fresh meat. Disease and death were dramtically reduced as the soldiers improved their standard of living. In order to curb the extremely high desertion rate, Hooker authorized a liberal furlough system. He also prescribed corps insignia to be worn which aided in proper unit identification and in the apprehension of stragglers and deserters.[4] Under his leadership, the Grand Divisions were abolished and the army was again divided into corps. The cavalry was reorganized into a fighting unit instead of a showpiece. Finally, idleness was reduced by requiring troops to engage in drills or some

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[4]Cornie was one of the first to take advantage of this new furlough policy. Since he had been away from home eighteen months he received a twenty-day leave in February. A red trefoil or three-leaved clover, was the badge worn by the First Division, Second Corps.

other military instruction. Soon the soldiers regained confidence in themselves and in their new leader. Cornie noted that "Hooker is gradually stealing into the confidence and favor of his troops, which they are slow to acknowledge from their love for McClellan."[5]

In spite of these changes, however, the army still required a considerable time to regain its stamina. In addition, the severe winter weather damaged the roads so badly that an early spring campaign was impossible. As a result, the Army of the Potomac remained stationary until late April.

As usual the soldiers found many diversions to occupy the long, quiet months. There were several festive occasions celebrated by the foreign-born troops in the army. One of the most lively of these was the Irish observance of St. Patrick's Day. The Second Corps contained an entire "Irish" brigade led by Brigadier General Thomas Meagher. He and the other sons of the "Emerald Isle" organized a memorable holiday for the men of the Second Corps. A variety of events took place that day. Foot races, horse races, wrestling and boxing matches were all enlivened with heavy draughts of whiskey. Cornie remembered the horse racing. Thousands watched as hundreds of contestants raced around an oval track jumping a series of hurdles. General Meagher acted as ringmaster while General Cauldwell served

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[5]Cornie to Adeline, 3 March 1863.

as judge for the event. The judge's stand was decorated with the National and New York state colors. Generals Hooker, Butterfield, Couch, French, and Sickles attended as special guests. Additional amusement was provided by a regimental band which performed the favorite airs of the day. When the festivities ended, the guardhouses were filled with many battered and drunken celebrants, but few could remember a better tribute to Saint Patrick.[6]

Baseball proved to be the favorite pastime of the soldiers in blue. The rules and manner of play in 1863 differed considerably from that of today. First, the ball was very soft, which caused it to bounce quite freely. Second, a runner was tagged out after being hit by the ball, thrown by the pitcher. Cornie mentioned a baseball game between his regiment and the 66th New York Infantry. He had great confidence in his team's ability to win, but unfortunately it lost by seven runs. Several of the umpire's decisions so angered the team that another game was scheduled to settle the matter. Apparently, the game was played as vigorously and enthusiastically then as today.[7]

Heavy April rains continued to hamper Hooker's plans to advance. Soggy roads forced the Army of the

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[6]Cornie to Adeline, 22 March 1863; Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 174.

[7]Cornie to Adeline, 3 April 1863; Wiley, Billy Yank, p. 170.

Potomac to remain "stuck in the mud." General Hooker devoted a great deal of personal attention to the reshaping of his army. He carefully administered every department and no matter was too trivial to escape his attention. The soldiers praised him for the time and attention he devoted to their welfare. His administrative abilities and concern for details reminded them of their beloved McClellan. Even the most ardent McClellan worshipers acknowledged Hooker's ability to command. He also showed promise as a tactician.

Hooker, determined not to repeat Burnside's mistake by making frontal assaults against the entrenched Confederates, devised a more imaginative plan to force the enemy out of their earthworks. The plan was similar to that which Burnside attempted in January, a flanking maneuver. He proposed to divide the army into three parts. One third, under Hooker, would secretly move up river and cross at Kelly's Ford. Another third, under Sedgwick, would make a diversionary attack against the Fredericksburg line to hold the Confederates in their entrenchments, while the remaining third controlled the area between the two wings to render support if necessary. The cavalry corps was to screen the infantry up river and then raid behind Confederate lines. His plan appeared to promote excellent results. The double envelopment made the best use of the numerically superior Federal force by placing strong units on each of Lee's flanks. In this way, the Confederates would be forced to fight on open ground, or withdraw toward Richmond.

When the roads dried late in April, the Army of the Potomac began its spring campaign. On April 27, the Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Corps marched toward the fords up river. The next day, the Second Corps, now commanded by Darius Couch, and the Third Corps ascended the river to Bank's Ford where they protected the center of the flanking movement. United States Ford, further up river, was reached the following day. The two corps crossed the river on April 30 and the following day the Second Corps reached Chancellorsville, where it established a defensive position.

The Federal flanking maneuver failed to bother Lee. Jeb Stuart's Confederate cavalry kept the Federals under surveillance so effectively that the southern commander knew every move made by the Union army. By April 30, Lee was aware of the threatened double envelopment and made preparations to combat it. The southern forces numbered only 60,000 men; Longstreet and two divisions were absent on a foraging expedition near Suffolk, Virginia. Instead of retreating, Lee left part of his army to hold the heights at Fredericksburg while the main body moved west to Chancellorsville.

Both armies collided on May 1 a few miles east of Chancellorsville. This region was a jungle-like area of scrub timber and narrow dirt roads called the "Wilderness." Movement and visibility were extremely limited as battle lines became confused and broken in the thick undergrowth. As Lee boldly pressed the attack, Hooker decided to break

off and withdraw to a defensive position of earth-and-log breastworks closer to Chancellorsville. The Federal position faced south and east where it was anchored on the Rappahannock. To the west the right flank was weak and not secured to any natural defensive position. Stuart's cavalry discovered the dangling Federal line and reported this intelligence to Lee. That evening Lee conferred with Stonewall Jackson and devised a daring flanking maneuver. Jackson would lead his forces on a fifteen-mile circuit march which would end beyond the Federal right flank. A vigorous attack upon this flank would roll up the Federal line and render their position untenable.

The fighting began in earnest at daybreak on the second of May. Cornie and the 57th regiment were located in the woods to the left of the Chancellor house near the vital road junction of Chancellorsville. The regiment helped to form a line of skirmishers in front of their main line where they repulsed repeated attacks. Late in the afternoon, Jackson launched his attack upon the Eleventh Corps holding the Federal right flank. The blow was a complete surprise. Panic-stricken soldiers dropped their weapons and ran wildly to the rear. Thousands stampeded the adjacent Second Corps and continued into the Confederate lines beyond. The Federal lines became hopelessly confused as the frightened soldiers mingled with other units. In an effort to check the Confederate advance, the 57th New York and other regiments were pulled out of

the line to form a provisional brigade under General Caldwell. They moved nearly a mile to the rear where they attacked and repulsed an advancing Confederate brigade. Fighting continued during the night, but Hooker was able to untangle his confused lines and prepare for renewed fighting in the morning.

On May 3, the Federal line was assailed from all directions. Slowly the Union army was driven back toward the Rappahannock, relinquishing the important road junction. During the fighting, a shell exploded near Hooker and stunned him. Although dazed, he refused to give up his command and instructed General Cough to withdraw the army to a prepared position against the Rapidan and the Rappahannock Rivers. Conveniently, the Federal withdrawal enabled Lee to turn his troops around to fight Sedgwick. The Federals had overwhelmed the weakened Confederate line on Marye's Heights and now marched toward Lee's rear. Their advance was intercepted at Salem Church, along the Plank Road to Chancellorsville. A sharp battle ensued which ended the next day when Sedgwick was forced to recross the Rappahannock or be crushed. Lee again turned his attention to the Army of the Potomac. He intended to force the remainder of that army to recross the river. May 4 and 5 were spent consolidating scattered troops in preparation for another attack, but Hooker did not wish to continue the contest and retreated across the Rappahannock during the night of May 5.

The battle of Chancellorsville is often described as Lee's greatest victory. In five days he divided his army three times to defeat a foe more than twice his own strength. General Hooker gave up the initiative when he first encountered the Confederates instead of pressing on towards Fredericksburg. This mistake cost him the battle, but in many other ways he was simply out-generaled. A talented tactical commander who could effectively lead a body of troops, he proved incapable of controlling situations beyond his range of vision. Yet, the battle proved only a Pyrrhic victory for the Confederates. Stonewall Jackson died from a wound accidentally inflicted by a volley from his own troops, and Lee had no one to replace him. With Jackson went much of the audacity which had characterized the operations of the Army of Northern Virginia.[8]

The defeated Army of the Potomac returned to its starting point at Falmouth. Once again, an offensive movement along the Rappahannock had failed. But the soldiers did not blame faulty leadership for the defeat. This time their anger centered on the cowardly Eleventh Corps which abandoned the field in headlong retreat. Cornie blamed the defeat on this one retreat even though the Federals reestablished their line and did not recross

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[8]These citations refer to the preceding four paragraphs. Cornie to Adeline, 29 April, 4, 15 May 1863; O.R., Vol. 25, part 1, pp. 176, 312-313, 319-323, 329-330; Vol. 51, part 1, pp. 179-180; Matloff, Military, pp. 241-246.

the river for another three days. He believed that had the Second Corps occupied the right flank, the rout would not have happened. Comparing the quality of Confederate troops fighting in the West and in the East, he considered those in Virginia to be superior. In his judgement, the South had its best troops and most able generals protecting Richmond. Higher casualty lists in Virginia as opposed to Tennessee and Mississippi, he believed, showed a greater determination on the part of Lee's soldiers. He also paid General Lee a high tribute by saying that he was "undoubtedly the smartest general America can boast of."[9] Although the army was defeated, it was not "shipped." Cornie did not think the South won a great victory because they also lost many men in the battle, Union cavalry threatened Richmond by raiding and alarming the countryside, and Stonewall Jackson was killed. In summary, although Hooker had failed, the soldiers still had confidence in his ability to lead another more successful attempt.[10]

After Chancellorsville, the Virginia front entered a period of relative quiet. The battle had not changed the military situation since the two armies remained in their same positions along the Rappahannock. Flushed by this recent victory, Southern leaders were confident of the invincibility of Lee's forces. A second invasion of the

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[9]Cornie to Adeline, 15 May 1863.

[10]Cornie to Adeline, 15, 25 May 1863.

North was discussed for many of the same reasons as those advanced in 1862. Virginia was becoming increasingly war weary. A campaign in the North would temporarily relieve the war-torn state of further destruction and the Confederate army could forage on the rich farmlands of Maryland and Pennsylvania. Preparations were soon begun. With Jackson's death, there was no other general capable of effectively leading his corps. Therefore, the army was divided into three corps commanded by Generals Longstreet, Ewell, and A. P. Hill. By the end of May all was in readiness. On June 3, McLaws' division moved out from Fredericksburg to begin the new campaign.

For ten days, Hooker failed to realize that Lee was launching another invasion. Cavalry probes revealed that the Confederates were extending their line; when gray infantry was discovered beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains Hooker mobilized his forces. The Second Corps, acting as rear-guard, was the last to leave Falmouth on the fifteenth of June. It made a rapid advance by way of Stafford Court-House, Aquia, Dumfries, and Wolf Run Shoals. On the seventeenth the corps arrived at Sangster's Station, having traveled more than forty miles in two days. After two days' rest, the march continued on the twentieth, to Centreville. It arrived at Gainesville, near Thoroughfare Gap, on the twenty-first. During its approach the corps crossed the celebrated Bull Run, marching through the scene of John Pope's defeat the previous August. The fields revealed

skeletons in shallow graves, fragments of spent shells with broken guns and accouterments scattered everywhere.[11]

Zook's brigade spent several days in Gainesville guarding the Manassas Gap Railroad. Before dawn on the twenty-fifth, the brigade was cut off entirely from the rest of the Second Corps by the passage of Jeb Stuart's cavalry. Stuart was beginning his long raid behind the Union army when he stumbled on the Federals at Gainesville. No fighting was reported as the Confederates headed south toward Warrenton, but Cornie found the formidable horsemen impressive, noting that they were considered the finest cavalry in either army.[12]

The Second Corps continued its trek northward on the twenty-fifth to Gum Spring and thence to Edward's Ferry where the Potomac was crossed on the twenty-sixth. Confidently, the troops waded the river singing "Maryland, My Maryland." From the Maryland side of Edward's Ferry the route lay through Poolville to Barnesville and Monocacy Junction. It was here the men learned that General Hooker had been relieved of command of the army and succeeded by George G. Meade. Bickering and disagreement between Hooker and the Washington administration over army operations resulted in Hooker's resignation. Changing commanders on the eve of a battle was dangerous, but Meade seemed to be

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[11]Cornie to Adeline, 22 June 1863; Frederick, Story, p. 162.

[12]Cornie to Adeline, 22 June 1863.

the best replacement. On the morning of June 29, the troops pressed forward during an extremely exhausting march. The weather was intensely sultry, causing many men to fall out from fatigue and sunstroke. From early morning to midnight the line of march continued from Monocacy Junction to Liberty, Johnsville, and Uniontown. Straggling grew at an alarming rate. Regiments became indistinguishable as stragglers became mingled with regiments other than their own. Ambulances were filled with footsore, exhausted men. The corps rested at Uniontown on the thirtieth as stragglers slowly rejoined their regiments. Distant cannonading to the north was heard on July 1 as the march continued toward Taneytown. During the night, the Second Corps arrived behind Cemetery Ridge south of Gettysburg ready for the impending struggle.[13]

Gettysburg was a quiet little market town in southern Pennsylvania. It lay at the junction of twelve roads that inevitably brought the contending armies to its gates. As the Army of Northern Virginia moved north through the Shenandoah and Cumberland valleys it was forced to disperse in search of supplies. Infantry columns in Pennsylvania extended from Chambersburg on the west to Carlisle on the north and York on the east. Lee felt lost as his army groped through the countryside. Jeb Stuart, Lee's "eyes," was leading a useless cavalry raid through eastern Maryland

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[13]Frederick, Story, pp. 163-165.

and Pennsylvania, and was not available to provide accurate intelligence regarding the location of Union forces. When Lee learned, on June 28, that the Federals were north of the Potomac, he ordered his widespread divisions to concentrate at Gettysburg.

General John Buford, whose cavalry division occupied Gettysburg on the twenty-ninth of June, led the Federal advance. Camped on the ridges west of town, on July 1, the Union cavalrymen encountered the advance elements of General A. P. Hill's corps marching down the Chambersburg Pike. The fighting quickly intensified as troops from all compass points marched toward the sound of the guns. Buford's cavalry was relieved by the First Corps which was later supported by the Eleventh Corps. With these forces present, the Federal line stretched in a wide arch north and west of town. Hill's Confederates, approaching from the west, were joined by Ewell's Corps from the north. These additional troops gave the Confederates the preponderance of strength on the field. Ewell's troops broke the lines of the Eleventh Corps and drove the Federals back through Gettysburg onto the hills south of town. Failing to press their advantage by pushing the disorganized Federals off the high ground, the Confederates settled into positions extending six miles, from Culp's Hill on the east, through Gettysburg and southward along Seminary Ridge. During the night the Federals fortified the hillsides. Using the advantage of interior lines, they

moved troops onto the key points of Culp's Hill, Cemetery Hill, Cemetery Ridge, and Little Round Top.

The fighting on July 2 was slow to develop. Confederate and Union forces continued to arrive on the field from all points. Reconnaissance and movement over unfamiliar and broken terrain was difficult for Lee's army. He planned to attack both of Meade's flanks, hoping for a breakthrough. It was 4:00 P.M. when Hood's division launched the opening assault against the Federal left flank. The fighting raged for the possession of a rocky eminence called the Devil's Den and the wooded hills of Round Top and Little Round Top. McLaws added his division to the fray, striking the Federal Third Corps at the famous Peach Orchard. Thus assailed by these two strong divisions, the Federal line soon broke under the pressure. Reinforcements were drawn from the Second Corps. Caldwell's division, containing the brigades of Cross, Zook, Kelly, and Brooke was sent to restore the line. The division entered with a three brigade front to present an imposing force to the enemy. By now, the Confederates had reached the Wheatfield, in rear of the Peach Orchard, and advanced to meet their new opponents. Brigades were sent in piecemeal as the Wheatfield became the scene of furious charges and countercharges. Fighting was incessant. Entire regiments were gobbled-up in the "whirlpool" of death that was the Wheatfield.

When Zook's brigade entered the field all was

confusion and terror. His advance was obstructed by the disorganized troops of Barnes's division (Fifth Corps). Zook angrily commanded the soldiers to get out of the way or lie down so his brigade could pass. The soldiers obeyed the order and the brigade marched over their prostrate bodies and formed a line of battle. General Zook then led his troops into the Wheatfield. The fury of this assault drove the enemy back in disorder and temporarily cleared the field. But it was a hollow victory; General Zook received a mortal wound and was taken from the field. The men of the 57th were stunned at the news. Zook had been their commander for nearly two years. He died the next day. Unsupported in their advanced position, the brigade retired to the east side of Plum Run, at the foot of Little Round Top and joined the remainder of the Federals in repulsing other Confederate attacks.[14]

Nightfall ended the fighting, of July 2, with the Federals still clinging to the Round Tops. During the night, Caldwell's division moved to a position close to the center of the Union lines. The next day, following a deafening artillery bombardment, General Pickett led one last desperate Confederate assault upon the Union center. At first, Pickett's division marched straight toward Caldwell's

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[14]These citations refer to the preceding three paragraphs. Cornie to Adeline, 5 July 1863; O.R., Vol. 27, part 1, pp. 175, 396; Glenn Tucker, High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1958), p. 274.

troops, but suddenly turned left and aimed for a copse of trees up the line. The brigades of Perry and Wilcox, which were supposed to protect Pickett's right flank, were forced to retreat under a withering fire from Caldwell's line. No Confederate troops successfully advanced beyond Caldwell's skirmish lines except as prisoners. After this threat dissipated, Cornie and his comrades watched the terrible destruction of Pickett's troops and cheered their defeat.

The major fighting at Gettysburg ended with the repulse of Pickett's suicidal attack. On the evening of July 4, General Lee withdrew his defeated army toward the Potomac River. The Federal forces were too badly mauled to offer more than a sluggish pursuit. They caught up to Lee at Williamsport, Maryland. His crossing was delayed by the flooding waters of the Potomac. Seemingly trapped, Lee assembled his army in a strong defensive position along the river. With the Confederates thus situated, Meade organized his army to attack. On July 13, the high waters subsided and the Confederates retreated across the river unopposed. Lee's invasion of the North was over. Gettysburg was the last major eastern battle of 1863. Lee and Meade were content to maneuver against each other during the remainder of the year in Virginia.

The Army of the Potomac continued southward until it reached Morrisville, Virginia, on the North Fork of the Rappahannock River near Kelly's Ford. Here the army rested and reorganized from the exertions of the Gettysburg cam-

paign. Depleted regiments, including the 57th, sent recruiting details home to encourage enlistment and bring back conscripts. The first Federal Conscription Act of March 3, 1863, met with great opposition from the public. One major loophole allowed a drafted man to hire another as a substitute or purchase his way out for $300. This clause greatly incensed the average citizen because it favored the rich over the poor. The Federal machinery for the enforcement of this act was evaded and obstructed; yet, despite its many defects, the measure stimulated volunteering.[15]

Dissatisfaction over the draft laws erupted into uncontrollable rioting in New York City during July 1863. Three days of looting, burning, and killing were finally quelled by the New York State Militia and troops from the Army of the Potomac. Cornie exemplified the majority of Union soldiers who were infuriated by the disloyalty on the home front. The soldiers knew that only through the draft could the army obtain the numbers of men needed to crush the Confederacy. Cornie feared the $300 commutation clause would prevent the army from filling its quotas,

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[15]By this act, all male citizens between the ages of twenty and forty-five were subject to military service. Exemptions were extended to the physically or mentally unfit, men with certain types of dependents, those convicted of a felony, and various high Federal and state officials. State draft quotas were set up by the President, while opportunity was given for volunteering. Long, Almanac, p. 325; Randall and Donald, The Civil War, pp. 313-318.

because everyone would be trying to raise the money in order to avoid military service. Many soldiers, including Cornie, believed those traitors who refused to obey the draft laws should be hanged.[16]

Civil disobedience also carried over to the military. While the army camped at Morrisville the provost marshal began to enforce strict penalties upon shirkers, including the execution of deserters. Now that the army was beginning to fill up with "conscripts" it was necessary to adopt harsh measures to check the increasing desertion rate. The conscripts were a new breed of soldier. They did not fight with the same willingness and enthusiasm as the volunteers, because they were serving by law not by choice. Consequently, many of these conscripts deserted at the first opportunity. Executions were gruesome ceremonies, designed to prevent desertion through abhorrence of such punishment. First, the brigade or division to which the deserter belonged was formed into a rectangle open at one end. Second, the condemned man marched between the ranks of his comrades with head bowed. The processional was led by the provost marshal, followed by a band playing the "Dead March," and four men bearing the coffin. Next, came the prisoner accompanied by a chaplain and two guards. When the procession reached its destination the

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[16]Cornie to Adeline, 15 May, 21 July, and 3 August 1863; Wiley, Billy Yank, pp. 281-282, 287.

prisoner sat on the coffin near his grave at the open end of the rectangle. The chaplain then said a prayer for the condemned man's soul; the provost marshal blindfolded the culprit, read the official order for the execution, and instructed the firing party to carry out the sentence. After the surgeon's pronouncement of death, the witnessing troops were marched past the corpse for a close-up view. Cornie witnessed several executions. He related one vivid account of the last few minutes of one prisoner's life. Before the deserter was blindfolded he firmly shook hands with the provost marshal.

> When he released the officer's hand it was red with the hard pressure he had given it--like the grasp of a drowning man. The first volley was effectual, and he rolled from his coffin without a groan--Tis hard to witness these scenes--oh! I hope they may have the desired effect upon those who may have half made up their minds to follow the example of poor Allen!

Shocking as such scenes were, there is no indication that these executions greatly deterred desertion, because there were many opportunities for escaping safely.[17]

Another problem which disturbed the army was the frequency of raids by guerrillas, the most famous of which was Mosby's raiders. They often prowled on the Union army's flanks, picking up prisoners and information. Cornie related one incident in August when Lieutenant Elisha L. Palmer, of Company A, was captured while on picket duty.

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[17]Cornie to Adeline, 28 August and 2 October 1863; Billings, Hardtack, pp. 157-161; Wiley, Billy Yank, pp. 206-207.

Palmer was taken by two of Mosby's men who were dressed in Federal uniforms and transported to Libby Prison in Richmond. The regiment received a letter from him a week later describing his experience. Cornie seemed impressed that an officer of his regiment graced the halls of the renowned prison. The lieutenant remained at Libby Prison until December 1864, when he was exchanged.[18]

While Meade's army remained at Morrisville, the Army of Northern Virginia concentrated near Culpeper. Both armies were depleted and haggard from the rigors of the Gettysburg campaign. Detachments were sent from the Army of the Potomac to Charleston, South Carolina, further reducing its strength. Lee's forces were also dininished in September by the loss of Longstreet's corps. Longstreet and two of his divisions were sent to Chickamauga, in north Georgia, to help stop a Federal advance. When Meade learned of Lee's weakened army he advanced, on September 12, across the Rappahannock and occupied Culpeper, forcing Lee to withdraw peaceably behind the Rapidan River. The Second Corps proceeded through Culpeper and established a position stretching nine miles along the north bank of the Rapidan. Here they were engaged in nearly constant picket duty. The men of the 57th regiment were soon on good terms with the Confederate pickets on the opposite bank. They swapped

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[18]Cornie to Adeline, 3, 15 August 1863; Frederick, Story, p. 195.

such articles as coffee, tobacco, and newspapers. Cornie reported that one of his friends returned to camp with copies of the Richmond Sentinel and the Southern Illustrated News.[19] The good natured conversations which followed these exchanges helped to ease tensions and improve relations along the front lines.

Late in September, the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps were sent by rail to Chattanooga, Tennessee, to help break the Confederate siege of that city. When Lee learned that Meade had lost these two corps he began offensive operations to turn the Federal position from the west by a maneuver similar to that which he had used against General Pope at Second Manassas. A watchful Meade tried to stay ahead of the Confederates, but the Second Corps, acting as rear guard was struck, on the 14th, near Auburn, west of Catlett's Station, on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. The 57th regiment was located on a small hill outside of Auburn. The soldiers were relaxing around their fires making coffee when a Confederate battery appeared in their rear and began shelling the camp. All was confusion as the soldiers scrambled for their rifles and as the coffee was overturned by the explosions. Henceforth, the Federals named the area Coffee Hill. The battery was soon silenced, but its fire was replaced by that of advancing Confederate infantry. Attacked from two sides and nearly surrounded,

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[19]Cornie to Adeline, 23 September 1863.

the regiment hastily retreated to the safety of some nearby woods. The whole affair lasted only twenty-minutes, but it was a frightful experience for the soldiers.

The regiment eventually caught up to its brigade and the entire division moved northeast, five miles, toward Bristoe Station. Later that day, the Second Corps was attacked at Bristoe Station by Hill's and Ewell's corps. The remainder of the Army of the Potomac continued northward to take possession of the Bull Run Mountains. Thus, the Second Corps was nearly cut off from the rest of the army. The troops took position behind the railroad embankment. As Hill's forces advanced, they were met by a murderous fire inflicting nearly two thousand casualties while the Federals suffered only slight loss. These were the same veterans who had repulsed Pickett at Gettysburg. So hot was their fire, that Lee believed he was facing the entire Union army and called off the engagement. That night the corps secretly left Bristoe Station and rejoined the army on the north bank of Bull Run.

With the Army of the Potomac placed strongly behind Bull Run, Lee discontinued any further offensive movements. The Federals expected the Confederates to initiate a third battle along the historic creek, but General Lee could see no advantage to be gained by attacking the entrenched Federals. He began withdrawing his forces on Ocrober 17 and started back to the Rappahannock. Meade followed leisurely on the nineteenth. Although the maneuvering

continued for several weeks, Lee failed to cut off Meade's withdrawal, and the campaign ended with no significant strategic result. The two armies eventually resumed their former positions between Culpeper and the Rapidan.[20]

The Second Corps settled into camp at Stevensburg, on November 7, about five miles east of Culpeper. During this time, Cornie received his commission from the governor of New York as a second lieutenant. The commission had little importance initially because he could not be mustered into service as an officer until the regiment received more troops. Cornie was more interested in the increased pay and allowances than his new rank.[21] He was trying to save enough money to establish himself in some type of business when he returned home, and a sergeant's pay was simply too small. Not until March 1864 was he mustered in to his new position.

Meanwhile, new preparations were made by the Army of the Potomac for an offensive movement. On Thanksgiving Day (November 26), it began an advance, successfully

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[20]These citations refer to the preceding three paragraphs. Boatner, Dictionary, pp. 87-88; Frederick, Story, pp. 196-202; Douglas S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study In Command, Vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), pp. 242-246.

[21]In 1863, a second lieutenant's pay and allowances amounted to $103.50 per month. Revised United States Army Regulations of 1861 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), p. 545.

crossing the Rapidan at Germanna Ford.[22] By this move, Meade hoped to maneuver Lee out of his position and force him back toward Richmond. After crossing the river, Meade's army turned west toward Orange Court House. The Federals skirmished with Confederate cavalry who sounded the alarm of the approaching enemy. Quickly, General Lee put his army in motion to block Meade's advance. Meade found the Confederates strongly posted along Mine Run, a southern tributary of the Rapidan, in defensive works that equalled those on Marye's Heights at Fredericksburg. He probed the strong Confederate positions for several days unsuccessfully trying to find an assailable position. Not wishing to cause the needless slaughter of his troops, he withdrew on December 1. The army then moved back to the Culpeper area and established winter quarters. This ended major operations in the east until the Wilderness campaign in May 1864.

After the men were comfortably situated in their winter camps, the Army of the Potomac began a campaign for the reenlistment of veterans. Most of the veteran regiments had enlisted for three years' service and 1864 would see their departure. Retention of the veterans was considered vital if the army hoped to launch a successful spring campaign. The combined influences of propaganda,

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[22]The 26th was also Cornie's twenty-first birthday and he celebrated with a meal consisting of hardtack, salt, fat pork, and water.

patriotism, bounties, and furloughs resulted in many regiments reenlisting. Cornie was among those who felt obligated to sign up. He believed it was his duty to serve until the war ended. Over half of his regiment reenlisted quickly, but it was doubtful how many more would follow suit. Retention of the veterans was especially important in view of the deterioration in the quality of men recruited for service. The miserable characters of many of the substitutes, bounty jumpers, and conscripts which filled the ranks, embittered the veterans and no doubt influenced many to reenlist out of concern for the army. In all, over 200,000 veterans, nationwide, continued their service and formed the nucleus of the Northern armies in the dramatic campaigns of 1864 and 1865.[23]

By the third winter of the war the conflict had altered in favor of the North. Confederate successes in the spring were later overshadowed by Federal victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga. Morale in the Army of the Potomac was greatly improved over the previous year. The victories at Gettysburg and Bristoe Station proved to the soldiers they were capable of defeating their Southern opponents. Improvements in army leadership largely explained the increased Federal success in the field. As a tactician, General Meade handled the combined arms of artillery,

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[23]Cornie to Adeline, 10, 26 December 1863; Wiley, Billy Yank, pp. 342-343.

infantry, and cavalry much more successfully than his two predecessors. The introduction of large numbers of conscripted soldiers into the army, however, changed its outlook. Many veterans feared for the future effectiveness of these troops and, after numerous urgings by the government, extended their enlistment periods to the conclusion of the war. As they settled into winter quarters, they looked forward to the spring campaign, hoping that it would finally bring the long-awaited victory over Lee's army, and the end of the war.

# CHAPTER IV

## 1864

As the New Year opened, few soldiers in the Army of the Potomac were bold enough to predict that its end would find them very close to their goal of complete victory. Throughout the previous year they had marched and fought over much of Northern Virginia, and had won a decisive victory at Gettysburg. Yet the Army of Northern Virginia appeared as strong as ever. It still blocked the road to Richmond. Indeed the New Year found the two armies settled only thirty miles west of their positions twelve months earlier.

Cornie and his fellow soldiers still looked for a commander who could lead them to victory in a decisive campaign. Lincoln had long believed ultimate victory required the decisive defeat of the Confederate armies. Yet, his commanders acted as though the primary objective was the conquest of territory. Moreover, the Federal armies often acted independently of each other, defying the necessity for a coordinated Union strategy. Lincoln continued to search for a commander who could implement his plan and the Army of the Potomac spent the winter in the vicinity of

Culpeper, awaiting spring and the beginning of a new campaign.

As a combination of new volunteers and conscripts slowly filled the depleted regiments, General Meade determined to reorganize his army. He disbanded the shattered First and Third Corps and divided their units among the remaining three corps. Whether this action was wise, considering the affection the soldiers felt for their old outfits, was debatable. Moreover, the reduction of the army to three corps made each unit both large and unwieldy. After the transfer of the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps to the west, the Army of the Potomac faced the spring campaign with only the Second, Fifth, and Sixth Corps.[1]

The Second Corps, again camped at Stevensburg, was comfortably situated for the winter. The usual chores of picket duty along the Rapidan, drilling, and dress parades occupied much of the soldiers' waking hours. Winter quarters for Cornie meant reasonably comfortable living in a "log house." He shared his quarters with his close friend, Martin Connolly, who was quartermaster-sergeant for the regiment. The two men constructed a two-room apartment, which included a living room and a bedroom. The walls of the living room were papered and decorated with evergreens and with photographs of family and friends. In the rear of the hut was a wall tent which served as the bedroom. A

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[1]Hassler, Commanders, p. 192.

door connected the two parts to allow easy access. In a letter to his sister Adeline, Cornie boasted of his quaint winter shelter. "We are comfortably situated now--have a nice little house, and live together as happy as a newly wedded couple-- . . . in fact, have everything as nice as we could wish under the circumstances."[2] But comfortable quarters and army friends scarcely satisfied the loneliness felt by all the soldiers, so long absent from home. More had to be done.

During the first two months of 1864, the soldiers welcomed several camp improvements. Early in January, General Meade issued orders permitting officers to invite their wives, daughters, sisters, or mothers to visit the army for several months. The presence of the ladies tended, in a large measure, to break the monotomy of camp life. They went about the camps and hospitals speaking kindly and cheerfully to the men, who, in turn, tried to present a neat and clean appearance. The soldiers used more shoe blacking that winter than at any previous time. In addition, they built a large music hall, used nightly for concerts, lectures, and other social gatherings. Some of the men in the 57th regiment formed a Soldiers Christian Union to minister to the spiritual needs of their regiment. Its members distributed religious literature, held prayer meetings, visited the sick, and ministered to their comrades

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[2]Cornie to Adeline, 26 January and 13 April 1864.

in many different ways. Our Camp Journal was a newspaper established for the literary improvement of the men in the First Division. The 26th Michigan Infantry originally published the periodical for the benefit of its members, but, in February, circulation expanded to encompass the whole division. Cornie represented his brigade on the staff, collecting stories and items of interest for publication. All of these social and benevolent changes helped to improve the soldiers' morale during the long winter encampment.[3]

While the army relaxed along the Rapidan, events in Washington hastened the final Union offensive leading to the collapse of the Confederacy. On March 9, President Lincoln commissioned Ulysses S. Grant lieutenant general and, three days later, promoted him to General-in-Chief of all the Union armies. This made it possible to organize a unified plan of operations against the Confederacy. Unified command offered the opportunity of countering the advantage which interior lines had provided the Southern armies, since they could move troops rapidly to threatened areas. Now, the Federals could more easily maintain pressure on many areas at the same time.

Grant immediately joined Meade and was soon planning the strategy for a new campaign, encompassing both the capture of the Confederate capital and the destruction of Lee's

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[3]Cornie to Adeline, 19 January and 21 February 1864; Frederick, Story, pp. 212-213, 215.

army. The success of his campaign would also result in destroying the capacity of the South to continue the war. The Federal forces would advance in concert into Virginia. Meade's Army of the Potomac was given the job of maneuvering Lee's forces away from the Wilderness in order to win a decisive battle in open terrain. Benjamin Butler's Army of the James was ordered to march west from Fort Monroe, skirting the south bank of the James River, menace Richmond, prevent reinforcements from reaching Lee, and destroy the railroads below Petersburg, severing Lee's communications with the lower South. Franz Sigel had the responsibility of leading a third advance up the Shenandoah Valley to destroy Lee's rail hub at Lynchburg. In the process, he was ordered to destroy crops and stores intended for the Army of Northern Virginia. Simultaneously, William T. Sherman was to march on Atlanta, destroying Joseph E. Johnston's Confederate army, and devastating the resources of central Georgia. Nathaniel Banks would complete the campaign by making a limited amphibious landing at Mobile, Alabama. The armies of the Union would be on the march in one grand operation designed to put simultaneous pressure on all major armies of the Confederacy. This coordinated Federal offensive, planned for early May, was designed to overwhelm the thin Confederate ranks, by preventing any reinforcement of threatened areas. Inevitably, Grant

believed, Southern resistance would collapse.[4]

While Grant evolved his plan, Cornie spent a long furlough at home in Greenport. As a reward for reenlisting, he was given thirty-five days to spend with his family. He returned to the army as a second lieutenant, placed in command of Company I and appointed acting adjutant for the regiment. Normally, a captain commanded a company, but because of the depleted condition of Company I, Cornie remained in command until the company was mustered out of service in August.

As the lieutenant commenced his new duties, final preparations for the army's advance were being made. The first order of business was the trimming down of the over-abundance of baggage, winter clothing, and wagons. Soldiers would travel light, carrying only the necessities. Sutlers were ordered to disband their operations and all visitors in camp were asked to return home. After five months of inactivity, the Army of the Potomac looked forward to the coming campaign as it confidently crossed the Rapidan on May 4.

Grant ordered the army to move eastwardly, maneuvering around the Confederate right flank. Rapid movement was essential for the success of his plans. He intended to free himself from the use of an insecure railroad from

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[4]Matloff, Military, pp. 262-265; Long, Almanac, p. 483; Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, Vol. 2 (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1886), pp. 127-134.

Alexandria. General Grant also wanted to end the army's dependence on a large wagon train carrying supplies. Finally, he wanted to take advantage of Virginia's rivers as supply routes with bases on the Chesapeake Bay. In order to carry out these plans, Grant made a risky move diagonally across Lee's front in Northern Virginia.[5]

With little room for maneuver, Grant's army was forced to march through the Wilderness. The Second Corps crossed the Rapidan at Ely's Ford and continued to Chancellorsville. That evening, the soldiers camped on the old battlefield near the Chancellor mansion. All about them lay the evidence of the earlier battle. The corps resumed marching the next morning, proceeding southward along Catharpin Road to Todd's Tavern. After advancing several miles past the tavern, Hancock received orders to turn his corps around and march northward toward Orange Court House Turnpike. Fighting had erupted earlier along this road between Ewell's Confederates and the Federal Fifth Corps. Once again the tangled woods and thickets of the Wilderness hampered vision and movement. Artillery and cavalry were almost useless as the fighting became close and desperate. The dry woods caught fire and many wounded soldiers died horribly in the flames and smoke. Upon reaching the scene, the Second Corps formed the left of the Federal position, along Brock Road. Barlow's

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[5]Matloff, Military, p. 266.

division held the extreme left of that line, facing south and east.[6] Lieutenant Colonel Alford B. Chapman, commanding the 57th regiment, took charge of the brigade skirmish line. Before he left the regiment, he warned Cornie to watch the new recruits. If any abandoned their position they should be shot for desertion. A few hours later, as the regiment advanced, it passed the Colonel's dead body. Shocked and angered, the men hastened to avenge their Colonel by destroying the enemy. Advancing with a new determination, they drove back the Confederates, secured their front, and carried Chapman's body from the field.

Early on May 6, Hancock launched a new and more successful attack. During this assault, A. P. Hill's Confederates were outflanked, but the timely arrival of Longstreet's troops prevented a rout. Later that morning, Longstreet launched his own attack upon Hancock's front. The Federals recoiled under the pressure. Frank's brigade, being out of ammunition, was forced to withdraw, leaving a serious gap in the line. Quickly, the Confederates advanced to exploit the breach as the Federal line crumbled. During the melee, Longstreet was wounded accidentally by a volley from his troops, and the attack stalled. Soon the Federals reestablished their line along the Brock Road and repulsed other Confederate attacks. After two days of hard fighting,

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[6]Brigadier General Frances C. Barlow was promoted to command the First Division, Second Corps, while Colonel Paul Frank commanded the Third Brigade of that corps.

neither army had won any advantage. The two armies rested on May 7, still facing one another. Now came the test of Grant's execution of strategy. After an encounter with Lee, other Union commanders had retreated and postponed any further combat with the Southern general. But Grant was not easily discouraged. He ordered the Army of the Potomac to slide around Lee's right flank and continue toward Richmond.[7]

On the night of the seventh, the army quietly moved southeasterly toward the crossroads at Spotsylvania. Next morning, the Second Corps arrived again at Todd's Tavern and erected breastworks. While awaiting a Confederate attack, the 57th regiment received orders to escort the wounded to Fredericksburg. Hancock detailed the regiment for this light duty because of its heavy losses in the Wilderness. Together with several companies of cavalry and a battery of artillery, the 57th proceeded to Fredericksburg with several hundred wounded soldiers and Confederate prisoners. The city was not then under Federal control, but the troops entered without hindrance. The first task was to care for the large numbers of wounded that were arriving from the front. Soon, the city became one great hospital. At first, food and medical supplies were scarce. A search of the local homes produced only scanty provisions. It was

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[7]Cornie to Adeline, 13 May 1864; O.R., Vol. 36, part 1, pp. 318-323; Frederick, Story, pp. 219-223.

not long, however, before members of the United States Sanitary and Christian commissions arrived, bringing supplies and assistance to the soldiers.[8]

The regiment remained in Fredericksburg for three weeks, supervising the transportation of the wounded to Washington, the burial of the dead, and the policing of the city. Many of the citizens welcomed the Federal occupation. Their presence raised the city's standard of living by allowing the citizens to purchase goods from the commissary department. Because of this privilege, talk of the Federal departure caused much sorrow among the people. "You can notice," Cornie remarked, "a regret apparent among the inhabitants at the prospect of our evacuating, bitter Secessionists as they are, for they hate to return to the want and beggary of the Confederacy again."[9] On May 28, the 57th regiment became part of a provisional brigade under Colonel Louis P. DiCesnola and marched southward to rejoin the army nearing Cold Harbor.

The Federals moved at a leisurely pace through the towns of Port Royal and Bowling Green. Outside of the latter town, they came upon an army wagon train that had been attacked by Confederate guerrillas. One soldier lay dead; supplies and mules were stolen. The soldiers searched

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[8]Cornie to Adeline, 13 May 1864; O.R., Vol. 36, part 2, p. 532; Frederick, Story, pp. 224, 236-238.

[9]Cornie to Adeline, 24 May 1864.

a nearby farm and uncovered four of the mules. After confessing his guilt, the farmer was sentenced to die for his participation in the raid. Cornie explained:

> He was made to kneel beside the work of his own hands, half-a-dozen men stepped forward with loaded rifles, the order was given to "fire!" and an instant later he died like a dog, as he was.

In a nearby shanty, an old Negro woman was found literally starving to death. Feeling compassion for the woman's plight, many of the soldiers freely gave some of their rations to ease her hunger. Cornie used these two divergent incidents as examples of the privations and sufferings experienced by many Southerners. Insightfully he remarked that "the people of the North, enjoying all the comforts of peace, comparatively, can have but a faint idea of War's horrors."[10] After these incidents, the Federals continued southward to Hanover Court House, arriving on June 2. Just after setting up camp, orders were given to march without delay. Misinterpreted marching orders resulted in the Federals being eight miles behind enemy lines. Hanovertown was their real destination. They marched eastward all night through rain and mud. Early the next morning they rejoined the Army of the Potomac at Cold Harbor, east of Richmond.

Cornie and the 57th regiment had avoided the previous four weeks of fighting and maneuvering with the Army of the Potomac. While he and his comrades enjoyed the

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[10]Cornie to Adeline, 7 June 1864.

quietude of Fredericksburg, the army fought at Spotsylvania and along the North Anna River. In each case, Lee blocked the Federal advance, but Grant simply side-stepped the Confederates and continued southward. On June 1, Grant and Lee converged on the road junction of Cold Harbor, eight miles east of Richmond. Initial fighting secured the crossroads for the Confederates as both armies dug in. On June 3, Grant launched a suicidal attack upon the entrenched Southerners with staggering losses. This attack climaxed a month of heavy fighting which resulted in approximately 55,000 Union casualties. These enormous losses caused a great outcry in the North demanding Grant's removal. His hammer tactics still had not defeated Lee's forces, but President Lincoln approved of Grant's methods.

The two opposing armies lay entrenched at Cold Harbor for another week. Daily skirmishes kept the soldiers alert, but neither army risked a major assault. Grant was determined to try another flanking maneuver against Lee. This time he would secretly slip across the James River and capture the important railroad center at Petersburg. In this way, Richmond's supplies and communications would be virtually cut off from the lower South. With great tactical skill Grant maneuvered his great army on June 12 toward the old defenses at Harrison's Landing. General Lee was completely deceived, believing Grant's forces to be north of the James even while Petersburg was under attack. The Second Corps crossed the river on the fifteenth, southwest

of Charles City Court House, from Wilcox Landing to Windmill Point. This position was only sixteen miles west of the imposing Confederate earthworks surrounding Petersburg. But due to unforeseen difficulties and bad directions, the corps did not arrive at the front until nightfall. Earlier that day, the Federal Eighteenth Corps, from Butler's army, successfully captured part of the sparsely defended Confederate earthworks, but failed to follow-up its advantage. The fighting ceased at dark as both sides prepared for renewed combat.

The Federals spent most of June 16 reconnoitering the Confederate fortifications. About 6:00 P.M., the 57th regiment, barely one hundred strong, participated in a general assault upon the Southern lines. The fighting centered around the home of O. P. Hare, a local merchant, which stood upon a commanding hill. Confederate batteries and sharpshooters opened a galling fire upon the advancing Federals. As they ascended the hill, Cornie was struck in his left side by a minnie ball. Later he recalled that "the ball passed through my canteen, blouse, pants, drawers, and shirt, struck me in the side, then passed through all the above articles again, vice versa, and 'went on its way rejoicing.'"[11] Cornie was spared critical internal injuries because the ball's velocity was reduced when it hit his

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[11]Cornie to Adeline, 29 June and 1 July 1864; O.R., Vol. 40, part 1, pp. 326-327, 329; Frederick, Story, pp. 253-256.

canteen. He went to the field hospital to have the wound treated, but he soon returned to his regiment. The Federals had gained a foothold at the Hare house, a mere one hundred fifty yards from the enemy lines. That night they repelled several Confederate attempts to recapture the hill, but the real test came in the morning.

Early on the 17th, the Second and Ninth Corps advanced gaining considerable ground on either side of the Hare house. The fighting raged throughout the day and several Confederate attempts to retake the hill were repulsed with great loss. Even with this success the Federals could not break through the strong Confederate entrenchments. Therefore, General Grant decided he must besiege Petersburg.

The next several days were quiet as the armies dug fortifications. But Grant was anxious to cut off Lee's supply lines and on June 22 ordered the Second and Sixth Corps to march toward the Weldon and Petersburg Railroad south of the city. Lee anticipated this Federal maneuver and ordered A. P. Hill's Corps to protect the exposed railroad. Unaware of Hill's presence, the Federals blindly entered the heavily wooded area near the railroad. This rugged terrain caused a large gap to form between the two corps. Alert to this development, Hill launched a devastating assault, dividing the Federals and capturing nearly two thousand men. The Second Corps received the brunt of the attack and retreated in great confusion. The hard

fighting of June 16-23 had taken a heavy toll of the 57th regiment. Its numbers were reduced to seventy-five men, less than company strength. They were not alone, for many other veteran units were understrength. As a result, the Second and Third brigades were consolidated, on June 27, with ten regiments under the command of Colonel Clinton McDougall.[12]

During most of July the new Consolidated Brigade performed various fatigue duties behind the front lines. Although new recruits arrived to fill the badly depleted ranks, rumors circulated that the smaller regiments would soon be consolidated and this worried the veterans of the 57th regiment. Some claimed they would join another branch of service if the regiment was dissolved. Cornie's friend, Martin Connolly, applied for a commission with the cavalry in preparation for such an event. Nevertheless, Cornie's veteran enlistment status changed and he eagerly accepted the opportunity to be discharged in mid-August.

Several high fevers plagued Cornie as he prepared to leave the service. The extremely hot days and the lack of good drinking water probably influenced these spells. He was in the hospital when the Second Corps, on July 26, crossed to the north side of the James River and attacked the Confederates at Deep Bottom, about three miles west of

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[12]Cornie to Adeline, 1 July 1864; O.R., Vol. 40, part 1, pp. 326-327, 329; Frederick, Story, pp. 253-256.

Malvern Hill. Grant ordered this movement to draw Confederate forces away from Petersburg in preparation for an attack. He planned to detonate eight thousand pounds of black powder in a tunnel dug under a Confederate battery. If successful, the resulting gap in the Southern defenses would allow the Federals to capture Petersburg. The fighting at Deep Bottom was quite sharp, but the 57th regiment remained idle. During the night of the 29th, the Second Corps returned to Petersburg in time to see the mine explode on July 30, but it did not advance into the crater.

Recovering from his latest attack of fever, Cornie eagerly planned his civilian life which would begin in two weeks. He and Martin wanted to go home and start a business together. The only drawback was Cornie's term of enlistment expired two months before Martin's. An arrangement was made with the captain commanding the regiment to get Martin transferred to Company F, being mustered out two days before Cornie's Company I. Everything looked bright for the future, but even the best laid plans go awry. When Cornie returned to his regiment, he discovered a number of difficulties which prevented Martin from going home with him. Cornie's great disappointment over the turn of events was reflected in his last letter.

> It will be impossible for both of us to get home. I <u>may</u> go yet, but shall not <u>try hard</u> to, for I do not look upon it as much a pleasure as I did a few days ago. Martie and I had built <u>such</u> castles in the air, which we hoped to mature when we got home

together, and now they have been scattered to the winds.[13]

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[13]Cornie to Adeline, 3 August 1864.

## CONCLUSION

Cornelius L. Moore was mustered out of the army with his company on August 13, 1864. The disbanding of Cornie's company began the gradual dissolution of the 57th regiment. It participated in the actions at Second Deep Bottom and Reams Station, two engagements which occurred immediately after Cornie's departure. Its companies were then assigned to a variety of fatigue and guard duties, as they were mustered out of service or transferred to the 61st New York Regiment in the months which followed.

Cornie returned to his home at Greenport, worked in his father's "newspaper store" for three months, and then decided to move to Brooklyn, New York, in search of larger opportunities for advancement. He found employment in a dry goods firm, H. C. Claflin and Company, and there he learned of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in April of 1865. In an emotional letter to his sister, he described his reaction to the news, as well as that of others with whom he came in contact:

> I feel so sad over the news received this morning of the Nation's great calamity, that I cannot write you a letter. I feel more like sitting down and having a good cry. Our President, who was so universally loved and respected by all lovers of their country murdered! . . . It is enough to stir up the most

> bitter feeling of revenge in our nation, and I sincerely trust that Mr. Johnson, in entering upon the duties of his elevated position, will leave no means unemployed to bring every leader of the cursed rebellion to the gallows in retalliation /sic/ for their last fiendish act. . . . Will you wonder, Ad, that I am feeling low spirited and sad when I tell you that I have not seen a man to-day who wore a smiling face? . . . Broadway was completely draped in mourning--not a building but was covered with black and white--and the flags which, but yesterday, was /sic/ waving so proudly in the bright sunlight, drooping in the storm at half-mast. Surely God has filled the Nation's cup of sorrow to overflowing![1]

In October 1867, Cornie married Julia Dayton Case and joined her father's wallpaper business. The couple lived in several different residences in or near New York City until 1908. During these years, four sons and two daughters were born to them. In 1908, upon his retirement from business, Cornie and Julia moved to a beachfront home at Peconic, close to his native town of Greenport. Here they lived until Julia's failing health forced them to give up their home and move in with their children. Cornie outlived his wife by five years. He died on January 23, 1930, in the midst of an economic crisis almost as severe as the political one which disrupted his early life.

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The military career of Cornelius L. Moore is of interest to the historian primarily because his attitudes and his experiences were often typical of those of the

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[1]Cornie to Adeline, 15 April 1865.

average soldier in the Army of the Potomac. One of the leading authorities on the common soldier, Bell Irvin Wiley, has drawn a composite picture of the Union soldier. Those who volunteered early in the war supported the Lincoln Administration, and its policy for the draft. They opposed the enlisting of black recruits, and shared a common prejudice against the members of this race. The overwhelming majority idolized McClellan, distrusted Burnside, and respected Hooker. Most were city dwellers who volunteered to fight for the preservation of the Union. They were indifferent to the slavery issue, and would have denied that they fought for abolition. These were views which Cornie shared.

Wiley notes that Northerners tended to be more practical than their Southern opponents, took more interest in politics, and were generally less religious. Cornie shared some of these characteristics. He saved as much of his army pay, as possible, in order to establish himself in business at the conclusion of his army service. Although he welcomed his promotion to lieutenant because of the higher pay it provided, he was reluctant to accept higher rank because he modestly believed his fellow soldiers were as deserving as he of such recognition. Political developments intrigued Cornie, and sometimes angered him. He was aware of the political realities which underlay the war and he took an interest in state and congressional elections in his native state. Religion was also an essential part of

his life. He attended church services whenever possible and often prayed for strength and courage to face the hardships of army life.

According to Dr. Wiley, many Union soldiers fostered a hatred for the South, but lacked a personal commitment toward the war. Cornie expressed no enmity toward his opponents in the Army of Northern Virginia, but he scorned Jefferson Davis and Southern guerrillas. Many Northerners did not feel the same commitment to fight as Southerners, because they were not defending their homes and family. Cornie, however, retained a very strong emotional attachment to the Union cause. He firmly believed it his duty to defend the United States against all of its enemies, domestic as well as foreign, and he carried this conviction through the three years of his army service.

Finally, Wiley found that Union soldiers, as a group, wrote with less humor and fewer battle descriptions than did Confederates. Although this generalization would apply to Cornie, he occasionally made fun of some of his old neighbors in Greenport, and he often teased his sister in his letters to her. Certainly his letters were sparse in describing battles. Yet, he provided dramatic accounts of the fighting at Chancellorsville and the siege of Petersburg.

Cornelius Moore lived through one of the most turbulent and critical periods of American history. He was not a leader whose decisions affected the outcome of the conflict. Rather he was but one of the hundreds of thousands

who answered the President's call for volunteers to save the Union. In later years he would recall with pride his contribution to Union victory. And he would leave a legacy in his wartime letters, which would provide his descendants, and others who chose to read them, a personal insight and perspective on the war more compelling than many of the later texts of the historians. "Could the lives /sic/ of every soldier be written," Cornie wrote on one occasion, "what a history it would make."[2]

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[2]Cornie to Adeline, 25 April 1863.

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