

ISAAC RIDGEWAY TRIMBLE, THE INDEFATIGABLE AND COURAGEOUS,

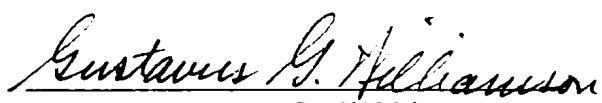
by

William M. Grace

thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in
History

APPROVED:


Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr.


Dr. Gustavus G. Williamson


Dr. Harold C. Livesay

April, 1984
Blacksburg, Virginia

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank those people most responsible for the completion of this study. Special thanks goes to Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr., for the time, patience and encouragement shown towards this project.

Special thanks also to Mr. and Mrs. William C. Trimble, for access to General Isaac R. Trimble's papers and hospitality provided by them.

In assisting the writer in his research, he would like to thank the following: Karen Stuart, Manuscript Division, Maryland Historical Society; the courteous and helpful staff at the United States Army War College; and the personnel in the Rare Books Collection, Library of Congress.

Finally, a warm thanks goes to Mr. William T. Grace and Mrs. Martha M. Hartl, the writer's parents, for their untiring enthusiasm and continual support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

Chapter

page

I. THE FORMATIVE YEARS 1

II. BAPTISM IN BATTLE 27

III. THE RISE TO PROMINENCE 53

IV. THE CLIMAX OF BATTLE 97

V. TOWARD AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE 138

VI. THE PAST BEFORE HIM 176

BIBLIOGRAPHY 184

VITA 191

ABSTRACT 192

Chapter I

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

The ancestral origin of Isaac Ridgeway Trimble can be traced to a Scotch ancestral blood that had been transplanted into Northern Ireland by King James I of England, to act as a buffer against the Celtic Irish.¹ The family members remained here until around 1740, when Joseph Trimble emigrated to North America. He settled at the young age of eighteen in Pennsylvania and adopted the Quaker religion of that colony. He engaged himself to serve and later became a partner in the mill with Rev. William Brown of Nottingham Township, Chester County, Pa. (now part of Cecil County, Md.).² Joseph "The Quaker" fathered nine children through two successive wives.

Isaac Ridgeway Trimble's father, John, was a child of Joseph's second marriage. Similar to Joseph, John married twice, fathering three children by his first wife and six by his second. Isaac Ridgeway was the youngest of the nine children. He was born May 20, 1804, in either Culpeper

¹ John F. Trimble, Trimble Families of America (Parson, W. Va., 1973), 3.

² Ibid., 159. Many of Joseph Trimble's descendants did not follow him in Quaker faith. Isaac Ridgeway Trimble was Episcopalian.

County, Va., or Redstone, Pa.³ His early childhood contained trying circumstances and recurrent displacement. As the Trimble family history states:

His father [John], who owned farmlands, a sawmill, and a "merchant mill" in Culpeper County, sold most of his real estate between 1796 and 1801. The balance, consisting of two mills and seventy-two acres was disposed of under the terms of an agreement signed on November 4, 1801. The sales were reportedly made necessary in order to make good on notes John Trimble had endorsed for a friend. Together with his wife Rachel Ridgeway and younger children (other members of his family had already moved West), John made the journey to Redstone, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, between February and April 1802 en route to Ohio. Because of Indian problems they were forced to remain in Redstone for four years. However, between May and July 1806 this family continued to Ross County, Ohio, where they settled in Kinnikkinnick, near Chillicothe. John Trimble and his wife Rachel died within a week of one another in 1809 from a prevailing fever, and young Isaac Trimble was placed in the charge of his elder sister Mrs. Joshua Woodrow of Hillsboro, Ohio. When nine years of age, Isaac was taken to Chillicothe where he lived with another sister, Mrs. James McClintock. Two years later, in 1815, he was again moved, this time to Mount Sterling, Kentucky, where his half brother David was practicing law.⁴

³ Ibid., 169-170. Many standard biographies such as Warner, Generals In Gray, Dictionary of American Biography and Evans, Confederate Military History give the incorrect date of May 15, 1802. The original date can be proven by examination of records held by William C. Trimble, the main administrator of the family papers. While some evidence gives the family's location at the time of I. R. Trimble's birth as Redstone, Pa., Trimble himself stated that he was born in Culpeper County, Va.

⁴ Ibid.

During this period of sudden and abrupt change, young Isaac Trimble displayed a unique characteristic that would have significant influence over the remainder of his life. This peculiar trait involved an emergent, strong-willed individual keen on never allowing a particular problem to overwhelm him in his quest for success. Thus, when a serious problem arose, he would muster all available strength within himself to overcome it, while simultaneously remaining self-assured that his abilities would prove superior to the task at hand. This was a true hallmark feature for a person exhibiting fine leadership qualities. The first indication of this development became apparent when he was nine years old and living with his sister, Mrs. McClintock in Chillicothe, Ohio. He habitually took the family horse for a ride and afterwards gave it some water at a nearby stream. To his utter disgust, he found himself frequently stoned by several envious townsboys whenever he went to the stream. In despair he asked Mr. McClintock for advise on how to handle the troublesome issue. Assured that thrashing one of the boys was the only acceptable solution, he set out a few days later determined to carry out his mission. That night he returned home without the horse, but deeply satisfied in knowing that no future harm would come to him the next time

he rode to the river.⁵ He had clearly won his first battle and could feel confident that future problems held similar solveable techniques.

Under his half brother's care, I. R. Trimble began to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to enter into a professional career. David Trimble saw to it that "he went to a school of more pretensions, learning Latin and arithmetic"⁶ which encouraged his aptitude toward study. With additional educational progress, young Trimble stood at a major crossroads.

In 1818, Trimble received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point through his half brother David, who was a senator from Kentucky.⁷ The Military Academy had recently undergone extensive reforms instituted by the new superintendent, Sylvanus Thayer. New programs placing greater emphasis in the fields of science, particularly engineering, had been incorporated into the Academy's curriculum. Thayer's concept of a well-educated small officer corps appeared to be bearing fruit.⁸ For Trim-

⁵ "Trimble Memoirs," Isaac R. Trimble Papers, in the possession of William C. Trimble, Baltimore, 1.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Trimble, Trimble Families of America, 170.

⁸ For information regarding Sylvanus Thayer's contributions at the U.S. Military Academy, see Stephen E. Ambrose, Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point (Balti-

ble, the trip to the Academy proved at times to be difficult and treacherous. One source stated that he "started on horseback from Kentucky to West Point. . . . The trip through the virgin forests was made mostly by night, the stops being in daytime, because a camp fire at night would have been almost certain to bring on an attack from the Indians."⁹ Once at West Point, however, problems of even greater magnitude confronted Trimble.

Shortly after Trimble's arrival, a sharp decline in his academic standing became evident. This was attributable to his "lazy room-mates who thought more of suppers in the room than of study, and at the beginning of the third year, he had dropped into the lowest section-- 4th."¹⁰ Upon receipt of his academic standing, Sen. David C. Trimble paid his half-brother a visit at the Military Academy. In the course of their discussion, the Senator "gently reproached him for neglecting his studies, and appealed to his pride and his brother's kindness, for which he ought in gratitude make

more, 1966), and Sidney Forman, West Point: A History of the United States Military Academy (New York, 1950).

⁹ Nineteenth Annual Reunion of the Association of the Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, June 11th, 1888 (East Saginaw, Mich., 1888), 64. Also "General Trimble Obituary," The (Baltimore) Sun, Jan. 3, 1888.

¹⁰ "Trimble Memoirs," 1.

better use of his opportunities."¹¹ The boy's faculties were once more aroused. He set out on a firm course to rectify the recent mistakes he had committed. He studied long and hard, and for several weeks he achieved the highest marks of his section. Impatiently he waited for his transfer to a higher section--3rd. Yet when it became obvious that nothing would happen, he went directly to Col. Thayer for some kind of explanation. The conversation immediately assumed a businesslike atmosphere. As Trimble later recounted:

He spoke to the Colonel boldly, saying he was ashamed to confess that he had neglected his studies; but had resolved now to study hard with the view of getting up in his class; that he had been marked "plus 18" the highest mark for some weeks and was discouraged by not being transferred. But said Col. Thayer, "cadet Vinton has been marked 'plus 18' also. I know that," said Trimble "the professor is a relative of Vinton, but why not transfer us both, and I promise you I will leave Vinton behind when we both get into the 3rd section. If I am transferred I will continue to study hard, and go on until I get into the 1st section, if not there is no use in killing myself (at this time he had but six hours sleep, rising always before day to study)." "Well," replied Col. Thayer, "you may do it, but it is a very unusual thing to rise up through the sections in that way, and if you succeed, you will have to study the back courses, which are necessary to attain proficiency in the upper sections." "I know that," said Trimble, "and am now studying them over again, specifically the mathematical courses. Well," said Col. Thayer, "continued as you are doing and I hope you may not be disappointed. The first week after this interview Trimble and Vinton were transferred to the 3rd section."¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

Trimble's resolve and determination did not fail him, for "in a week or two he was transferred to the 2nd section, leaving Cadet Vinton somewhere in the middle of the 3rd section, as to marks."¹³ Yet his rise to reach the top of his class hit an unforeseen snag, for he was unable to graduate first due to a denial by the testing board to allow him to retake a mathematics exam in which he had done poorly during his first year. Still, he had accomplished a spectacular feat, for no one had ever before risen so rapidly through the sections as he had done. Truly this was an accomplishment unto itself. Trimble therefore graduated and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Third Artillery.

In the Regular Army, his official duties included in 1822 ordnance duty, the following year garrison service at Fort Lafayette, N.Y., and topographical duty beginning in 1824 with surveys made for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. The next year he was assigned to the "Board of Engineers" and ordered to examine the country between Washington and New Orleans with the intent of constructing a national high-

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 2. Also in "Herbert R. Preston Letter," Jan. 8, 1972, is cited Trimble's class standing each year he attended West Point. A visible upward trend can be noted. 1819 (4th year), ranked 54 in a class of 116. 1820 (3rd year), ranked 53 in a class of 86. 1821 (2nd year), ranked 31 in a class of 53. 1822 (1st year), ranked 17 in a class of 40.

way that would pass through all the coastal capitals of the South.¹⁴

After examining two separate routes for the proposed road, he was again selected to survey a third route for the same road. He completed the task that same year in early December, staying in New Orleans until spring. " While there Trimble took up the study of French, with a view that to speak the language would enable him to read French scientific works with facility."¹⁵ The next summer he once again endeavored to survey two routes between Washington and Buffalo, N.Y., with the intent of building yet another national highway. In the winter of 1826-1827, Trimble finished making out all five national road routes for submittal to the Secretary of War, James Barbour.¹⁶ At this juncture, he became involved in a far greater activity demanding his engineering expertise.

In the year 1827 the railroad industry was on the brink of breaking forth in the United States. Trimble's sound training in engineering at West Point, and his recently acquired experience in survey duty for the national highway network, made him a prime candidate for the joint civilian

¹⁴ "Trimble Memoirs," 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid.

and military programs associated with the new construction of various railroad lines. As Sidney Forman noted:

American railroad building began in 1827 with the construction of the Baltimore and Ohio, the first important railroad undertaken in the United States. The company asked for and received technical assistance from the government. Several Army officers were assigned to aid. The directors reported to the stockholders that "several able and efficient members of the Topographical Corps have been detailed in the service of the company." The officers involved were Captain William Gibbs McNeill (USMA 1817), Lieutenants Joshua Barney (USMA 1820), Isaac Ridgeway Trimble (USMA 1822), Richard Hazzard (USMA 1824), William Cook (USMA 1822), Walter Gwynn (USMA 1822), and John N. Dillahanty (USMA 1824). A section of this road, between Baltimore and Ellicott's Mills, was entrusted to McNeill and his Army assistants, by whom says the report of July 7, 1828, "it has been accomplished with a degree of precision highly satisfactory of the Board."¹⁷

Further surveying of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad awaited Trimble after the completion of this initial task. The next summer he alone reconnoitered the proposed railroad route between Cumberland, Md., and the Ohio River. He walked the entire length of this route, frequently sleeping in the mountains alone at night. The following winter he was directed to make an examination of the country between Cumberland and Pittsburgh for [another] railroad route. Upon its completion he submitted both surveyed routes to the B. and O. Railroad Company's Board of Directors. Basically

¹⁷ Forman, West Point, 76-77. For more on the Topographical Corps actions, see Charles F. Carter, When Railroad Were New (New York, 1910), 39.

both original routes were accepted with only minor alterations attached. Lieutenant Trimble commenced construction under Superintendent Caspar Wever's direction, he being the only Army officer retained for this purpose.¹⁸

Soon after he left the B. and O. Railroad, under passionate pleas to remain, for the Boston and Lowell Railroads. His prior service with the B. and O. had been outstanding. In the process of carrying out his functions, he had proven himself to be a worthy engineer with vast leadership capabilities and extreme resourcefulness. The shortcomings experienced at West Point had finally been vindicated.

Isaac Trimble's marriage to Maria Ferguson Presstman on July 4, 1831, signaled a dramatic change in his life. Until 1831, he had found satisfaction with military life; but once married he began casting about, seeking better employment opportunities. In accordance to his new desires, he resigned from the United States Army on May 31, 1832. This year officially marked the beginning of his career in civil engineering and launched what would eventually take him to the heights of the American railroad system. At this time, he secured the position as Principal Assistant Engineer for the Boston, Massachusetts and Providence, Rhode Island,

¹⁸ "Trimble Memoirs," 6.

Railroad.¹⁹ Thus, his residency became Boston and his wife soon gave birth to twins. Unfortunately for the Trimble household, both the male and female infant died shortly after birth.²⁰ Trimble did not allow this sad circumstance to reflect on his official responsibilities. He continued to officiate over the surveying and construction of the railroad line. His hard work was soon rewarded. In the fall of 1834, three Massachusetts railroad companies chose him to go to England for the express purpose of buying iron, steam locomotives and other machinery. He was also granted unlimited credit for the purchase of these items. While in England he purchased an iron planing machine, the first of its kind to be introduced in the United States. In gratitude for services rendered, he received at company expense reference works on engineering and architecture which he personally bought while in France and Britain.²¹ Still greater challenges confronted him upon his return to America.

Once back home, Trimble accepted a position with the Baltimore and Susquehanna (Northern Central) Railroad. Within a year of his appointment, he assumed the post of

¹⁹ George Washington Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, from Its Establishment, in 1802, to 1890 (Boston, 1891), 285.

²⁰ "Trimble Outline," Trimble Papers, 2.

²¹ Ibid.

chief engineer with the company. Instantly his duties expanded and became increasingly tedious. During the construction of the line, Trimble advanced an innovative idea that never before had been conceived. In building this particular road, several ridges and summits had to be traversed. The standard procedure of the day called for the use of stationary engines whenever gradients exceeded an elevation of twenty feet per mile. Trimble devised a new scheme. Instead of a stationary engine used whenever a gradient proved too steep, he argued that less railroad cars with a greater number of locomotives should be employed, thus eliminating the cumbersome task of utilizing stationary engines in propelling a trainload up a precipitous incline.²² This novel discovery quickly became universal throughout the whole railroad industry.

Other duties were likewise executed with characteristic precision. The successful bridging of the Susquehanna River at Harrisburg, Pa., was an example.²³ Later, after the completion of the Baltimore and Susquehanna road, he traveled to Pottsville, Pa., where he took control of an iron furnace and perfected the smelting of iron ore with anthracite coal, the first such activity to be done in the state.²⁴

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 3.

Another engineering project stimulated his fancy. In 1836, Trimble was assigned the duty of compiling a preliminary survey for the construction of the Maryland Canal. His appointment symbolized the high esteem and confidence the Baltimore citizenry held for him, for the report's findings would set trade patterns and inevitably determine the prospective economic livelihood of the city.²⁵ From the outset, the intended purpose of the canal had been to link Baltimore with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. This would facilitate the solicitation of trade from the western marketplaces, primarily the Cumberland and Ohio vallies, from which such items as agrarian goods and coal could be received and exchanged for Baltimore manufactured and imported foreign goods. Trimble's main concern centered on selecting one of four proposed canal routes which would yield the greatest benefit to Baltimore. He ultimately opted in favor of a Georgetown route, which visibly held the qualities of being the cheapest, shortest and most capacious, to connect the harbor of Baltimore with the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. In March, 1837, he submitted his findings in a report to the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, Report of the Engineers Appointed by the Commissioners of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore on the Subject of the Maryland Canal (Baltimore, 1837), 3.

Mayor and Baltimore City Council.²⁶

In 1842 Trimble became an engineer for another railroad: the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore. "As its engineer and General Superintendent, he exercised full authority to manage its concerns as he might think best for the interests of the stockholders without interference from the Board of Directors in appointments, purchases or expenditures of all kinds."²⁷ These liberal powers were a direct result of the poor economic conditions afflicting the company. Trimble speedily acted to arrest the dire conditions plaguing the railroad. In the course of his six-year reform program, stock values rose to a healthy level, tracks were relaid on ballast with rails of heavy pattern, bridges rebuilt and station houses erected. All of these improvements were possible with the surplus capital generated by the company, with only one exception: a debt accrued with the purchase of iron rails from England. Clearly Trimble had demonstrated a phenomenal feat of grand leadership and efficient management. Even with this laudable success, he encountered cursory opposition from within the administrative hierarchy of the company

²⁶ Ibid., 21.

²⁷ "Trimble Outline," 3.

About a year following Trimble's departure from the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, a controversy emerged questioning his former conduct with the road. In October, 1853, the recently installed president of the railroad company, Samuel M. Felton, called for a formal investigation of Trimble stemming from alleged rumors of misconduct. Trimble moved abruptly and skillfully to clear his name. On December 3, 1854, after a massive and lengthy investigation, the Board of Directors for the railroad circulated its findings. In the report they fully and unequivocally exonerated Trimble from any previously alleged misconduct.²⁸ He could rest assured now that his past successes were no longer jeopardized by outlandish and cruel critics envious of his achievements. It was much like the day long ago in Ohio, when he overpowered the towns boys stoning him while watering the family horse. His strong will and resolve had proven sufficient for the task at hand.

Trimble had just accepted the position of general superintendent with the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad in 1854 when tragedy struck. Maria Presstman Trimble, his wife of twenty-three years, died suddenly. In the wake of her death she left two sons nearing maturity. Trim-

²⁸ See Isaac R. Trimble, The Replies of I.R. Trimble to the Inquiries Propounded to Him. . . (Baltimore, 1854), 22-23.

ble speedily remarried, his new bride being his first wife's sister, Ann Calhoun Presstman. This marriage produced no additional children.

Then a new challenge attracted his eye. The year 1857 brought with it an opportunity for Trimble to ply his engineering trade in the Caribbean. The Cuban government had openly solicited foreign contractors to build a stretch of railroad from Santiago de Cuba to Havana. Trimble's bid on railroad construction was readily accepted by the Cuban authorities, and he left Baltimore accompanied by several skilled laborers and mechanics.²⁹ On arrival in Cuba, he set up a field camp to conduct his operations. Owing to the difference in climate, yellow fever soon attacked the camp's inhabitants. In the hour of greatest peril, Trimble's courage and leadership shown brightly. "He stayed in camp day and night, provided physicians and every comfort for the men and himself administered medicine and nursing, until the fever had run its course, at the eminent risk of his own safety."³⁰

His personal self-sacrifice to aid and assist others was obvious. Of even greater magnitude was his doggedness in remaining regardless of dangerous consequences. This was

²⁹ "Trimble Outline," 4.

³⁰ Ibid.

a rare and invigorating idiosyncrasy that would prove immensely valuable when the trials and tribulations of the Civil War engulfed the nation.

In 1859 Trimble requested and received the general superintendency of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad. He retained this post until early 1861, his major duty being to supervise the surveying of the railroad line around the region of the Patapsco River.³¹ Then a noteworthy phase in his life drew to a close. Railroad engineering, the dynamic force that had driven him to the top of his profession, became subordinated by the more serious internal problems confronting the nation.

By the end of 1860, acts aimed at dissolving the Union had already been set in motion. With the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, South Carolina swiftly severed its bonds with the Union. This was followed in order by Mississippi on January 9, 1861, Florida on January 10, Alabama on January 11, Georgia on January 19, Louisiana on January 26, and Texas on February 1. These seven Southern states then formed their own government, the Confederate States of America, before Lincoln had even a chance of reconciling the differences between the two estranged parts of the nation.

³¹ Henry V. Poor, History of the Railroads and Canals of the United States of America (New York, 1970), 477.

Maryland also showed signs of wavering in its old commitment to the Union. It was visibly divided over the Southern secession issue. The state itself had strong pockets of both union and secessionist sentiments. Unionist strongholds were primarily located in the central and western regions of the state. The people there comprised a high percentage of the foreign immigrant population, mainly of German and Irish ancestry. One authority stated: "Practically all of them disliked slavery because it resembled the oppressive life in Europe from which they or their forefathers had fled."³² Slavery to these people was unnecessary and useless.

On the other side of the coin, southern and East Shore Maryland represented secessionist strongholds. This region had close ties to the principles of slavery. In most instances, its residents had owned the land for several generations and they were dependent on slave labor to carry out the functions of planting, maintaining and harvesting the crops.³³ In the middle of the schism stood Baltimore, Maryland's hub of commerce and about evenly divided over the secessionist issue.

³² Harold R. Manakee, Maryland in the Civil War (Baltimore, 1961), 17.

³³ Ibid., 15-17.

Trimble's interest in the secession issue did not carry him into an extremist position. Instead, he maintained a moderate stance. As a member of the family later stated: "Although a Southerner in sympathy and a Marylander by adoption (he took up residency in Baltimore shortly after leaving the U.S. Army in 1832), Isaac R. Trimble was initially opposed to secession, believing that the differences between the states should be settled by peaceful means."³⁴

By "peaceful means," Trimble believed with numerous others that Maryland should be able to choose freely whether or not it wanted to remain in the Union. The exercise of "states rights" was relatively apparent. The best way of deciding the future course was for the legislature to go into special session to deliberate the secession issue; then, after careful evaluation, it would make a decision on the matter. This seemed to Trimble a basic, democratic approach to solving the perplexing problem.

Vacillation resulted, however, and with it came heightened anxiety.³⁵ This anxiety remained high as April, 1861, began. National events only intensified excitement in Baltimore.

³⁴ Trimble, Trimble Families of America, 171.

³⁵ This anxiety was the result of Governor Thomas H. Hicks's refusal to call the state legislature into special session until late April, 1861. See Manakee, Maryland in the Civil War, 21.

For weeks the city newspapers had debated the pro and con arguments of the secessionist issue. Then, on April 12, the bombardment of Fort Sumter at Charleston, S. C., signalled the outbreak of civil war. When news of the event reached Baltimore, inhabitants displayed high emotions. Crowds formed on street corners to hear the latest news; secessionist sentiments were discussed openly, sometimes sympathetically and at other times derogatory in tone. This hysteria heightened when President Lincoln asked the states to furnish 75,000 militia to put down the insurrection. This April 15 call led Virginia, Maryland's sister state, to secede from the Union two days later. Then a military order directing all Northern volunteers to assemble at Washington, for the purpose of protecting the exposed capital, triggered a wave of alarm and concern in the Baltimore area. Serious questions began to surface in the minds of its citizens: Were the troops gathering at Washington just there for the purpose of protecting the capital? Or was the real intention of these Northern troops to march into Maryland and coerce it to remain in the Union? Therefore, should Maryland allow these troops access to enter its borders to quell the insurrectionary states? And finally, should it even permit Northern troops access through the state to protect the capital?

In this atmosphere the "Baltimore Riot" of April 19, 1861, occurred. The affair began innocently enough. On the previous day, a trainload of Northern volunteers had passed through the city on its way to Washington. In the process of transferring trains, a crowd had assembled and jeered the troops as they readied themselves for the last leg of the journey. On the 19th, the 6th Massachusetts attempted to force its way through the city, but in the process it encountered hostile resistance. A running battle ensued between the troops and a mob of townspeople. When the Northern regiment finally left the city, 4 volunteers and 12 citizens lay dead or dying.³⁶ Chaos and confusion followed as Baltimore prepared for retaliation by Northern authorities.

Trimble steered clear of the April 19 riot. As he later stated, "I took no part in it whatever and was only present at its termination as an astonished spectator."³⁷ Nevertheless, when the city of Baltimore in its hour of need sought his assistance and expertise, Trimble unhesitatingly volunteered it. He exercised his official responsibilities with great deft and courage. As he reflected later:

³⁶ Boatner, The Civil War Dictionary, 42.

³⁷ Isaac R. Trimble, "Statement on April 19th, 1861, Riot and Events Thereafter," Trimble Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

On the night of the 19th, the Mayor had information that more troops had started from Philadelphia (they had come as far as the Susquehanna River). As the only bloodless means of preventing their entrance into the City, it was agreed in consultation between the Mayor and the Governor (Hick's), to destroy the bridges on the two Railroads heading into the City.

At 12am the 19th and 20th while at home in bed, I was sent for by the Mayor to repair to his office. On my arrival he simply spoke of the calamity which threatened the City if more troops reached it and that "it had been decided to destroy the bridges on the two roads, as the means of preserving peace and the lives of the Citizenry," and concluded by saying "he wanted me to break down those on the Philadelphia Road." I said "that for private reasons, I preferred that someone else would be selected for that service." He rejoined "No one else could be found at that hour to do it, that the troops would be in the City by daylight and that no time was to be lost." I then asked if the Governor of the State approved of this proceeding. He replied "He did as he had consulted him half an hour before and had his full concurrence." I then replied "if the thing was to be done and he would give me a written order with the approval of the Governor, I would do it.: He wrote the order at once and in a few hours two of the bridges on the Philadelphia had been rendered impassable for a week by burning the draw bridges, 18 and 20 miles from the City. I refrained from doing other damage to these costly structures, than burning the draws in the channel. Marshal Kane, the same night burned two bridges on the Northern Central about 16 miles from the City.³⁸

After destroying the draws of the bridges over the Bush and Gunpowder Rivers, he turned to more administrative matters.

³⁸ Ibid.

Mid-morning of April 21 rang with renewed excitement throughout Baltimore. On this Sunday, it was reported that "[Northern] troops had come down from Pennsylvania to a point where the bridges had been burned [at Cockeysville] on the Northern Central Road and were expected at any hour to arrive." Quickly the uniformed militia were called out for the defense of the city, and a much larger force of 20,000 non-uniformed volunteers assembled.³⁹ General Charles Egerston commanded the militia companies; Mayor Brown selected and President of the Board of Police Charles Howard confirmed the appointment of Colonel Isaac Ridgeway Trimble to command of the huge volunteer forces.

Upon appointment, Trimble set several programs into motion. His first act was to designate a reliable staff to carry out his objectives. His staff consisted of Col. J. H. Milliken as adjutant; S. J. Ulman, secretary; and as aides Grafton D. Spurrier, William H. Norris, Ex-Governor Robert M. McLane, Benjamin C. Presstman, Charles Wethered, E. Louis Lowe, and Frederick Harrison.⁴⁰

On April 23, a new member of importance joined Trimble's staff as adjutant general. His name was Francis J. Thomas. The second act that Col. Trimble undertook involved

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The Sun, Nov. 22, 1861.

drilling the volunteers and finding available arms for them. Firearms proved to be in such short supply that city officials in desperation ordered 2,000 pikes "from the machine shop of Ross Winans."⁴¹ The third act involved enforcing a tight security corridor around Baltimore. This meant prohibiting all ingoing and outgoing ships as well as preventing government ships from leaving port. The last act was strictly a private affair. In appointing Col. Francis J. Thomas, Trimble sought to gain a secret envoy with Virginia and to be able to procure heavy cannon and small arms for the defense of Baltimore.⁴² Unfortunately, the scheme failed largely because of the Federal occupation of Maryland. Even Trimble's own statements attested to the supreme effort he exerted in the performance of his office. As he noted: "I acted in this capacity [commander of the city volunteers] until the 29th of April in daily, almost hourly consultation with the Mayor and Police Board."⁴³ Trimble indeed performed an outstanding job with so little resources at hand.

⁴¹ Harry W. Newman, Maryland and the Confederacy (Annapolis, 1976), 37.

⁴² For further details, see Francis J. Thomas to Trimble, May 1 and 5, 1861, and William Gayers to Trimble, May 1, 1861. Trimble Papers.

⁴³ Trimble, "Statement," 3.

On April 29, just as Trimble had begun to make significant progress at the function of commander of the volunteers, his position was abolished. It definitely did not reflect on his overall performance. In a letter from Charles Howard disbanding the volunteers, hearty thanks and congratulations went to Trimble's handling of his duty.⁴⁴ Two occurrences prompted the disbanding. One was President Lincoln's promise to bypass Baltimore in funneling Northern militiamen to the aid of Washington and the other was the summoning of the Maryland legislature into special session.

A false feeling of normalcy had returned to Maryland, but this feeling of security quickly evaporated. On the night of May 13, Northern troops under the command of Brig. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler advanced from the Relay House nine miles outside of town on the Northern Central Railroad and by daybreak had firmly occupied Baltimore. Trimble recounted his last days in Baltimore: "After giving up my authority [command of the volunteers], I remained at home [Ravenhurst] waiting events, until warned about a week after, that I would be arrested next day, together with other citizens and members of the Legislature, if I was found in the city. I then left the State and a month after accepted a military appointment from Virginia, my native State."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The Sun, May 4, 1861. 3.

With this abrupt departure into Virginia, a new phase of Trimble's life began. He made a decision to oppose rule imposed by Federal authorities when martial law was proclaimed over the eastern half of Maryland. Instead, he cast his lot with the Confederacy.

Trimble's physical appearance also mirrored his resolute personality. At the time of his entrance into the Confederate army, he was nearing sixty years of age. He still possessed a soldierly manner. He had a well-knit frame and erect carriage that made him look about forty years old. He was of medium height, 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighed 120-130 pounds, had a hawk nose, piercing dark eyes with a kindly expression, and a receding forehead with black hair on top and graying hair on the sides. When he spoke, it was straightforward and convincing, usually in a genial tone. He personified a man of means and position in his customary well-dressed appearance and professional manner.⁴⁵ He was used to getting his own way and having others listen attentively in subordinate assent. He possessed vast leadership qualities with an aggressive spirit.

⁴⁵ Trimble, "Statement," 5.

⁴⁶ See "The Attempt to Relieve Rebel Prisoners in the West," and "Trimble Memoirs." Also Douglas S. Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants (New York, 1942-1944), I, 348-49.

Chapter II

BAPTISM IN BATTLE

Trimble reached Richmond in the midst of an intense frenzy enveloping the city. The new capital of the Confederate States (on May 21 the Confederate Congress had passed a resolution moving the Southern capital from Montgomery, Ala., to Richmond) resembled a beehive of frantic activity.⁴⁷ Each day scores of new military formations arrived and encamped on the outskirts of the city. With so much to do, Trimble's services were quickly needed. On May 25, Governor John Letcher's Advisory Council appointed him a lieutenant colonel of Virginia Volunteers for engineer duty.⁴⁸ Within days he received promotion to colonel in the now designated Confederate States Army "and was ordered by General Lee to take charge of the construction of the forts and field works for the defense of Norfolk."⁴⁹ Trimble obviously did his duties well, for on August 9, 1861, he was elevated to the rank of brigadier general.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See E. B. Long, The Civil War Day by Day (New York, 1971), 76, 1063.

⁴⁸ James I. Robertson, Jr. (ed.), Proceedings of the Advisory Council of the State of Virginia: April 21-June 19, 1861 (Richmond, 1977), 115-16.

⁴⁹ "General Trimble Obituary," The Sun, Jan. 3, 1888.

⁵⁰ See Southern Historical Society Papers, I (1876), I, A32,

Prior to this promotion, Trimble had had ample time to dwell on the problems confronting his native state, Maryland. A clear indication of this dominate concern came with a June 4 letter addressed to Gen. Robert E. Lee. Its contents expounded on the need to establish a forward military position in Maryland that would win the war quickly and decisively. He argued long and hard to convince the Confederate high command that the only feasible approach to secure lasting independence was for an armed strike to be made from Harper's Ferry against Hagerstown and Baltimore. He envisioned both of these cities being attacked simultaneously. The largest force concentrating at Hagerstown would surprise and defeat the Pennsylvania troops located there and drive them back into their own state. Then this force would rest for about ten days, perfect a solid line of defense, and thereafter march to the aid of the Baltimore force.

In the meantime, the smaller Confederate force would take railroad cars between Harper's Ferry and Baltimore, seize and occupy strong points within the latter city and then await the arrival of reinforcements from Hagerstown. With the success of the two operations, Washington would ea-

hereafter cited as S.H.S.P. Nineteenth Annual Renion of the Association of the Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, June 11th, 1888 (East Saginaw, 1888), 65. Jon L. Wakelyn, Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy (Connecticut, 1977), 415.

sily fall because of its right flank and rear being overrrun and completely destroyed.

As Trimble further postulated, even with partial success of this plan, the Confederacy would be in a far better state than it existed at that time. And the Confederate government could look forward to an estimated 12,000 Marylanders clamoring immediately to the Stars and Bars.⁵¹ This was a vital source of manpower that a hard pressed nation could ill afford to ignore. Trimble early recognized the urgent necessity of taking and holding Maryland and how its destiny was linked directly to the Confederacy's survival. The quicker the Southern army liberated this border state, the greater its chances were of winning out against the Federal authorities. With each passing day the Federal side grew progressively stronger, much to the anguish and disgust of Trimble. He waited impatiently for the Confederacy to make that decisive move.

His new assignment consisted of constructing artillery fortifications on the southern bank of the Potomac River to block the river to U.S. vessels seeking passage to and from Washington, D.C. On September 3, Gen. Joseph E. Johnston,

⁵¹ U.S. War Dept. (comp.), War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. LI, Pt. 2, 129-30. Cited hereafter as O.R., with all references being to Ser. I.

commanding at Manassas, placed Trimble in command of the battery at Evansport, Va., on the Potomac. At first his task proved to be difficult and tedious. A lack of available heavy guns, barbette carriages, and an adequate Negro labor crew to assist the undersized military force engaged in the project hampered the completion of the military fortification. Surrounded by desperate circumstances, Trimble in early September, 1861, asked Gen. Benjamin Huger whether any heavy guns could be spared and sent forthwith to the Evansport installation from Norfolk.⁵² After repeated attempts at acquiring some heavy guns, his efforts were finally rewarded. On September 29, Trimble was able to report that "the first of our river batteries at Evansport is finished, and guns mounted ready for service without discovery by the enemy."⁵³ Even with completion of a portion of the batteries, problems still persisted. Some of these perplexing snags remained a constant nuisance throughout Trimble's stay at Evansport.

Nonetheless, in the two short months that he was stationed at Evansport, Brig. Gen. Trimble managed to make considerable headway in perfecting defenses. An officer of the 22nd North Carolina noted at the time:

⁵² Ibid. I, 853.

⁵³ Ibid., 883.

There were three of these batteries at first, mounted with 9-inch Dalghren guns, smooth bore 32 and 42 pounders, and one heavy rifled Blakely gun. After the batteries opened, traffic by water to Washington ceased almost entirely, but the river there being about two miles wide, some craft succeeded in running the gauntlet from time to time, . . . especially at night.⁵⁴

Trimble could take pride in being the initial architect and driving force behind the construction of the first few batteries and of their immediate success once they had become operational. Yet even with this accomplishment, greater challenges and demands required the utmost attention and skill. His leadership qualities and resolve would soon be tested in a different way.

Since coming to Virginia, Trimble had yearned for a position of active military involvement rather than the passive setting offered by the Engineer Corps. He realized early that for the Confederacy to win its independence and for Maryland to be liberated, military victory was essential. Therefore, he vigorously sought command of a combat unit. When such an opportunity availed itself, he eagerly accepted it. On November 16, 1861, Trimble received Gen. George Crittenden's brigade after the latter was assigned to a departmental command.⁵⁵ The troops under Trimble's new

⁵⁴ S.H.S.P., XXIV (1896), 261.

⁵⁵ Louis H. Manarin, "21st Regiment North Carolina Troops," in North Carolina Troops 1861-1865: A Roster (Raleigh, 1966-77), 530.

command consisted of the 15th Alabama, 21st Georgia, 16th Mississippi, and 21st North Carolina. In addition, Courtney's artillery from Virginia was assigned to support the brigade. This brigade was part of Maj. Gen. E. Kirby Smith's division encamped at Centreville, Va.

For the next few months, with the army in winter quarters, Trimble instituted a policy of extensive drill to get his troops in a more favorable condition of combat readiness. As William C. Oates of the 15th Alabama latter recalled: "Trimble exhibited confidence as a commander with prompt obedience to orders essential to efficiency and the highest soldierly qualities."⁵⁶

In addition to his disciplinary skill, two separate incidents also marked this period. The first involved an outbreak of measles that plagued his brigade. "No less than 150 men of the 15th Alabama regiment had died that fall at the hospital [near Haymarket] from the effects of this disease and the want of proper treatment and 'attention'".⁵⁷ Trimble's initial response became one of keeping the camp clean and guaranteeing the sick men from the others. With such a policy as he had followed in 1857 in Cuba--of providing good health care and adequate shelter, the whole brigade

⁵⁶ William C. Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy (Dayton, 1974), 80.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 81.

soon recovered and was once again back up to regular strength.

The second incident involved Trimble's, Richard Taylor's and Arnold Elzey's brigades witnessing the execution of two Confederate deserters from Wheat's Louisiana Battalion. They were shot by firing squads, and the incident demonstrated how personally encompassing the war had become. These activities were the mainstay of Trimble's concerns as the year drew to a close.

With the beginning of the new year, there came about a change in the command of Smith's division. On February 21, 1862, Maj. Gen. Richard S. Ewell took command of the division.⁵⁸ Then on March 8-9, Gen. Joseph E. Johnston began a systematic withdrawal of his forces from the Manassas and Centreville areas. Ewell's division retreated as far south as the Rappahannock River before establishing a line of defense. Johnston continued with the majority of the Confederate forces to the defense of Richmond and the peninsula. Ewell was given orders to hold his current front against any Federal attack and to assist Gen. "Stonewall" Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley if the latter requested his aid. At the Rappahannock, Elzey's brigade went into camp about a mile east of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Trimble and

⁵⁸ Manarin, North Carolina Troops, 530.

Taylor were posted up the river to the west of it." Yet "from the 11th of March until the latter part of the month they were undisturbed by any turnout or approach by the enemy."⁵⁹ The type of fighting that emerged once the Federal forces came into position was restricted to an occasional exchange of artillery fire, minor skirmishing, and brief firefighting between pickets. The regular small-scale action characterized by a prolonged stalemate. Thus the positions remained virtually unchanged.

The blossoming of spring in the first half of April brought a slight change within Trimble's brigade stationed outside Gordonsville. In that month Companies B and E were transferred from the 21st North Carolina Regiment and organized into a separate unit assigned to the brigade and known as the 1st Battalion, North Carolina Sharpshooters.⁶⁰ Besides this minor adjustment, little of significance perturbed the brigade until the middle of the month. In fact, Trimble had ample time to enjoy the friendship of fellow officers. Major General Ewell observed at the time: "Old General Isaac R. Trimble told me the other day that he was pined for a glass of Madira [wine] and I told him to dine with me, and I opened the last bottle to his delight. He

⁵⁹ S.H.S.P., X (1882), 49-50.

⁶⁰ Manarin, North Carolina Troops, VI, 530.

tried to criticize it, but when I gave its history, he discovered new qualities."⁶¹

This lighthearted mood quickly changed, for off in the distance a violent storm rumbled. The first indication of an impending battle came with "Stonewall" Jackson's urgent order from the Shenandoah Valley for Ewell's division to join him with dispatch. On April 18, Ewell set out with the bulk of his division toward the Shenandoah Valley. The troops were excited by the prospect of ending camp boredom and meeting the enemy. Yet in the march to rendezvous with Jackson at Swift Run Gap, a soldier's recollections captured the hardships endured en route by the troops. He stated: "Friday evening, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, exposed constantly to cold, drenching rain, with no shelter, and during two whole days without anything to eat. Our blankets and clothing were soaked with water: we marched wet, slept wet, and got up in the morning wet."⁶²

As the division came closer to the Valley spirits soared in anticipation of a forthcoming battle. Under this prevailing atmosphere, and on the night of April 30 near Conrad's Store, Ewell's division linked up with Jackson's

⁶¹ Percy G. Hamlin (ed.), The Making of a Soldier: Letters of General R. S. Ewell (Richmond, 1935), 110.

⁶² Randolph H. McKim, A Soldier's Recollections (New York, 1911), 82-83.

"Stonewall" Division. Trimble's troops occupied the central position in the marching column with Taylor's brigade in advance and Early's brigade bringing up the rear.⁶³ Trimble rode alongside his troops and exhibited an exultant behavior. As the bands played "Listen to the Mockingbird," his mind became engrossed with past experiences suffered under the Federal authorities in Baltimore and the deep satisfaction of a prospective victory awaiting him on the not-too-distant battlefield. The time for redressing grievances appeared to be at hand with each step taken toward Jackson's glistening campfires. Wearily Trimble settled his men besides Taylor's and Early's for a short night's rest while the remainder of the camp rapidly underwent a dramatic change. Maryland soldier George W. Booth later remarked:

When morninig came Jackson had disappeared, whither, no one seemed to know. For some days we remained in this state of disappointment and uncertainty, which was shared by General Ewell and his brigade commanders. It is said that General Ewell called a council of his Brigadiers and discussed with them the peculiar situation. Here he was with his division, without orders, without very much information as to the position or purposes of Banks, and absolutely without any knowledge of the movements or whereabouts of General Jackson, and it was a serious question if his instructions from General Johnston did require him to return to the east of the Blue Ridge.⁶⁴

⁶³ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy 93.

⁶⁴ George W. Booth, Personal Reminiscences of a Maryland Soldier in the War Between the States, 1861-65 (Baltimore, 1898), 30.

A perplexing circumstance had indeed overtaken Ewell's division. While Ewell waited bewildered at Swift Run Gap for additional word from "Stonewall" Jackson, Trimble's high aspirations of attaining a smashing victory against the northern foe began once again to melt away. He quickly became bored and irritated with the duty of sitting and waiting for something to happen. Being a man groomed to action and calculating resolve, he found intense displeasure with his plight. Then news arrived of Jackson's May 8 victory at McDowell. In a masterful stroke, Jackson had eliminated part of the stranglehold placed on him in the Valley. This event signified a turning point in Jackson's celebrated Valley Campaign.

With this message received, Ewell continued to debate whether his stay at Swift Run Gap was indeed justified. His reasoning centered on Jackson's parting words of April 30, that of keeping a close watch over Federal Gen. Nathaniel A. Banks's Army at Strasburg; but the situation had now changed drastically, as Banks was retreating down the Valley away from Ewell. The real threat now seemed to be directed against Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock River, where Gen. James Shields's division of Banks's army was reportedly moving to link with Gen. Irvin McDowell's forces at Fredericksburg. This new development did not escape the eye of the

Confederate high command, for on May 17 Ewell received orders from Johnston to move eastward again. After delaying a day or two, Ewell started eastward on his long march. Trimble remained in a dejected mood as he proceeded to carry out his official duties on the march. To the surprise of everyone, the division was halted in the process by none other than Jackson himself.⁶⁵ As Booth related the incident:

I remember distinctly when Jackson joined Ewell's division. We marched from the vicinity of Conrade's store and the head of the column recrossed the mountain and had about reached its eastern base; our regiment was just about at the summit, when there came riding rapidly up the road, which was comparatively free from obstruction, a mounted officer with several attendants. As they neared the point where we were, it was at once discovered that "Jackson" had come. Enquiring for General Ewell, he pushed on and in a little while returned with that officer, when rightabout was the command, and we retraced our steps down the mountain and halted for the night on the road to Luray. The next morning the march was resumed, and on the morning of May 23d we reached Front Royal, which was occupied by a federal force.⁶⁶

The potential for battle once again buoyed the spirit of Trimble and the rest of the troops under Ewell's command.

During the morning of the 23rd, Jackson readied his troops for an assault against Banks's left flank located at Front Royal. In choosing this specific strategy, he hoped to be able to get into the rear of Banks's main position at Front Royal.

⁶⁵ Lenoir Chambers, Stonewall Jackson (New York, 1959), I, 513- 20.

⁶⁶ Booth, Personal Reminiscences, 30-31.

Strasburg and wreak havoc. The battle opened about 2 p.m. with the 1st Maryland (Confederate), assailing the enemy defenses manned by the 1st Maryland (Federal). Quickly the Confederate forces broke the first line of resistance and pushed their way forward until they encountered a second line of defense. The retreating Federal forces succeeded in destroying partially the two bridges over the North and South forks of the Shenandoah River. The result was a considerable delay in the Confederate followup advance. By the time the two bridges were made serviceable, the Federals had gained a substantial lead over their pursuing enemy.

Throughout this engagement, Trimble's brigade remained inactive. Much to Trimble's annoyance, his regiment had been passive spectators to the whole day's conflict. Even though Trimble was old, he still possessed plenty of fighting spirit and wanted above all else to be an active participant in the struggle that surrounded him.

The next day, Trimble was given a chance to make up for the idleness of the day before. At 6 in the morning on May 24, Trimble's brigade cautiously advanced down the road from Front Royal to Winchester, with Gen Turner Ashby's cavalry in support. The rest of Ewell's division remained in camp at Front Royal.

The mission of Trimble's troops was strictly a reconnaissance in force designed to gleam where Banks was presently located so that Jackson could coordinate his next attack. Jackson stopped Trimble's advance near Nineveh, about eight miles from Front Royal, to await further news from Ashby's cavalry. Here Trimble's men remained until 5 p.m.⁶⁷ When Ewell arrived at this point, a Jackson courier who had become lost finally reached the divisional commander with orders for him to resume his advance.⁶⁸ At once Ewell ordered Trimble's and Gen. George H. Steuart's units to press forward to Winchester. In the reconstituted advance, the 21st North Carolina drove in the enemy's pickets that evening, held the position two miles from Winchester and occasionally skirmished during the night.⁶⁹ Other units under Trimble spent the hours of darkness in last-minute preparations for the attack to be launched the following day.

Trimble's troops were up on May 25 before first light. The bulk of Jackson's army rested on the Middletown Turnpike to the left of Trimble. His brigade occupied the extreme right flank of the Confederate line, being positioned close to the Plank Road leading to Front Royal. His left rested

⁶⁷ O.R., XII, Pt. 1, 705.

⁶⁸ S.H.S.P., XLIII (1920), 224n.

⁶⁹ O.R., XII, Pt. 1, 705.

on the 1st Maryland. Trimble's wish had at last come true: he could now demonstrate his battlefield skills while the rest of the division watched. As Ewell reported:

At dawn [Trimble's Seventh brigade] moved out, and opened the attack at 5:40 a.m., the Twenty-first North Carolina (Colonel Kirkland) and Twenty-first Georgia (Colonel Mercer) gallantly dashing into the western part of the town and driving back the advanced posts of the enemy. The Twenty-first North Carolina was exposed to murderous fire from a regiment posted behind a stone wall. Both of its field officers were wounded and a large number of privates killed and wounded. They were forced back, retiring in good order and ready to renew the fight. Colonel Mercer, of the Twenty-first Georgia, drove out this Federal regiment and joined the rest of the brigades in the subsequent movements.⁷⁰

With this enemy position taken, the rest of the brigade began to assemble on the field. As the 21st Georgia awaited additional orders from Trimble, the 15th Alabama and 16th Mississippi joined their comrades.

Then an unusual phenomenon occurred. At about 7:30, a heavy fog descended over the battlefield. It totally obstructed visibility and brought further progress by Trimble's brigade to a halt. This fog lasted for about a half-hour. With its lifting, Trimble's assault resumed. Quickly he saw that the Federal left was unprotected. He relayed his findings to Ewell and requested permission to realign his attacking line and strike the enemy on its exposed left

⁷⁰ Ibid., 779.

flank.⁷¹ Ewell ignored Trimble's suggestion until around 9, when loud cheering to his left announced that Jackson had routed the Federal right flank. Fleeing enemy troops could be seen moving to the rear. At this juncture Ewell acquiesced and ordered Trimble to change fronts for a flanking assault. Trimble complied with the order, but with disgust he observed later: "Had this movement been permitted half an hour sooner (prevented by causes known to you) the retreat of the enemy's reserves would have been completely cut off. The delay of this half hour enabled them to get so far the start of us that it was impossible to get a further view of them during the next two hours, in which time my brigade was marched nine miles, until recalled by your [Ewell's] order."⁷²

In his first combat engagement, Trimble had seen smashing victory snatched from his grasp by an indecisive superior. Similar instances such as this one would reoccur and create future friction and animosity between the two generals.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Reports of Military Operations (Confederate): The Rebellion, 1860-1865 (Washington, 1878), III, 710-11. Also see O.R., XII, Pt. 1, 782.

After the defeat at Winchester, Banks's Federals retreated toward Martinsburg. Jackson pushed forward in pursuit. Recurrent fears surfaced in Washington that a Confederate thrust against the Union capital was imminent. To thwart such a possibility, the forces of Gen. John C. Fremont, Banks and McDowell were to unite in the Shenandoah Valley and inflict such a crippling blow on the meddlesome forces under "Stonewall" Jackson that all danger against Washington could completely be removed. Jackson had to act swiftly if he was to avoid entrapment and destruction by the converging pincers of the enemy. Jackson determined to try to defeat each of the Federal armies individually before they could effect a linkup. Otherwise, a united Federal force would be too strong and Jackson's little army would be eventually annihilated by the sheer weight of enemy troops. Timing--specifically how fast Jackson moved--would be the decisive factor if the Shenandoah Valley was to be saved for the Confederacy.

Jackson departed Winchester on May 30 and began a long retreat southward up the Valley to avoid rearward thrusts directed against him by Fremont and Shields. Banks had been so demoralized by his last encounter with Jackson that his pursuit was at a snail's pace. Trimble's troops soon became painfully acquainted with Jackson's penchant for forced

marches. Often the brigade was marching before sunrise and long after sunset in its bid to outrace the two Federal forces converging in the lower end of the Valley. Through it all, Trimble maintained order and discipline within the ranks of his brigade. As the Confederate forces neared Cross Keys in a fatigued state, signs of renewed conflict became abundantly clear.

In eight days Jackson's army had successfully traversed a large segment of the Shenandoah Valley. During the course of his retreat, he had evaded the closing jaws of the Federal pincer at Strasburg and had made his way southward up to Port Republic (Cross Keys being just on the northwest side of the river). The situation now consisted of Fremont's Union forces in the vicinity of Harrisonburg, with Shield's Federals to the east moving up the east side of the South Fork of the Shenandoah. For Jackson, Port Republic represented an excellent defensive position from which to meet the two Federal armies converging on him. The village was on an isthmus formed by the North and South rivers as they merged into the South Fork of the Shenandoah. A wooden bridge spanned the North River and a passable ford nearby was used to cross the South River. The South Fork now served as a natural barrier between the two Federal armies.

The morning of May 8 found Ewell's division camped some four miles northwest of Port Republic near the hamlet of Cross Keys. The main body of Jackson's army was encamped on the northern outskirts of Port Republic. At 10 a. m. Trimble accompanied Ewell on a survey of terrain around Cross Keys to determine the best defensive ground on which to oppose Fremont's approaching legions. Trimble later recounted the decisions reached and the subsequent actions that occurred.

It was decided to post my artillery (Courtney's battery) on the hill to the south of the small stream [Mill Creek], and immediately on the left of the road from Union Church to Port Republic. You directed my brigade to take the right of our line of defense and occupy the pine hill to the east of the road and the the battery, but somewhat retired from the front, en echelon position. Previous to assigning my brigade its position in line of battle, I rode forward in front and to the right, about half a mile, and examined a wooded hill running nearly parallel to our line of battle. Finding this position advantageous, with its left in view and protected by my artillery, and its right by a ravine and densely-wooded hill, I at once occupied this position with two regiments (the 16th Mississippi and 21st Georgia) about 10:30 o'clock, leaving the 21st North Carolina with the battery to protect it.⁷³

⁷³ Reports of Military Operations (Confederate), V, 50. For a map on Trimble's specific military position at Cross Keys and another good map of the general battlefield area, see O.R. Atlas, Plate XLII, Nos. 4 and Plate LXXXV, Nos. 5.

Along with Col. Canty's 15th Alabama posted as picket one mile in advance of Ewell's main battle line, Trimble's brigade began bracing to receive Fremont's assault.

The battle began with an attack delivered against the 15th Alabama Regiment at Union Church. Initially the Alabamians held their own against the enemy's advances. However, as more Federal troops entered the assault, it became apparent that if the 15th Alabama held firm, it would soon be outflanked on both right and left. It therefore was ordered to retreat. Canty withdrew the regiment; he was able to maintain an orderly withdrawal, "passing the enemy's flanking forces on the right and left," before reaching Trimble's main position with a minimum of loss. "He was placed on the right of the 16th Mississippi and 21st Georgia," while Trimble continued to wait anxiously for the principal attack to commence.⁷⁴

About a half-hour later, Fremont's forces resumed their advance. and drove in Trimble's pickets with a scalding fire. Trimble afterward recounted:

I ordered the three regiments (15th Alabama, 16th Mississippi, and 21st Georgia) to rest quietly in the edge of an open wood until the enemy, who were advancing in regular order across the field and hollow, should come within fifty steps of our line. The order was mainly observed, and as the enemy appeared above the crest of the hill a deadly fire was delivered along our whole front,

⁷⁴ Ibid., V, 50.

beginning with the right. . . . The repulse of the enemy was complete, followed by an advance, ordered by me, in pursuit. As the enemy's rear regiments had halted in the wood on the other side of the valley, I deemed it prudent, after the field in our front had been cleared, to resume our position on the hill and await their further advance.⁷⁵

After a momentary pause, Trimble initiated a new maneuver. He noticed that no follow-up advance by the enemy had occurred on his front; therefore, he directed his forces to concentrate against an enemy battery farther to his right while he sent a dispatch to Ewell outlining his new strategy. Trimble stated:

I accordingly in person moved the 15th Alabama to the right along a ravine and unperceived got upon the enemy's left flank and in his rear, marching up in fine order as on drill. I had on leaving with this regiment ordered the other two to advance rapidly in front as soon as they heard I was hotly engaged with the enemy. These regiments, before the order was executed, stood calmly under a heavy fire of the enemy's artillery, directed at the woods. The 15th Alabama completely surprised the force in their front (the enemy's left flank) and drove them by a heavy fire, hotly returned, from behind logs and trees along the wood to the westward.

Meantime the 21st Georgia and 16th Mississippi moved across the field and fell in with the remainder of the enemy's brigade, which had reformed in the woods to our left, and delivered a galling fire upon the 16th Mississippi, which omitted to turn up the woods to its left, after the main body of the enemy, thus exposing its men to enfilading fire. Colonel Mercer, of the 21st Georgia came to their timely rescue, and both soon gallantly drove

⁷⁵ Ibid., 51.

the enemy out of the woods.⁷⁶

In a short period of time, Trimble had outflanked the enemy and sent its forces reeling backward. All of this had been accomplished solely through Trimble's own judgement and personal effort.

Elsewhere, the battle at Cross Keys continued to blaze away. Trimble soon received as reinforcements the 13th and 25th Virginia under Col. James A. Walker. Trimble directed Walker "to move on his right through the woods and advance on the enemy in line of battle perpendicularly to his line and in rear of the battery."⁷⁷ Unfortunately, Walker became entangled in the woods with the 15th Alabama and lost valuable time. After emerging into the open, the 13th and 25th Virginia found themselves exposed to the full brunt of fire delivered by the Federal battery. They had to retire to the woods for protection. At this point, Trimble directed the 15th Alabama back against the Federal battery, which retired and narrowly avoided capture.

With the withdrawal of the Federal forces, Gen. Taylor appeared with his brigade. A brief interview between the two commanders followed. Trimble urged a renewed attack against Fremont's left, whereas Taylor claimed his troops

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

were simply too tired from two fast-paced marches of that day to carry out such a spirited attack. At 4 p. m. Trimble reluctantly bade farewell to Taylor and his brigade.

Shortly he regretted this action even more. As Trimble stated: "About half an hour after General Taylor left, Major Barbour came to me with orders from General Ewell to 'move to the front,' and that a force would be sent forward on the enemy's right to make a combined attack before night. It was too late to recall General Taylor."⁷⁸

At once he complied with the order and moved to within 500 yards of the enemy line concealed in the woods. There he awaited the sound of gunfire from his left which would signal his attack. In vain he waited. During this time he sent several messages back to Ewell of his readiness to launch an attack, if the latter would just create a momentary diversion to his left.⁷⁹ Still no response came as afternoon settled into night.

In frustration and remorse he went personally to talk to Ewell. As he afterward noted: "I was strongly tempted to make the advance alone at night, and should have done so had I not felt it a duty to secure complete success by waiting for the combined attack . . . and having some scruples

⁷⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

in regard to a possible failure, if acting alone, which might have thwarted the plans of the commanding general, whose success the day after would be seriously jeopardized by even a partial reverse after the fortunate results of the day."⁸⁰ Not finding Ewell at his headquarters, he went in search of "Stonewall" Jackson to get his permission for a night attack. He rode seven miles to meet with General Jackson and "obtained his consent to have Colonel Patton's battalion cooperate with him under the direct consultation and guidance of General Ewell."⁸¹ Upon presenting Ewell with Jackson's permission, the division commander refused to take the necessary responsibility. Trimble left Ewell in an angry and embittered state. Slowly he made his way back to his command, carrying with him total disappointment at the reception he had received at the hands of this superior.

At daybreak on June 9, Trimble moved his troops back to their former position against Fremont, while Jackson attacked Shields's forces east of Port Republic. Trimble's brigade, Patton's 42nd Virginia and the 1st Virginia Battalion were able to repulse Fremont's repeated probes along the Port Republic road until 9 a. m. Trimble stated: "Being without artillery and finding the enemy had placed a

⁸⁰ Ibid., 52-53.

⁸¹ Ibid.

battery to drive us out of the wood where they had sustained so fatal a repulse the day before, I slowly retired towards Port Republic. Receiving from General Jackson two messages in quick succession to hasten to the battle-field where he had engaged General Shield's army, I marched rapidly to obey this order, crossed the bridge, burned it just before the enemy appeared, and reached the field after the contest had been decided in our favor."⁸²

Trimble clearly had won over Ewell to his point of view. Thomas T. Munford of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry later recalled a conversation with Gen. Ewell on the night after the battle of Cross Keys. Ewell stated: "Old Trimble is a real trump; instead of being over cautious, he is as bold as any man, and, in fact, is the hero of yesterday's fight. Jackson was not on the field. They will call it mine, but Trimble won the fight; and I believe now if I had followed his views we would have destroyed Fremont's army."⁸³

In the future, Trimble would enjoy a more honored role beside his superior. At Cross Keys, he had acquitted himself well. He had taken an inexperienced brigade and molded it into a well-seasoned fighting unit. His combat leadership qualities had proven sound, and he had personally con-

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ S.H.S.P., VII, 530.

tributed much to the climatic victories in Jackson's Valley Campaign. Most importantly, he had won over the admiration and trust of his fellow officers. Plainly Trimble was a rising star within the Confederate officer corps. He would have more opportunity in the future to demonstrate his military skills in battle.

Chapter III

THE RISE TO PROMINENCE

Trimble and his troops enjoyed a day of inactivity before once again resuming official duties. This brief pause provided a welcome respite for a body of troops so utterly exhausted by the rigors of battle. During this time, Trimble was able to collect together his depleted force and reconstitute cohesion within its ranks. On June 12, the army continued the march and came to rest at Weyer's cave. A sense of suspense enveloped the army as it stood in unaccustomed idlement. Then on the 17th, the feeling of tension vanished with orders to proceed at once to Richmond. Trimble and his men broke camp in a confident mood, and with the rest of Jackson's army they marched to Ashland, where they embarked on railroad cars for a twelve-mile ride to Richmond.⁸⁴

On the 26th, Jackson's forces occupied the extreme left of the Richmond defenses. The sounds of volleys of artillery and musketry greeted Trimble's arrival on the battlefield.⁸⁵ With night fast approaching, Trimble settled his men into camp, but little sleep came that night in anticipa-

⁸⁴ See O.R., XII, Pt. 1, 716; Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 107.

⁸⁵ O.R., XI, Pt. 2, 614.

tion of a big battle the next day. By 8:00 that morning, his troops were advancing on Cold Harbor. Twice he was ordered to change his front to the left. As he closed with his quarry, heavier volumes of artillery fire rained down on his position. Then orders from General Ewell arrived. Taking the lead with the 15th Alabama, the 21st Georgia following close behind, he proceeded down the Cold Harbor road to McGehee's farm, crossed the swamp, and placed these two regiments in a position to attack. In the process of conducting this maneuver, he lost contact with the 16th Mississippi and 21st North Carolina. No time could be wasted in retracing his steps. "The two regiments--15th Alabama and 21st Georgia--were ordered to advance, and soon encountered a furious discharge of musketry, shot, and shell from the well-selected position of the enemy. Several regiments were met falling back and leaving the field."⁸⁶

Trimble nevertheless continued with his advance. Doggedly he strove to reach a dense woods, but there met a solid sheet of flame from enemy guns. His command staggered under the volleys. Yet "still the brave fellows pressed on, followed by a Virginia and a Texas regiment." For an hour and a half the 15th Alabama and the 21st Georgia endured this deadly fire.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Only reluctantly did Trimble break from the action in search of his two lost regiments. On reaching the rearward area, Trimble met Gen. W. H. C. Whiting leading his division and seeking advise on where to deploy, Trimble directed him to move farther to the right (north), "so as to flank the force in their front or encounter a separated body of the foe."

In but a few minutes, General John S. Winder appeared and inquired on the same question as had Whiting. Trimble gave different advise to Winder for the deployment of his brigade. As Trimble later recollected: "I directed him to march well to the left, which he did, and brought a timely support, in a perilous crisis, to General Elzey's and other brigades, which had been terribly cut up by the terrible fire of musketry and the well-served batteries at McGehee's house afterward captured."⁸⁷

Finding the lost 16th Mississippi and 21st North Carolina, Trimble proceeded to expand the front of attack. He directed them to move "one-third of a mile to the right (north) of the first point of attack." As their advance gathered steam, it met elements of two routed regiments. A brief verbal exchange ensued before the 16th Mississippi and 21st North Carolina resumed its steady motion forward. The

⁸⁷ Ibid., 614-15.

demoralized troops comments included: "'You need not go in! We are whipped! You can't do anything!'" To which Trimble's troops replied: "Get out of our way; we will show you how to do it!"

As they trod onward, remnants of other regiments began to collect on their left flank. Shortly, a long line of battle formed and Trimble rode up and down its entire length reciting last-minute instructions to his men. He ordered the men "to make a charge with the bayonet and not to stop one moment to fire or reload"⁸⁸ until the enemy's heavily fortified position had been successfully breached. Instinctively, he once again reminded the men that certain death awaited them if they paused, and that a quick charge would insure less loss of life.

Apprehending the readiness of his troops, he executed the command to attack. "Leading them on with perfect confidence in their pluck the regiments advanced firmly and gallantly, receiving heavy volleys of the enemy's fire from the opposite height without returning it; pushed on down the hill and over trees felled in the swampy ground to impede their progress all the time under torrents of musketry fire, and bravely and rapidly ascended the hill, cheered on by the continuous shouting of the command, "'Charge, men,

⁸⁸ Ibid.

charge."⁸⁹

At the top of the hill, Trimble and his troops met light resistance from the enemy. Soon Federal forces were beating a hasty retreat toward their encampment. Confederates then delivered a destructive fire into the scrambling mass of the enemy. "One [enemy] regiment surrendered in a body; the others fled down a ravine toward the Chickahominy."⁹⁰

The bold charge was a total success. Not only had a strong enemy position fallen, but seven guns of the 1st Pennsylvania Artillery had been seized. Taking stock of the situation, Trimble ordered the 21st North Carolina to guard the captured guns. Nightfall was descending over the ridge overlooking the Chickahominy River, when the sounds of battle gradually died away. Trimble's troops slept that night on the battlefield. Each within his command felt the pride of a job well done and wondered what the fortunes of the next day would bring.

Morning brought no renewal of hostilities. Instead, "the brigade rested on the field of battle, and was chiefly employed in taking care of the wounded and the burial of the dead."⁹¹ As the day passed, Ewell sent some of his force ac-

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

accompanied by cavalry down the north side of the Chickahominy to Dispatch Station, where it destroyed a portion of railroad track.

On June 29, Trimble's brigade was again in motion. The troops experienced a temporary delay around 9 a. m., and Trimble took advantage of the time to ascertain where the enemy forces were situated. He ordered an officer to ascend a tree that had formerly possessed an enemy observation post and to observe the movements of the enemy. Federals were retreating southward from Reynoldsville (Gen. McClellan's headquarters). The smoke from hastily burned stores further attested to this development. Trimble at once advised Generals Lee and Jackson of the movement. Soon Lee sent a reply that "the enemy were in heavy force on the right, and that he had tried to reach them with artillery, but without effect."⁹²

In the meantime, indications of a massive retreat by the Federal's became even more pronounced. From atop the tree observatory, four large conflagrations could be viewed, while "infantry, artillery, and wagons were seen moving amid clouds of dust in a southerly direction." To all who witnessed this scene, it appeared that the Federal army could

⁹¹ Ibid., 617.

⁹² Ibid.

retreat with impunity from the very jaws of the Confederate forces. Acute frustration seized Trimble as he stood helplessly by and gazed upon the spectacle.

He then made one last desperate attempt to remedy the situation. Hurriedly to Lee he penned another letter requesting that an attack be made on the retreating foe before escape had been mastered. He sent a courier to deliver the message to Lee's headquarters, two mile away.

Around 10 a. m., Trimble's brigade resumed its march under unchanged orders. The destination was Bottom's Bridge on the Chickahominy, which they reached about 2:00 in the afternoon. Needless time had been wasted in the course of the advance by marching and countermarching the troops. As Trimble later stated: "Several times in the afternoon I had called attention to the dense clouds of dust observed on the north side of the Chickahominy; that it plainly indicated a rapid retreat of the enemy, and that our forces should be thrown across the stream to intercept their flight or increase their disorder."⁹³

After lengthy and deliberate contemplation, Ewell decided to heed Trimble's advise. A "practical" ford had been discovered near Trimble's stationary position, and around 4:00 Ewell decided to attack the enemy at this point. With

⁹³ Ibid.

full preparations for an attack scheduled, orders to the contrary arrived at Ewell's headquarters. Under Jackson's express orders, at about 6 p. m., "the division was marched back up the Chickahominy, crossed the stream in the night at the new bridges, and bivouacked at Reynoldsville twelve hours after the enemy had abandoned it."⁹⁴

Encampment brought the day's lost opportunities into brighter focus for Trimble. As he settled back for a few hours' rest, a feeling of disappointment filled his head. The same recurrent vision replayed itself before him: the enemy's retreating columns should have been destroyed by a decisive Confederate attack across the Chickahominy. Only slowly did this vision diminish with the prospective offerings of a new day.

On the 30th, Trimble's brigade arose at an early hour. Once assembled, the men marched down the same road the enemy had used twenty-four hours earlier. On the third mile of their journey, they came upon Savage Station and bloody scences from the day before, when Longstreet's forces had engaged the enemy. All that remained to be captured now was a Federal field hospital with 2,500 sick and wounded soldiers, plus some 500 medical personnel.⁹⁵ With this feat ac-

⁹⁴ Ibid., 618.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 556.

complished, the march continued. Jackson's army reached White Oak Swamp about 4 p. m. After an hour-long artillery duel with the enemy, it bivouacked for the night.⁹⁶

At sunrise the next day, Trimble's command crossed White Oak Swamp. The bridge over which they trod had only recently been rebuilt, after the Federals had destroyed it the day before. A feeling of immense optimism overtook Trimble on the march. The shortcomings of the last two days stood a good chance of being rectified. Battle would provide the redeeming grace. Spiritedly he pursued his labors as brigade commander.

At 2 p. m., a line of battle was formed at the Poindexter farm, adjacent to Malvern Hill. The Seventh Brigade represented the extreme left of Ewell's division. There it "remained in position about three hours, during the greater part of which time artillery and musketry firing was heard on the right a mile or two distant."⁹⁷

During this period of supposed inactivity, Trimble had feverishly been at work. Using a field glass, he had reconnoitered the disposition of the enemy's forces. As he later stated: "I asked permission to move [my brigade] through the continuous woods to the left and attack the enemy by

⁹⁶ Ibid., 618.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

surprise on his right. This proposal forwarded to Jackson, was declined by him."⁹⁸ Impatiently, Trimble awaited the real move that would signal the Confederate drive on his front.

After a belated time span, things started rolling. At sundown Trimble received an order to march his forces to the extreme right where Gen. D. Harvey Hill's troops had recently suffered a repulse. Trimble later recalled: "I moved quickly, guided by an officer of General D. H. Hill's staff, through a dense woods, in the dark, exposed for 1 1/2 miles to a continuous and a rapid fire of the enemy's artillery, and took up a position on that part of the field where General Magruder had made his disastrous charges across an open field, every yard of which could be swept by the adverse artillery."⁹⁹

The field onto which they had deployed had woods to the left and a precipitous slope that descended into Turkey Creek on the right. At about 9:00, Gen. Hill accompanied Trimble on a forward reconnaissance of the enemy positions. Stealthily they picked their way to within 100 steps of the enemy's firing batteries. With an unhindered view before them, Trimble suggested to Hill the advantage of making an

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

immediate night attack on this battery. It should be successful, as they could approach the enemy undiscovered and the enemy would not expect one from this position.

Trimble's scheme for a night assault did not sit well with Hill. Instead, "Hill declined as before to order the attack, and directed Trimble to make no further movement."¹⁰⁰ At around midnight, Trimble reluctantly led his troops into the woods for an evening's rest. The high hopes of the day had evaporated with each fleeting hour.

At dawn Trimble awakened with the compunction to save something from the previous day's drawbacks. He pondered that even an assault at this late hour could yield effective results. Seeking new orders that would comply to his wishes, he set off to consult with either Ewell or Hill. He was struck by the utter disorder surrounding the Confederate army. He encountered "thousands of stragglers asking every passer-by for their regiments; ambulances, wagons, and artillery obstructing every road, and altogether, in drenching rain, presenting a scene of the most woeful and disheartening confusion."¹⁰¹ In disdain Trimble abruptly realized that no matter what success would be gained through an attack, the army was unable to exploit any advantage won from

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 619.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

it. So resigned, Trimble rode back to his brigade.

The following day found Trimble's troops in good order. Since July 2, the enemy's battlefield position had changed dramatically. General George B. McClellan had withdrawn his forces to Harrison's Landing on the James River. From there he could depend on the additional firepower of the Federal gunboats for safety. To this new enemy position Trimble and his troops hastened. That evening Trimble bivouacked some eight miles from the James River, opposite Westover.¹⁰²

On July 4, Trimble and his command resumed the march. As they came to within four miles of the James, the men formed a battle line and skirmishers deployed for half a mile in advance. An occasional shot rang out from the skirmish line whenever a Federal's presence became known, but no large-scale firing ensued. That night Trimble selected one regiment for picket duty while the remainder went into bivouack. This marked the end of the Seven Days' Campaign.

Through the series of battles the brigade losses had been heavy. Trimble listed 23 officers and 396 men lost out of the brigade's total strength of 2,047 soldiers.¹⁰³ Combat injuries and deaths were not the only factors responsible

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ O.R., XI, Pt 2, 975; S.H.S.P., VIII (1880), 304.

for such a loss. The consumption of impure water, excessive fatigue and prostration suffered during the taxing campaign contributed further to reductions in the ranks.¹⁰⁴ Time was needed to replenish these units. Trimble and his staff undertook to do just that.

On the night of July 8, Trimble's troops vacated their position opposite Westover and began a rearward movement to the outskirts of Richmond.¹⁰⁵ Close to a large city, Trimble could count on many conveniences sorely needed by his men: shoes, clothing and medicine. Richmond would also mean a boost in morale of the men, who had known nothing but hard campaigning for several months. Drill and discipline could be resumed as the brigade recuperated and grew in strength. A well-seasoned and highly dedicated brigade had been forged in the heat of battle, and a promising future performance seemed assured.

Like his troops, Trimble anticipated benefiting from his time off. For him, leisure meant reflection on past mistakes and the deep desire not to have them repeated. He felt confident, in the light of his recent military successes, that his desired night attack would finally be taken seriously and implemented. He looked forward to a future

¹⁰⁴ O.R., XI, Pt 2, 619.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

date, when time and opportunity would avail itself to the execution of his much-fancied plan. Trimble did not doubt for an instant the ability of his men and himself to accomplish such a difficult military operation.

During this brief pause, one incident changed the complexion of Trimble's brigade. As Colonel Campbell Brown later noted: "While encamped at Strawberry Hill, near Richmond, the Sixteenth Mississippi, one of the very best regiments in the division, was detached from it . . . just before we [the brigade] started for Gordonsville."¹⁰⁶ The transfer had taken place because President Jefferson Davis believed that a brigade possessing a single state constituency would perform better due to state pride and rivalry. This loss meant that Trimble would have to operate with an understrength brigade for the foreseeable future and, therefore, be at a disadvantage with the other brigades in the division.¹⁰⁷

On July 13, Trimble and his men abandoned their camp environs outside Richmond and headed in a northwesterly direction. Their movement was in response to a new threat posed by Gen. John Pope's army in the vicinity of Gordons-

¹⁰⁶ S.H.S.P., X (1882), 259.

¹⁰⁷ O.R., XI, Pt. 3, 547; Henry W. Thomas, History of the Doles -Cook Brigade (Dayton, 1981), 218; S.H.S.P., I (1876), 420.

ville. Ewell's and Jackson's divisions were selected to meet this new Federal challenge. Gordonsville had long been a point of strategic importance. Both the Orange and Alexandria and the Virginia Central railroads converged at this juncture and the protection of this railroad link was considered essential for Richmond's continued survival. In addition, the location provided an ideal spot from which to observe Pope's army. On the 19th, Trimble and his troops arrived at Gordonsville in a rhapsodized mood over the prospect of renewed hostilities.¹⁰⁸

On August 7, Trimble's troops and the rest of Jackson's army commenced its march. Their ultimate destination was Culpeper, where part of Pope's forces were reportedly stationed. That night the Southerners bivouacked near Liberty Mills. As quiet descended over the camp, the hope of yet another victory against the enemy loomed largely in everybody's mind.

On the 9th, the troops approached to within eight miles of Culpeper. Ewell's division led the advance, with Early's brigade forward, Trimble's brigade center, and Hay's brigade--now commanded by Colonel Forno--in the rear.¹⁰⁹ Their speed had reduced to a crawl. "The day was hot and the dust

¹⁰⁸ O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 176, 181. See also Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 128.

¹⁰⁹ Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, 22.

oppressive," a staff officer noted, "and the march was a slow one for the road was occupied by troops."¹¹⁰

Soon the enemy's front was discovered near Cedar Run, a short distance west and north of Slaughter Mountain. During the morning hours, Trimble received orders to assist in driving off an enemy cavalry patrol alongside the Culpeper road. He and his men advanced undetected and occupied a cluster of pines about three-quarters of a mile from the enemy's picket. Then one company was detached to support a battery to the right of the pines. These guns soon drove back the enemy cavalry. This was only partially successful, however; for when the guns finally fell silent, the enemy simply reoccupied its former position.¹¹¹ A more determined attack was needed, if the enemy were to be dislodged and put to flight.

Around 2 p. m. Trimble received orders to continue his advance. "Through the woods on his right along the slope of Slaughter Mountain and occupy a favorable position." This flanking movement was made in conjunction with Early's attack on the left. With renewed energy Trimble led his troops onward with Hay's brigade following close behind and

¹¹⁰ McHenry Howard, Recollections of a Maryland Confederate Soldier, 1861-1866 (Baltimore, 1914), 167.

¹¹¹ O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 235. Also see O.R. Atlas, Plate XLII, No. 2.

acting as a reserve. "About 3 o'clock," Trimble noted, "the brigade reached the northwest termination of the mountain, elevated about 200 feet above the valley below, and distant from the position of the enemy's batteries about 1 1/4 miles, where we remained concealed from view."¹¹²

Following Ewell's instructions, Trimble sent for him to examine the selected position and give his approval. After a brief conversation between the two men, Latimer's Battery struggled up the mountainside and took a position inside Trimble's line. Latimore's effective fire diverted the enemy's guns on the left from concentrating against Early's forces. An intense artillery duel ensued.

About 5 p. m., from across the valley to the left, musketry fire of Early's assault could be distinctly heard. At this point, "the Fifteenth Alabama Regiment was sent out as skirmishers on the right, with orders to advance on the enemy's flank."¹¹³ An enemy battery immediately wheeled and delivered a brisk fire against the advancing Alabamians.

Sundown marked a renewed effort by Trimble to storm the enemy's defenses. On Ewell's orders the 21st Georgia and 21st North Carolina charged and secured a clump of woods in the valley 400 yards from the battery. The success of this

¹¹² O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 235.

¹¹³ Ibid., 235-36.

drive provoked Trimble to attack the enemy battery, but the fire from Latimore's guns prevented such a movement because the shells struck the open ground on which the advance must pass. Perplexed, Trimble sent his aide, William D. McKim, back to Latimore with orders to halt the bombardment. In the meantime, Trimble had dispatched two companies who took position along a fence and opened fire on the battery. When the brigade advanced to the top of the hill, it discovered the guns gone. Precious minutes spent in disengaging Latimore's battery had cost Trimble the prize of capturing the enemy's guns. With regret he watched as the enemy retreated out of sight.

Quickly surveying the battlefield, Trimble found that the abrupt collapse of the enemy's left flank had meant the abandonment of many Federal killed and wounded soldiers plus some ambulances and ammunition wagons. A fine victory had been won at the expense of eighteen casualties. Trimble's choice of well-concealed battle positions had paid off handsomely.

Then Ewell appeared with orders to resume the advance. Trimble's brigade moved to the left to link up with the main body of Jackson's army. In the darkness the men marched for a mile in pursuit of the Federals. Finally, with the enemy found to be in considerable strength in front, Trimble was

ordered to return to his original position on the battlefield and make camp.¹¹⁴ The troops wearily retraced the path they had taken a few hours before. Once in camp, heavy slumber speedily enveloped the men.

The next morning the brigade stood in a state of combat readiness. Rumors circulated that the enemy had been reinforced during the night and might resume its attack. Yet as the day passed, tension diminished and gave way to more pressing duties. Under Trimble's command, detachments carried the wounded to the rear, buried the dead and collected arms from the battlefield.

The 11th brought a temporary truce between the sides to bury the remaining dead. During the course of the labors, Trimble and his men talked with Federals on sundry matters. For a brief time the war seemed distant and unobtrusive. Yet when the truce expired at 5 p. m., so did feelings of congeniality between the opposing groups.

That night Trimble received orders to break camp. The whole of Pope's army was reportedly concentrating against Jackson and would deliver a massive attack the next morning. To deceive the enemy of his intentions, Trimble had his men build extensive fires and then marched off into the darkness. By daybreak they were miles away, en route to Gor-

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

donsville.¹¹⁵

At about this time, an incident occurred that plainly highlighted Trimble's aggressive tendencies. One night Trimble had an opportunity to visit with Gen. Jackson. In the course of the discussion, Trimble exhibited his age-old knack of going right to the crux of the problem. As he had done with Col. Thayer at West Point, he addressed Jackson over the fact that a lesser qualified candidate (William B. Taliferro) had been considered for promotion while he remained an obscure brigadier general. With Jackson's chief surgeon--Dr. Hunter McGuire--present, he vowed once more to outperform his fellow colleagues at every turn, in exchange for a fair consideration in the promotion of rank. "In great indignation and disappointment he turned to Jackson and exclaimed: 'By God, General Jackson, I will be a major general or a corpse before this war is over.'" With that he left.¹¹⁶

While Jackson's division remained in camp at Gordonsville, Ewell's division went into motion. Trimble's brigade advanced down the south side of the Rapidan to the neighborhood of Porter's and Morton's fords.¹¹⁷ His assignment was

¹¹⁵ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 130.

¹¹⁶ S.H.S.P., XIX (1891), 314.

¹¹⁷ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy,

to keep watch over Pope's army in the vicinity of Culpeper and Stevensburg. A feeling of a renewed fight stirred the air.

On August 14, Trimble's brigade left the environs around Liberty Mills, marched for two days, and finally halted at Clark's Mountain. While there, news arrived of McClellan's evacuation of Harrison's Landing on the peninsula. Every indication now pointed to a major confrontation. Trimble's adrenalin began to flow as he contemplated the next moves of the opposing armies. Surely, he thought, with proper reinforcements the Confederate drive would succeed in wiping out the Federal forces and liberate the nation from Northern tyrannical grip.

For three days Trimble's brigade remained stationary at Clark's Mountain.¹¹⁸ While there, elements of Jackson's division began arriving from Gordonsville. Signs of a renewed struggle were indeed apparent. General Longstreet, with his division and the two brigades under Gen. John B. Hood, were joining Jackson's army to strengthen defenses along the Rapidan.¹¹⁹

131. For good maps on surrounding terrain between Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, see O.R. Atlas, Plate XXIII, Nos. 4 and 5, and also Plate XXII, No. 5.

¹¹⁸ S.H.S.P., VIII (1880), 306.

¹¹⁹ O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 552.

That night Trimble and the other officers in Ewell's division got a briefing on the upcoming campaign. Their role was to cross the Rapidan and attack Pope's left flank. Combined with a similar thrust by Longstreet and Stuart's cavalry on the enemy's rear, Pope's army would be forced either to retreat or face possible annihilation. Trimble listened closely and happily to the plan.

On the 20th, following behind A. P. Hill's division, Trimble's brigade headed toward the Rapidan River fords. At Somerville Ford, Trimble and his men crossed the Rapidan. Pope responded by retreating behind the Rappahannock and positioned artillery to counter any future enemy crossing. With darkness falling, Trimble's brigade bivouacked at Stevensburg.

Early next morning Trimble and his troops resumed the march. With the steady beat of tromping feet and the occasional clatter of a passing wagon, Trimble rode beside his men, frequently shouting an order for them to close ranks or alter their speed in accordance with the troops ahead. Trimble was the picture of showmanship. Mature in years and handsomely dressed in a black felt hat, with a cord of sweeping feathers hanging from it, his uniform seemed to glisten with an iridescent glow.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Confederate Veteran, V (1897), 613.

As the day progressed, Trimble neared Beverly Ford on the Rappahannock. The rumble of artillery fire greeted their arrival. Taliaferro and Stuart were hotly engaged in front and Jackson's hopes of crossing the river at this point diminished when enemy forces appeared along the river below them.¹²¹ Trimble and his men tried to make the best of a monotonous wait, entertaining themselves with statements on how the enemy would soon succumb to their valiant charge. But as the day grew longer, nothing happened. Instead, that evening they bivouacked near where they had halted.

The brigade rose before dawn the next morning. Jackson was anxious to get across the Rappahannock well in advance of Pope's right flank. Trimble and his men proceeded up the south side of the river and at Welford's Mill crossed the Hazel River. At 10 a. m. Trimble's brigade took position near Freeman's Ford to guard the flank of the wagon train against a possible enemy attack. The Federals had kept pace with the Confederate advance by traversing the north side of the river. Around noon Trimble learned of a surprise attack delivered by Sigel's division, which had crossed the river and captured some ambulances and mules from the wagon train. In response, Trimble ordered the 21st Georgia to intercept the enemy and recover the captured property. The Georgians

¹²¹ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 131.

succeeded and, in the process, captured some prisoners who stated that Federals planned to throw one or two brigades across the river to interfere with the Confederate advance. With no immediate support available, Trimble decided to hold his defensive position.

That afternoon Trimble used reconnaissance and verbal information to pinpoint the position of the enemy forces across the river. After careful deliberation, Trimble decided to attack the enemy as soon as Hood's reinforcements arrived on the scene. At 4 p. m., with Hood at hand, Trimble advanced headlong against the enemy's position. As he proceeded to advance, he noticed that the enemy's position could be flanked on either right or left. Making the necessary adjustments, he ordered the 15th Alabama and 21st Georgia to attack the enemy's flanks, while he personally led the 21st North Carolina's advance on the center. Trimble later stated: "After a sharp conflict with the Twenty-first North Carolina the enemy were driven back to the hills on the river. At this point, supported by their artillery on the north side of the river, they made an effort, by blowing of trumpets, beating of drums, and cheers, to encourage their men to charge."¹²²

¹²² O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 719.

Trimble quickly reacted to this challenge by delivering a bayonet charge. His men advanced and drove the enemy before them into the river and beyond in great disorder. The enemy then opened a cannonade against Trimble's forces that had little impact. As Trimble stated: "Our men pursued them closely and slaughtered great numbers as they waded the river or climbed up the opposite bank. The water was literally covered with dead and wounded. Over 100 prisoners were captured, and among the dead was found one colonel."¹²³

With no artillery support, Trimble retired to a safer position and ordered Hood to keep a close watch over the enemy. Then he marched his brigade back to the wagon train. In two short hours he had driven the enemy a distance of a mile and totally lifted the enemy's threat against Jackson's army. Trimble had much to celebrate, for he had lost only 47 killed and wounded a small price to pay for such a major victory.¹²⁴

During the Hazel River fight an incident occurred that proved General Jackson's unshakeable confidence in Trimble. As the main part of Jackson's army approached White Sulphur Springs, news arrived of an enemy force having crossed in the rear at Hazel River. Asked whether the army should dou-

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 720.

ble back and check this enemy threat, Jackson coolly replied: "General Trimble will attend to them. I expected this movement, and ordered Trimble posted there to meet it."¹²⁵ Trimble was undergoing the supreme test; and if he measured up to Jackson's rigid standards, he could be assured of a promotion.

The next day, Trimble's brigade advanced farther north along the Rappahannock to find a crossing unprotected by Pope's army while Longstreet brought up the rear. That night they encamped near Warrenton Springs.¹²⁶

Daylight brought a temporary pause to Trimble's march. As the guns of both sides barked at each other, Trimble and his men maintained a state of vigilant readiness. The march to cross the Rappahannock before Pope's forces could interfere had taxed the soldiers, and weariness was visibly etched on their faces. With the cessation of artillery fire, Trimble and his men resumed their march. That night they sprawled on the ground at Jefferson.¹²⁷

At dawn Trimble's brigade had stirred. The next morning, one of Trimble's men reported, they "crossed on a very inferior little bridge, the stream at this point being small

¹²⁵ S.H.S.P., XXXV (1907), 91.

¹²⁶ S.H.S.P., VIII (1880), 306.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

and narrow; the crossing was at Henson's Mill, four miles above Waterloo. They passed through the village of Orleans and bivouacked near Salem that night after a long and very fatiguing march."¹²⁸ Trimble slept soundly that evening, knowing that the water barrier had been crossed and Pope's right outflanked.

On the 26th, Trimble and his men readied themselves in the predawn for the order to advance. Ewell's division marched in advance with Hay's brigade leading, followed subsequently by Trimble's, Lawton's and Early's brigades.¹²⁹ The march took them through the Bull Run Mountains at Thoroughfare Gap, past Gainesville, to the Alexandria Railroad at Bristoe Station. They had succeeded in reaching Pope's rear and were now situated between his army and Washington. During the last two days, the brigade had marched nearly sixty miles, subsisted mainly on green corn and half ripe apples hastily gathered from the fields and orchards that they had passed.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 133.

¹²⁹ Thomas, History of the Doles-Cook Brigade, 218. For a good map showing the terrain of Bristoe Station, Manassas Junction and Groveton, see O.R. Atlas, Plate CXI, No. 1.

¹³⁰ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 133.

While on the march that afternoon, Trimble received vital information pertaining to Manassas Junction. The message read that an assault against Manassas Junction that night was imperative. Only a few hundred Federal troops were stationed there, and the depot itself contained incalculable supplies intended for Pope's army. Trimble informed Jackson that a brigade would be more than sufficient for the task.¹³¹ The ramifications were indeed great. In one thrust, Jackson could resupply his ragged army, while denying the enemy their source of supply. Whatever Jackson thought of the plan, he kept it to himself. As Trimble marched onward, he wondered if his long awaited night assault would receive the necessary sanction and finally be implemented.

After sunset the Confederates reached Bristoe Station, which a Federal garrison still occupied. Speedily Ewell formed his line of battle and attacked the station. In utter surprise and confusion, the Federal inhabitants fled. Within seconds, the sound of approaching trains could be heard coming from Warrenton. These trains were on a return journey, having just deposited troops for Pope's army on the Rappahannock. At once Ewell divided his force and ordered

¹³¹ "General Trimble Obituary," The (Baltimore) Sun, Jan. 3, 1888. Also Thomas, History of the Doles-Cook Brigade, 352.

that two points along the Alexandria Railroad be seized. Taylor's brigade formed in line along the railroad to the west of the hotel and Trimble's brigade to the east of it. "A cross-tie was thrown across the track on an embankment for the purpose of throwing the train from the track," an Alabamian stated, "but to the surprise of the Confederates, the cow-catcher threw off the obstruction and the train escaped and made its way to Washington, but with several bullet holes in it."¹³²

A momentary pause ensued before another train came into sight. During this interval, another obstruction was erected and four field guns brought forward to knock the train off the track if the obstruction failed. The Alabamian again noted, "then came three long trains in close proximity to each other. The engine of the first struck the obstruction [an iron rail], leaped into the air and then tumbled down the embankment amidst the roar of musketry fire, for both brigades fired on it."¹³³ But the engineer of this train had blown the danger-signal for the trains following him to stop. Luckily a locomotive engineer from the 21st North Carolina seized the whistle lever and blew the safety-signal, whereby the following trains resumed their

¹³² Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 134; O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 643.

¹³³ Ibid.

course.¹³⁴

A scene of vast destruction soon emerged. For "the engine of the second plowed through the cars of the first train, throwing them high in the air, and overturning them, until it was itself overturned and went crashing down the embankment. The engine of the third came plowing and crashing along like its predecessor, until it could go no further, and stopped on the track."¹³⁵ Ironically the builder of railroads had become a destroyer of them. In a dazed state, Trimble's troops observed the final wreckage while their commander beamed with delight over the results.

As soon as the dust had settled from the demolished trains, Trimble began issuing orders. He instructed the 15th Alabama to clear the track of all debris and salvage as many locomotives and cars as could be reasonably done. After repeated efforts to remove the wreckage had failed, Trimble adopted another method. The demolished trains were soon set ablaze, the glow from them lighting up the night sky around Bristoe Station.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Thomas, History of the Dole-Cook Brigade, 352.

¹³⁵ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 134.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 134-35.

Meanwhile, Federal prisoners had revealed that Manassas Junction--just seven miles away--did contain immense stores that Trimble had mentioned that very afternoon. In addition, it appeared likely that the depot would fall to the torch if Jackson did not act promptly, for the enemy's fleeing station garrison and the single train that had managed to escape would surely spread the alarm far and wide of Jackson's presence in the area. With an air of dire urgency, Trimble personally volunteered to lead a night assault against Manassas Junction.¹³⁷ Yet again Jackson vacillated. With no definite answer, Trimble's brigade went into bivouac a short distance from the railroad tracks. Trimble could hardly hide his feeling of disappointment.

Then the unexpected happened. Between 9 and 10 p. m., an aide-de-camp arrived from Jackson's headquarters with welcome news. After rousing Trimble, he delivered the following message: General Jackson directs me to say to you, that you can, if you choose, take Manassas Station tonight. He leaves it to your discretion."¹³⁸

The restraints had finally been lifted from Trimble's will to conduct a night assault. Speedily he awakened his men. Although extremely fatigued and drowsy, they held a

¹³⁷ Ibid. See also O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 643.

¹³⁸ "General Trimble Obituary," The Sun, Jan. 3, 1888.

high affection and deep respect for their commander.

Hastily they assembled.

About 500 men from the 21st North Carolina and 21st Georgia rapidly followed Trimble down the railroad tracks toward Manassas Junction. The night was dark and eerie shadows played with the men's imaginations as they trailed behind their commander. Intermittent musketry fire suddenly split the tranquility of the night. In their front, the 6th Virginia Cavalry had engaged some Federal pickets guarding a hospital. Nearing the scene of disturbance, Trimble went forward to consult with Gen. J. E. B. Stuart.¹³⁹

A distance of about two miles now separated Trimble from his ultimate goal. As Trimble later stated: "I received no orders from General Stuart as to the disposition of my force in its advance, and it was not until we received the fire of the enemy's batteries, half a mile distant from Manassas Junction, that I disposed the two regiments each on either side of the railroad."¹⁴⁰

To the right of the railroad went the 21st North Carolina under the personal command of Trimble, and to the left of the tracks the 21st Georgia. Arrayed against them were two enemy batteries, one on each side of the track, and a

¹³⁹ O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 721, 724.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 718.

strong infantry contingent hidden behind an earthen redoubt. As Trimble's aide-de-camp, William D. McKim, sat atop the tracks coordinating the movement of the 21st Georgia with that of the 21st North Carolina, the brigade crept to within 100 yards of the enemy's position.¹⁴¹

Here Trimble ordered a temporary halt. He first sent McKim back to inform Stuart of his intended attack and request from the latter any cavalry support that could be spared. Next he issued watchwords and responses to the two regiments, so that his men might recognize each other in case of a mingled encounter with the enemy.

Once this had been understood, the regiments advanced. They were greeted by shell, canister and musketry. Through the hail of flying iron they ran, each regiment keeping a compact line in the darkness. The enemy's position seemed to give way under the sheer weight of the charge. Trimble's men jabbed frantically with bayonets, swung freely with rifle butts and occasionally let off a round or two. Within five minutes the fight was over. Trimble then dispatched an officer to the north side of the railroad to ascertain the success of the Georgia regiment. The aide could not immediately find them, and cried out, "Halloo, Georgia, where are you?"

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 720.

The reply was, "Here; all right! We have taken a battery."

"So have we," was the response, whereupon cheers rent the air.¹⁴² The time was 12:30 a. m. and Trimble stood in possession of 8 field guns, 300 prisoners (including a lieutenant colonel) and a vast storehouse of supplies--all bought at a low price of 15 wounded men.¹⁴³

McKim's quest for assistance met with a cold reception from Stuart. Two hours elapsed after Trimble seized the junction before Stuart and his men arrived. Once there, Trimble noted with grim disgust, they "commenced an indiscriminate plunder of the captured horses."¹⁴⁴ Trimble shuddered when he thought of what might of happened if he had actually been hard pressed and needed valuable reinforcements. Quickly he divorced himself from the situation, for much demanded his attention.

Immediately after the fall of the depot, Trimble sought to ascertain what the depot did in fact possess. "The regiments were employed for several hours gathering up prisoners and searching through the various buildings."¹⁴⁵ Confeder-

¹⁴² Ibid., 720, 722.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 720, 723-24.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 721.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 724.

ates discovered some 200 blacks at the junction. Then a humorous incident occurred. The men rifled the negro shanties of their contents. Many emerged from doorways bedecked in "women's hats, with long red ribbons and trimmings attached."¹⁴⁶ To the catcalls of the rest of the men, they ambled through the camp exhibiting their newly-found wares. Trimble must have turned a blind eye to the whole affair, for no reference to this event ever appeared in his writings.

Trimble had indeed netted a bountiful harvest;¹⁴⁷ but with the approach of dawn, he busied himself with security matters. He feared that at any moment Federals might launch an attack on the depot, especially via the Alexandria Railroad. In addition to assigning a strong guard detail over the buildings, Trimble also posted a sizable sentry around the perimeter of the depot and ordered his regiments to sleep on their arms. With this he sent Jackson news of his successful night assault.¹⁴⁸ Gladness filled Trimble's eyes

¹⁴⁶ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 135.

¹⁴⁷ O.R., XII, Pt. 2, 723. Captured items included 5,000 pounds of bacon, 1,000 barrels of corned beef, 2,000 barrels of salt pork, 2,000 barrels of flour, 2 trains loaded with clothing, large stores of oats, corn and whiskey, 8 artillery pieces with caissons and ammunition, 72 artillery horses and harnesses, 175 draft horses, 42 wagons and ambulances, 4 sutlers stores and contents, and 200-300 new tents.

as he contemplated the long day's activities.

As sunshine glistened in the eastern horizon, Trimble and his men stood guard over the junction. Trimble had disposed his forces to occupy some old batteries and redoubt positions at the depot, in anticipation of an enemy attack.¹⁴⁹ He was visibly fidgety, as he gazed to the southwest looking for a telltale sign of Jackson's advance from Bristoe Station. Soon a courier arrived with sketchy news from Jackson's headquarters. The General wrote: "Permit me to congratulate you upon the brilliant success with which God has blessed you; You deserve promotion--The 12th Georgia and 15th Alabama Regiments have been ordered to you this morning."¹⁵⁰ Yet bad news abruptly eclipsed this moment, for enemy troops had been detected marching down the railroad from Bull Run. At once Trimble turned to face the new danger. He ordered his men to "lay upon the ground near the crest of a ridge just in front of one of the old forts, readying them to receive the New Jersey men when they approached near enough, but the men could not be restrained until they got fairly within range."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 721.

¹⁴⁹ S.H.S.P., VII (1880), 307.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas J. Jackson to Isaac R. Trimble, August 27, 1862, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁵¹ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy,

As if on military parade, the enemy brigade drew closer. Then the roar of an artillery piece rang out. Overwrought in excitement, Stuart had indiscreetly ordered the artillery to commence firing well before the enemy was within range of Trimble's musketry. Luckily the shells hit their marks with maximum effect, for without cavalry support, the enemy's formation remained out of the reach of the Confederate infantry. Immediately Trimble summoned his troops forward on a brisk run that pursued the enemy for quite a distance. The chase eventually ended seven miles later, just outside of Centreville. With heavy breath, Trimble regrouped his brigade and proceeded back to Manassas Junction. There he received the 12th Georgia and 15th Alabama as previously promised. The 12th Georgia had been detached from Early's brigade and now would become a permanent fixture within Trimble's command.

The next morning dawned with Jackson's presence still unknown. During the morning hours, Taliaferro's division arrived to relieve Trimble. To receive the mass of Jackson's incoming troops, Trimble had constructed a series of tables where each passing soldier received an ample portion of bacon and hardtack upon reaching the end of the line, he was allowed 2-3 minutes in which to help himself to whatever

else the camp possessed. Each man left overloaded with the riches from the camp.¹⁵²

Then disaster struck. Before Trimble's eyes, a massive sacking of the stores erupted. With indignation and utter helplessness he watched.¹⁵³ The disorder had begun when Gregg's brigade arrived at the Junction. One of the South Carolinians confessed: "Fine whiskey and segars circulated freely, elegant lawn and linen handkerchiefs were applied to noses hitherto blown with the thumb and forefingers, and sumptuous underclothing was fitted over limbs sunburnt, sore and vermin-splotched. And many a worn foot received its protection from the rocky soil."¹⁵⁴ From that point on, it became a massive rampage as the contents of one building after another were spilled on the ground. Trimble stared in disbelief as all of his labors evaporated in a sea of larceny.

As Trimble and his men commenced their evacuation, the depot became engulfed in flames. Soon the skyline was black from burning stores.

¹⁵² Ibid., 136-37.

¹⁵³ S.H.S.P., XIII (1885), 12.

¹⁵⁴ J. F. J. Caldwell, The History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, Known First as "Gregg's," and Subsequently as "McGowan's Brigade," (Philadelphia, 1866), 31.

Without additional reinforcements from Longstreet, Jackson stood little chance of beating his opponent. As Trimble's brigade pressed toward Bull Run, Pope's army began to concentrate along the Warrenton Turnpike. A clash appeared imminent. Traversing the old Manassas battlefield, crossing Blackburn's Ford, and skirting close to Pagedale, at about dusk, Trimble's brigade came into contact with the enemy.

Immediately Trimble drew his brigade into battle formation. Outside Groveton, he became the left wing of the attacking force. The Confederate battle line was soon in place. Trimble's sector offered the protection of a small woods. As he conducted a last-minute inspection of his troops, the faint boom of cannon could be heard at Thoroughfare Gap.¹⁵⁵ This noise signified Longstreet's impending approach, and with it, Trimble's heart beat a few decibels faster. He reassured himself that help was most certainly on the way.

On Jackson's order, Trimble's brigade advanced. While Trimble rode in front of the 21st North Carolina, he cried out the command: "Forward!"¹⁵⁶ Across an open field marched the gray line, which soon they encountered an intense bar-

¹⁵⁵ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 137.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas, History of the Doles-Cook Brigade, 354.

rage of musketry. Quickly the Southerners returned the fire with little effect, for the enemy's position was partially concealed by a dip in the plain. Darkness had now begun to close in on the battlefield. The contest continued at a feverish pitch for about an hour and extracted a heavy toll in casualties.¹⁵⁷

At 8 p. m., an order reached Trimble to renew the attack. Gathering together the 21st North Carolina and 21st Georgia under his personal command, he advanced into a sheet of flame. As these two regiments went forward, the 15th Alabama neglected to hear the order and remained stationary. One participant wrote: "This exposed the two Twenty-ones to a front and cross fire from the enemy, who outflanked them, and whose position under a hill enabled them to see the forms of Trimble's men against the sky. They rose up when the Confederate line was within thirty steps, and delivered a most deadly fire."¹⁵⁸ Momentarily the advancing wave staggered under the forceful impact, but quickly managed to rally and stabilize its position, only reluctantly ceding ground when ordered to do so.

¹⁵⁷ S.H.S.P., VII (1880), 307.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Meanwhile the 15th Alabama started forward. It pursued a path through a skirt of woods and advanced until it reached a fence bordering an open field. While gunfire enveloped the Alabamians, they paused to discern the enemy's position. The Federals had posted themselves in a gully which paralleled the hillside some 20 steps from the fence. Here confusion reigned supreme; what little organization remained intact in the Confederate regiment soon completely vanished. All sight had been lost of friend and foe alike, and the Alabamians hesitated to direct a fire against the gully, feeling that the troops there might be fellow comrades. Any supportive role that Trimble's other regiments might have enjoyed was non-existent. Thus, the Federal line at this point retained its cohesion and escaped the likelihood of being overrun.¹⁵⁹

The 12th Georgia followed on the heels of the Alabamian assault. Unlike its predecessor, however, when the Georgians reached the fence, they commenced delivering a spirited fire directed at the enemy. They continued in this pursuit until the close of the action, not yielding one inch of ground on their front.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 307-8.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 308.

Late that evening the Federal army withdrew from its position and established a new line farther back from the front. Trimble's brigade collapsed on the battlefield and slept soundly that night, making no further demonstrations to challenge the enemy.

Particular elements within Trimble's brigade had suffered severe losses. With daylight the decimation became clear. In the 21st Georgia, the muster roll the previous afternoon showed 242 men present for duty. Now no more than 69 men answered the roll call. A similar situation prevailed in the 21st North Carolina. The severity of the moment even touched Trimble, who wrote: "I have never known so terrible a fire as raged over an hour on both sides" yesterday.¹⁶¹ To give some small comfort to these two fragmented regiments, he ordered them to undertake burial detail while the 15th Alabama and 21st Georgia bore the combat of that day.

At 10 that morning, Trimble ordered the 15th Alabama and 21st Georgia to advance. They proceeded to the left of Lawton's brigade. On reaching an unfinished railroad embankment, Trimble instructed his men to prepare a defensive position and await the attack of the enemy. Large numbers of the enemy soon appeared on their front. Pope had un-

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

leashed his entire army to annihilate Jackson before Longstreet could join him. The sound of heavy fighting rang out from the woods to the left. Quickly skirmishers were driven in along the front and Trimble's 300 man force braced themselves for the assault.¹⁶²

Meanwhile, Trimble rode off to investigate the gunfire coming from the woods. He feared that the enemy were in the process of outflanking his position and would drive a wedge between his and Lawton's forces. As he mounted the top of a hill to observe the enemy advance, a bullet fired from an enemy sniper struck and shattered his left leg near the knee. Pain from the wound throbbed throughout his body. Blood gushed down his leg. Without an accompanying aide to assist him, Trimble galloped at full speed back toward his brigade. As he rode he felt lightheaded and struggled to keep himself in the saddle.¹⁶³ He arrived within his lines and was borne from the field in a litter. At the field hospital he insisted that the surgeons amputate his leg, but they refused.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Ibid., 309.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, 143.

He waited impatiently for any forthcoming news about his brigade and sought to question others to learn the result of the battle. Even with a serious wound, his enthusiasm and aggressive tendencies remained. All that dominated his mind was the final outcome of the conflict. Less important questions soon followed. Like for instance: Who would replace him as commander? How badly had his men suffered during the Federal onslaught? And would General Lee exploit the successes gained on the battlefield? Not a negative thought eclipsed his optimistic outlook. He yearned to return to the battlefield, but knew he could not physically do so. He tried to comfort himself with additional assurances that in the future his military prowess would be more paramount.

Trimble had much of which to be proud. His long-sought night attack had proven a spectacular success. In the process of fulfilling this objective, he had completely won "Stonewall" Jackson's confidence. Recognition coupled with promotion could not be far off. He truly symbolized an effervescent meteor in the night skies of competent Confederate generalship. Now rest and recuperation were essential for his continued rise to prominence.

Chapter IV

THE CLIMAX OF BATTLE

Trimble languished at the field hospital only briefly. His condition remained guarded but not life-threatening. As soon as new quarters could be arranged, he was carried to the private residence of a Mr. Foote.¹⁶⁵ Within hours he resumed a transitory course, this time traveling up the Valley to a more secure place of subsistence.

At Front Royal, Trimble found accomodation in the household of a Mrs. Cloud. She and her daughters provided him with "great dignity and loveliness of character" which bolstered his spirits and alleviated the tension brought on by his injury.¹⁶⁶ Trimble's wife soon joined him, along with various family members and close acquaintances. This entourage allowed him the privilege of escaping the hardships of battle while enjoying the endearment of loved ones.

Still the plight of the Army of Northern Virginia did not go completely unnoticed. For instance, Trimble found time to read newspapers and talk with recently returned combatants from the front in order to keep up with the progress

¹⁶⁵ Isaac R. Trimble, "The Civil War Diary of General Isaac R. Trimble," Maryland Historical Magazine XVII (1922), 5.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

of the Maryland invasion. In a bedridden state, Trimble voiced repeated disgust over what he considered straggling within General Lee's ranks. He expressed fear that this single defect would ultimately lead to the ruination of the entire Confederate war effort. Only with Lee's safe retreat back across the Potomac river and his encampment at Winchester did Trimble cease worrying about the Confederate military situation.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, Trimble was anguished to hear of the extensive casualty toll at Sharpsburg. It seemed that many of his old brigade's most trustworthy officers and soldiers had succumbed to the destructful forces of battle. One name struck deeply at his mental conscious. Captain Duncan McKim, his most favorite aide-de-camp, had been severely wounded while carrying orders to the 15th Alabama.¹⁶⁸ Trimble yearned once more to be in command of the Seventh Brigade and felt sadness over his good friend's fate.

On September 22, 1862, Gen. Jackson delivered on his earlier promise to Trimble. As Jackson mentioned in his letter to the adjutant general's office: "It is proper to state, that I do not regard him [Trimble] as a good disciplinarian; but his success in battles has induced me to re-

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ O.R., XIX, Pt. 1, 977.

commend his promotion."¹⁶⁹ Trimble's quest to reach the position of major general had finally materialized. From Jackson's character, Trimble knew that far greater resourcefulness and proficiency were now expected of him. His advocacy of aggressive tactics had finally paid off handsomely. With deep satisfaction and excitement, he prepared himself for a rapid recovery.

On October 15, after a month's rest, Trimble bade farewell to the Cloud household and journeyed to Staunton. He secured lodging with the Opie family who lived one mile outside town.¹⁷⁰ With his new residency established, he continued to keep in close correspondence with Jackson. One particular letter highlighted his concerns at the time. On the 30th Jackson wrote: "Your wishes respecting serving in my command have been anticipated. I have recommended your promotion and also a few days since recommended you for the commander of my division provided you were well."¹⁷¹ Clearly Jackson recognized Trimble's fine command qualities, but owing to his lengthy illness, his bright prospects appeared to remain in jeopardy.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas J. Jackson to Samuel Cooper, September 22, 1862, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁷⁰ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 5.

¹⁷¹ Thomas J. Jackson to Isaac R. Trimble, Oct. 30, 1862, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

Trimble quickly replied to Jackson's overture with enthusiastic reassurance. On November 5, he wrote: "Permit me to express the great gratification I feel for any preference you have shown me in the command of your division, and if so fortunate as to be assigned to that command I hope to meet your approbation in the discharge of my duties and to do more than I yet have done to promote the success of the great cause now pending. During this month possibly by the 20th I expect to be fit for duty."¹⁷²

Trimble's health had improved progressively since the time he had first contracted his injury. By November 16, the bone of the leg had knit and the wound nearly closed; but boils had broken out on the ankle and prevented him from using crutches to restore the circulation of the leg. The lancing of these boils only exacerbated his condition.¹⁷³ Still Trimble remained optimistic, clinging to the belief that his minor complications would soon vanish.

As at Front Royal, Trimble continued to enjoy the companionship of family members. His weekly routine revolved around religious observance on Sundays, while the weekdays were consumed in a multitude of functions that ranged from tending to family affairs, finding out the fate of other

¹⁷² Isaac R. Trimble to Thomas J. Jackson, November 5, 1862, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁷³ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 6.

less fortunate Baltimoreans after Federal occupation, and engrossing himself in purely military matters. By mid-December the battle of Fredericksburg preoccupied much of his time. His health assumed a mixed status, with recurrent inflammation followed by intervals of temporary improvement. Then, on December 13, a piece of bone was extracted from above his fractured leg.¹⁷⁴ At once he assumed that the worst had passed and that soon he would be on crutches.

On December 17, Trimble left Staunton for Chancellorsville. Before departing he settled his account with Opie and sought another medical opinion to his affliction. A Dr. Garnett suggested that Trimble bathe his leg in a laudanum and lead solution to reduce the swelling. Trimble followed such advise, journeyed to Chancellorsville and obtained residency at a Mrs. Carr's.¹⁷⁵

Administrative duties began to demand a greater portion of Trimble's time. Jackson's headquarters urgently requested both the Manassas Junction and Hazel River battlefield reports. Discrepancies had appeared in J. E. B. Stuart's and John B. Hood's reports concerning Trimble's involvement in those battles. Trimble busied himself in collecting the necessary material to file his reports. In addition, he

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

helped Kyd Douglas gather together data for the writing of Jackson's own battlefield reports beginning with Cross Keys--but these reports were never completed.¹⁷⁶

The immense struggle with paperwork soon had its rewards. On January 1, 1863, Jackson wrote Trimble: "Do you not think you are well enough to sit in comfortable room and give orders for a division, so long as it is in camp? If so I wish you would report for duty. It is important that we should have permanent commanders. If the division should march or go into action, then another could for a time discharge your duties. As soon as you report for duty I think you will be promoted."¹⁷⁷ Trimble hastened to comply with his superior's suggestions. On January 10, he reported for duty in the "Stonewall" Division. He secured a room and converted it into his headquarters. There he spent the days reading, writing and conversing.¹⁷⁸

Trimble's assumption of command brought an end to an old controversy. The controversy involved William B. Taliaferro and the "Stonewall" Division. Since Charles S. Win-

¹⁷⁶ See James A. Smith to Isaac R. Trimble, December 30, 1862, and January 27, 1863, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives; Henry Kyd Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall (Chapel Hill, 1968), 210-11.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas J. Jackson to Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, January 1, 1863, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

¹⁷⁸ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 7.

der's death at Cedar Mountain, the command of the division had remained uncertain. Taliaferro had taken Winder's place with the aspiration of receiving permanent command. Yet as Trimble had remarked earlier, the vacant position and promotion should go to an able candidate, such as himself. This issue lay dormant until Jackson broke the impasse. Trimble's comment of being either a corpse or a major general appeared to have borne fruit. Much to Taliaferro's chagrin, he had been passed over for the hard-fighting and aggressive Trimble. With considerable indignation, Taliaferro requested transfer to a different theater of operations.¹⁷⁹ Trimble's track record had ultimately proven superior to Taliaferro's own actions as commander of the division.

Greater clarification of Trimble's elevation in rank came on January 19 with Special Order Number 19. The President appointed "Brigadier-General Isaac Trimble to be major-general, and to report to Lieutenant-General Jackson for assignment to the command of a division of the Second Army Corps."¹⁸⁰ Yet one last hurdle had to be cleared to guarantee Trimble's appointment as a major general.

¹⁷⁹ Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants, II, 417 and 505. See also Alvey P. McDonald (ed.), Make Me a Map of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson's Topographer (Dallas, 1973), 110.

¹⁸⁰ O.R., XIX, Pt. 2, 683-84.

Senator Louis T. Wigfall appeared to be making threatening gestures in the Confederate Congress over the confirmation of military promotions submitted by President Davis. Chairing the powerful Senate Military Committee, Wigfall asserted himself in the role of curbing what he believed was executive despotism.¹⁸¹ In addition, there existed a hint of personal animosity between Trimble and Wigfall dating to late 1861, under such trying circumstances that the Marylander's chances at promotion dimmed. Yet Trimble did not allow this setback to hinder his aspirations, for he quickly recruited his own political supporters to combat Wigfall's actions. Writing to Alexander R. Boteler of Virginia (a well-known friend of Jackson's), Trimble received a favorable response to his request for assistance. Boteler promised Trimble "that he would see Senators, give them facts and be prepared to defeat the designs of Wigfall which he thought easy to do."¹⁸² Boteler's analysis proved correct. On April 23, 1863, the Senate officially confirmed Trimble's promotion to major general.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Alvy L. King, Louis T. Wigfall, Southern Fire-eater (Baton Rouge, 1970), 158-59.

¹⁸² Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 8. For Boteler, see Allen Johnson (ed.), Dictionary of American Biography I, (1964), 467.

¹⁸³ S.H.S.P., I (1876), 18-19.

On February 1, Trimble officially assumed command of the "Stonewall" division. By the 12th, he felt well enough to make a visit. He rode his horse for the first time in five months and proceeded some five miles to converse with Brig. Gen. John R. Jones. During the ride he experienced no pain or inconvenience. This buoyed his spirits, and the next day he journeyed to the Third Brigade's lines along Skinker's Neck. On finishing his brief tour, Trimble discovered that he felt a little fatigued.¹⁸⁴

Duties concerning his division soon absorbed a bulk of his time and energy. The needed improvement of existing roads in his sector and the proper care of the division's horses became vital issues requiring immediate attention. With no renewed fighting, the troops under his command became restless. Extensive furloughs were granted to officers and men. Trimble also found time to pen a letter to General Lee in which he discussed a plan to attack Washington in the spring.¹⁸⁵

With a relaxed atmosphere prevalent at military headquarters, Trimble had an opportunity to supervise a Maryland gesture of gratitude involving Lee's conduct. At the behest of a group of Baltimore ladies, Trimble oversaw the presen-

¹⁸⁴ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 7.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

tation of a splendid sword and sash honoring Lee's great military exploits.¹⁸⁶ Trimble felt immensely proud over the patriotic zeal exhibited by the fine women of Baltimore.

His appearance as commander of the "Stonewall" Division sparked admiration among the men. Kyd Douglas observed: "There was fight enough in Trimble to satisfy a heard of tigers."¹⁸⁷ Yet Trimble also had a milder side when religious worship was concerned. During this particular winter season, he actively encouraged his soldiers to erect a log cabin chapel for Sunday services and urged them to attend regularly.¹⁸⁸ He exhibited an even-tempered nature that embodied a devotion to military duty and a reverence to Christian principles.

As time progressed, graver problems began to surface. By the end of February, the desertion rate in the Army of Northern Virginia had reached a critical state. Within the "Stonewall" Division, speedy punishment against offenders resulted. Kyd Douglas noticed in Gen. Frank "Bull" Paxton's brigade that the penalty of flogging had been restored. Early in February, six men were court-martialed; one was sentenced to six months' hard labor with ball and chain, two

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall, 212.

¹⁸⁸ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 9.

were to be flogged, and three were ordered shot.¹⁸⁹ On February 27, one of the condemned died before a firing squad.

On March 1, Trimble addressed the division over the issue of desertion and announced that the President had pardoned the remaining accused. His speech went right to the root of the problem. "You have all now seen that desertion is to be followed by a gloomy retribution," he stated, "if any of you have heretofore considered this offense as trivial, you must now see your error."

Trimble then commenced to expound on this idea. Gradually his speech took on substance and clarity. He continued: "By permitting this crime to exist, our armies would be destroyed, our liberties subverted and all that is dear to freemen--property, home and honorable independence-- given up to rapacity and violence of a savage enemy--who knows no sense of honor, justice or pity--all these evils would be self-inflicted by the prevalence of desertion, and not by the arms or skill of our enemies."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall, 213. Also see John G. Paxton (ed.), The Civil War Letters of General Frank "Bull" Paxton, C. S. A. (Hillsboro, Tex., 1978), 74.

¹⁹⁰ I. R. Trimble, "Address to the 1st Division, 2nd Corps on Shooting of Deserters," March 2, 1863, in possession of William C. Trimble, Baltimore.

The men, he believed, must be the conscious guardians of discipline or else face the permanent loss of their liberties. Such a speech had a positive effect over the men and helped to elevate morale.

As the turmoil subsided over desertions, Trimble's mind turned to other matters. One aspiration that held particular appeal involved a surprise attack on the enemy. On March 28, Lee replied to Trimble's proposed military plan. Lee showed a reluctance to commit valuable resources to an attack he considered costly in the expenditure of men and material. The tactic of surprise, he contended, would be lost if a trestle bridge were built across the Rappahannock, since the enemy could so easily detect it. Lee concluded: "The idea of securing the provisions, wagons, [and] guns of the enemy, is truly tempting. . . . The movement you suggest. . . has been at various times studied, canvassed with those who would be engaged in their execution, but no practical solution of the difficulties to be overcome has yet been reasonably reached."¹⁹¹

About a week into March, Trimble received good news from home. His son John had been appointed a midshipsman within the Confederate navy. The general was especially

¹⁹¹ O.R., XXV, Pt. 2, 658. For the correct date, see I. R. Trimble, "Letter of General Robert E. Lee to Isaac R. Trimble," March 28, 1863, Maryland Historical Society.

grateful to a Capt. Smith Lee for his son's commission.

John had been ordered to Charleston, S. C., to begin active duty.¹⁹²

During that spring, Trimble developed a highly imaginative idea. It involved an enterprising scheme to feed the half-starved army. His order placed extreme emphasis on the collection of edible wild plants not normally considered for human consumption. Such things as "dandelion, poke sprouts, curl leaf dock, lambs quarter, sheep sorrel, water cresses and other items were to be gathered daily to help augment the division's meager diet."¹⁹³ The outcome only proved partially successful, for by mistake other noxious things were included that brought disagreeable results when eaten. Trimble's idea had merit, but it lacked the necessary qualified staff to guarantee its success.

On April 13, Trimble suffered a serious setback in health. In performing his military duties, he became wet and contracted a cold. His state of health diminished rapidly and he developed a case of erysipelas. The illness soon evolved into a graver complication, that of osteomyelitis. Curtailment of all physical activity ensued. Trimble later would proclaim: "Thanks to the Angel of Mercy, which

¹⁹² Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 8.

¹⁹³ McHenry Howard, Recollections of a Maryland Confederate Soldier, 1861-1866 (Baltimore, 1914), 253.

in mid-heaven stayed the shadowy wing of death's swift messenger, [I was] saved."¹⁹⁴ However, recovery was a slow and tedious process.

On April 27, feeling somewhat better, Trimble took leave of his division and journeyed to Richmond. Along the way, his travel became interrupted because of an enemy cavalry raid on the Confederate capital. Once the menace had passed, Trimble found quarters in the city at the home of an old friend, J. W. Clarke.¹⁹⁵ There Trimble rested and contemplated his future.

Early in May, his newly proclaimed division saw action at Chancellorsville. Trimble's division, under Gen. Raleigh E. Colston, experienced high casualties. With heavy heart Trimble acknowledged the deaths of two on his personal staff. Captain W. Duncan McKim was killed while conducting reinforcements to the front line. Major Alfred Hoffman also fell in action. In addition, Charles E. Grogan sustained a severe wound.¹⁹⁶ For Trimble, the agonies of war had struck a painful blow. As the loss of these able men numbed his senses, word arrived of the deaths of Gens. Jackson and Frank "Bull" Paxton, along with Colston's alledged incompe-

¹⁹⁴ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 8.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹⁹⁶ O.R., XXV, Pt. 1, 1003.

tency.¹⁹⁷ A feeling of helplessness and despair rent through Trimble as he struggled to overcome his malady.

Command of the "Stonewall" Division passed to Maj. Gen. Edward Johnson. Plenty of rest and relaxation prompted an improvement in Trimble's health. By mid-May he could mount a horse for a daily ride. On Monday, May 18, Trimble set out for Shocco Springs, N. C. He hoped to hasten his recovery by treating his ailing leg to the warm spring waters. At the end of the first day he had reached Warrenton, where he felt extremely fatigued from the journey's labors. After a good night's sleep, however, he felt refreshed enough to resume his trip. Going by stage, he became nauseous and vomitted. That night he lay in bed with a fever; but by morning he was well enough to travel again. In such an unsteady state he reached Shocco Springs to begin his treatment.¹⁹⁸

With the energy of an untiring warrior, Trimble wrote Lee in search of military duties. In his May 15 letter he said: "I am so near recovery from the severe attack of camp erysipelas, that my return to duty is looked forward to with much eagerness. I therefore respectfully ask to be placed in some command in your Army of Northern Virginia, where I

¹⁹⁷ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 9.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 10.

may, in your opinion, be most useful to our cause."¹⁹⁹

Lee responded quickly to Trimble's inquiry. "I hope you will recover your strength, but you must not return to the field until able to undergo its fatigues. I have a proposition to make. It is that you take command (if able) of the Shenandoah Valley (Col. Davidson is in local command at Staunton and Gen. Jenkins with his cavalry below) and you will have all the Maryland troops which I hope you will be able to organize and build up into something respectable." Lee added further: "You will . . . have free permission to capture Milroy. Supply us with commissary stores and take Maryland as soon as you can. Let me know when you will be able to enter on your new command and I will issue the order."²⁰⁰ At an instant, Lee had offered Trimble an independent command with all the complexities and challenges inherent in such a position.

Lee's offer encompassed a glimmering prospect that Trimble had often desired. Marylanders throughout their career in Confederate service had been denied any symbol of state distinction or identity. Only in one case, the 1st Maryland--which became the 2nd--did this rule fluctuate. Trimble, who represented the highest ranking Maryland Con-

¹⁹⁹ O.R., XXV, Pt. 2, 801-802.

²⁰⁰ R. E. Lee to General Isaac R. Trimble, May 20, 1863, Maryland Historical Society.

federate, had the opportunity to eradicate this flagrant injustice. Still the task was replete with many pitfalls. Trimble was expected to raise the Maryland corps primarily from newly arriving conscripts, for the Army of Northern Virginia could not spare any troops already within its ranks. Since the early days of the war, the flow of Maryland recruits had ebbed. Now a state of deficient quantity prevailed. In a debilitated condition, and with Lee preparing to go on the military offensive, Trimble's likelihood of fashioning a Maryland corps appeared slim. An air of skepticism overcame Trimble as he readied himself for new duties.

In a May 25 reply, Trimble accepted the proposed command in the Shenandoah Valley. "I thank you for the honor you would confer," he wrote Lee, "I hesitate to incur so great a responsibility, after the brilliant achievements of General Jackson in that district, but as I know the country well, having been in his command last year, I will hope, by diligence and zealous effort, and with the favor of Divine Providence, for success under such orders."²⁰¹

On May 28, Trimble was assigned the command of the Valley and ordered to proceed to Staunton for orders.²⁰² Yet it

²⁰¹ O.R., XXV, Pt. 2, 822.

²⁰² Ibid., 830.

was June 19 before Trimble departed for Staunton to assume his new command. Riding on horseback, he arrived there on the 22nd. There he found his forces absent, they being moved to Maryland in support of Lee's invasion. Trimble did not hesitate, but instead rode down the valley, in an attempt to overtake Lee. On the 24th, he intercepted Lee near Berryville. "As soon as the courtesies of meeting had passed, he [Lee] said: 'You are tired and hungry. If you will step down to the mess, you may find some remains of a fine mutton which kind friends have sent us. After eating come up and we will talk.'"²⁰³ Clearly Trimble knew that the situation had changed drastically and he wondered what new function Lee might call upon him to perform.

Once lunch had been finished, Trimble called again at General Lee's quarters. Finding him alone at his tent, a casual conversation ensued. Trimble began by saying: "Well, General, you have taken away all my troops. What am I to do?"

Lee replied: "Yes, we had no time to wait for you, but you must go with us and help to conquer Pennsylvania." Continuing, Lee noted: "We have again outmaneuvered the enemy, who even now don't know where we are or what are our designs. Our whole army will be in Pennsylvania the day after

²⁰³ Confederate Veteran, XXV (1917), 209.

to-morrow, leaving the enemy far behind and obliged to follow us by forced marches. I hope with these advantages to accomplish some signal result and to end the war if Providence favors us."²⁰⁴ To Trimble, this is what he had long wanted. The image of liberating Maryland from Federal tyranny and successfully carrying the war into the enemy's territory now seemed close at hand. A wry smile crossed Trimble's face as he stood before Lee.

Next Lee turned to the subject of the Confederate army's conduct while in southern Pennsylvania. The commanding general seemed disturbed over the possible rash behavior his men might show in the course of marching through Pennsylvania. Lee spoke of numerous letters he had received from prominent Southern citizens that urged "retaliatory acts" directed against Pennsylvanians in compensation for former Northern atrocities. Lee then remarked: "What do you think should be our treatment of people in Pennsylvania?"

Trimble commented: "General, I have never thought that a wanton destruction of property of noncombatants in an enemy's country advanced any cause. Our aims are higher than to make war on the defenseless citizens or women and children."

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

With that, Lee said: "These are my own views. I cannot hope that heaven will prosper our cause when we are violating its laws. I shall, therefore, carry on the war in Pennsylvania without offending the sanction of a high civilization and of Christianity."²⁰⁵ An official order from Lee's headquarters a few days later reiterated what Lee and Trimble had agreed upon during their conference.²⁰⁶

On June 26, Trimble accompanied the Army of Northern Virginia into Maryland. He was still full of ideas, for he stated: "I met him [General Lee] in Hagerstown and suggested sending at once a brigade to Baltimore to take that city, rouse Maryland, and thus embarrass the enemy. He [Lee] so far considered the plan as to write to Gen. A. P. Hill, the

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 209-10.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 210. Lee's June 27 order from Chambersburg read: "The commanding general had observed with marked satisfaction the conduct of the troops on the march and confidently anticipates results commensurate with the high spirit they have manifested. No troops could have displayed greater fortitude or better performed the arduous duties of the past ten days. Their conduct in other respects has, with few exceptions, been in keeping with their character as soldiers and entitles them to approbation and praise. There have, however, been instances of forgetfulness on the part of some that they have in keeping the yet unsullied reputation of the army and that the duties exacted of us by civilization and Christianity are not less obligatory in the country of the enemy than in our own. The commanding general considers that no greater disgrace could befall the army and through it our whole people than the perpetration of the barbarous outrage upon the innocent and defenseless and wanton destruction of private property that have marked the course of the enemy in our country. Such proceed-

only corps commander near, to ask if he could spare a brigade for that purpose. General Hill told me he had sent a reply to General Lee that it would reduce his force too much so it was not done."²⁰⁷ possible.

That afternoon Lee and Trimble again met to discuss developments affecting the army. Trimble observed: "He [Lee] called me to where he was seated and unfolding a map of Pennsylvania, asked me about the topography of the country east of South Mountain in Adams County and around Gettysburg and said with a smile: 'As a civil engineer, you may know more about it than any of us.'" Trimble then described the terrain in detail for General Lee, emphasizing that "almost every square mile contained good positions for battle or

ings not only disgrace the perpetrators and all connected with them, but are subversive of the discipline and efficiency of the army and destructive of the ends of our present movements.

"It must be remembered that we make war only upon armed men and that we cannot take vengeance for the wrongs our people have suffered without lowering ourselves in the eyes of all whose abhorrence has been excited by the atrocities of our enemy and offending against Him to whom vengeance belongeth and without whose favor and support our efforts must all prove in vain.

"The commanding general, therefore, earnestly exhorts the troops to abstain with most scrupulous care from unnecessary or wanton injury to private property, and he enjoins upon all officers to arrest and bring to summary punishment all who shall in any way offend against the orders on this subject."

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

skillful maneuvering."²⁰⁸ Lee seemed to nod his head in approval as Trimble paused.

Next Lee began to lay out his military strategy. Lee stated: "Our army is in good spirits, not overfatigued, and can be concentrated on any one point in twenty-four hours or less. I have not yet heard from General Stuart. When [the enemy] hear where we are, they will make forced marches to interpose their forces between us and Baltimore and Philadelphia. They will come up, probably through Frederick, broken down with hunger and hard marching, strung out on a long line, and much demoralized when they come into Pennsylvania. I shall throw an overwhelming force on their advance, crush it, follow up the success, drive one corps back on another, and by successive repulses and surprises before they can concentrate create a panic and virtually destroy the army."²⁰⁹ In short, Trimble had been briefed on Lee's general intentions. Lee now paused and perused Trimble's face for some visible reaction.

Trimble did not waste a moment. "The plan ought to be successful," he responded, "as I never knew our men to be in finer spirits in any [other] campaign."

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Lee noted: "That is, I hear, the general impression."²¹⁰ As the meeting adjourned, Lee informed Trimble that he had reserved a special task for him.

As Trimble started to leave, however, Lee motioned for him to remain a moment. Lee placed his hand on the map over Gettysburg and said: "Hereabout we shall probably meet the enemy and fight a great battle; and if God gives us the victory, the war will be over, and we shall achieve the recognition of our independence." He concluded by saying: "General Ewell's forces are by this time in Harrisburg; if not, go and join him and help to take the place."²¹¹

Trimble proceeded to the vicinity of Carlisle. On Sunday, June 28, he located Gen. R. S. Ewell at Carlisle Barracks. Trimble's military role within the Army of Northern Virginia had changed dramatically since he had first departed the Shenandoah Valley. He was now serving at the behest of Lee as a volunteer member of Ewell's staff. Trimble's desire to be at the front, even though he could not exercise command over a combat unit, had prompted him to undertake this administrative task.²¹² With warmth, Trimble greeted Ewell at the commander's quarters. After Ewell's inquiry of

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., 211.

²¹² Wilbur S. Nye, Here Come the Rebels! (Baton Rouge, 1965), 308.

Trimble's health and how General Lee was doing, the two officers got down to serious matters.

Trimble readily became dismayed over what he considered to be Ewell's inactivity. As Trimble later recalled: "General Early had been sent to York, but no force against Harrisburg. I told General Ewell that it could easily be taken, and I thought General Lee expected it. I volunteered to capture the place with one brigade, and it was arranged that we should start before day Tuesday morning."²¹³

Under Trimble's applied pressure, Ewell sent orders to Gens. Jubal A. Early and Albert G. Jenkins that they move toward Harrisburg. The former officer responded by marching to Wrightsville on the Susquehanna, and the latter deployed his cavalry within three miles of the Pennsylvania capital. Trimble hoped that Ewell's delay had not jeopardized the whole Confederate military operation.

Ewell and Trimble then settled down to attending to more superficial chores. Ewell had proclaimed this day in Carlisle as a semi-religious holiday. Two religious services were performed that day at the Barracks. Ewell and his staff attended both.²¹⁴

²¹³ Confederate Veteran, XXV (1917), 211.

²¹⁴ Nye, Here Come the Rebels!, 308. See also McDonald, Make Me a Map of the Valley, 135.

Then a more lively event captured the army's attention. That afternoon at Carlisle Barracks, Ewell conducted a flag raising ceremony. Rodes's division provided the honor guard, while the 32nd North Carolina oversaw the raising of the flag. The bands played merrily, and soldiers within the ranks hooted and hollered. As the Confederate flag floated above the Barracks, Gens. Rodes, Trimble, Daniels, Ewell and others delivered patriotic speeches. Just at the oral climax, a thunderstorm erupted and forced the participants to seek shelter.²¹⁵

The next day brought a mixed bag of results. Following Trimble's advice, Ewell ordered Rodes's division to march down the road toward Harrisburg. At last the seizure of the Pennsylvania capital appeared assured. Yet as afternoon slipped into evening, a courier arrived from Lee's headquarters. Lee's dispatch read: "The enemy had crossed the Potomac on the 26th and 27th with an order to cross at once the South Mountain 'and march to Cashtown or Gettysburg, according to circumstances.'"²¹⁶ That night, as rain drenched the surrounding countryside, Ewell was in a testy mood. Trimble knew that Ewell had waited too long to attack Harrisburg, and he pondered whether Ewell would act decisively

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Confederate Veteran, XXV (1917), 211.

enough in executing Lee's new orders.

On June 30, Ewell redirected Rodes's division to leave Carlisle and proceed toward Heidelberg. The Confederates reached their destination about dusk. That night Ewell called together Early, Johnson and Trimble to discuss the quandary confronting him. The tone of Ewell's voice sounded uncertain. "Information had come of the arrival of the 11th Corps of the enemy at Gettysburg, and he was undecided what to do under his order. . . ."

When asked, General Early commented negatively to the idea of concentrating Ewell's forces in the vicinity of Cashtown or Gettysburg. Trimble next said: "I could interpret it in but one way after hearing from General Lee a few days before of his plan to attack the advance of the enemy wherever found with a superior force and throw it back in confusion on the main body, and that, as this advance was in Gettysburg, we should march to that place and notify General Lee accordingly."²¹⁷ Once Trimble had expressed his opinion, Ewell ended the meeting--still undecided on what approach he would take the next day.

July 1 dawned with Ewell personally commanding Rodes's division. This division had arisen between seven and eight o'clock with orders to proceed to Middletown. As Trimble

²¹⁷ Ibid.

later recalled: "I suggested that place [Middletown] to be indirectly on the way to both Cashtown and Gettysburg and that a courier should be sent to General Lee for positive orders."

Around 10 o'clock, Ewell's force passed through the town and received orders from Hill to hasten to Gettysburg. Rodes's division now was the spearhead of Ewell's probe. The unit marched some seven miles to the outskirts of Gettysburg.

There about noon it formed a battle line. Moving in a northwesterly direction down the Middletown road, it maintained a brisk pace. Trimble guided the division as it sought to reach the high ground on Oak Ridge. Shortly the sound of Hill's artillery raking the enemy's position atop Seminary Ridge could be heard. Then Trimble noted: "Rodes at once engaged with his infantry on our right, and his batteries opened against those of the enemy just in front of town, while one of his brigades was extended on our left, by General Ewell's order, out into the low ground toward and beyond the Emmitsburg Road."²¹⁸ The initial stage of the battle of Gettysburg had begun.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

With Rodes's division well positioned, Early's troops appeared on the left. By 2 P. M., the combined efforts of Rodes and Hill had succeeded in dislodging the enemy from their original fortified position. Trimble remarked: "From the position I was in [Oak Ridge] I could command a view a mile and a half in extent from one flank to the other and noticed that the whole space in open fields was covered with Union soldiers retreating in broken masses toward the town from our own and General Hill's front."²¹⁹

Quickly Ewell made his appearance, and in the accompaniment of Trimble, the two made their way towards the center of town. They came upon some recently captured enemy soldiers. The temptation to converse proved too great. Trimble quickly spoke to an enemy officer being escorted to the rear. "Fortune is against you today," he commented. The officer responded: "We have been worse whipped than ever."²²⁰ At this comment, Ewell and Trimble peered at each other with glee. Next they spurred their horses and rode rapidly for the town. The Federal army appeared to be on the verge of collapse.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Upon entry into the town, they found pandemonium. As Ewell led his staff through the congested streets, a shot rang out from a nearby house. Ewell appeared to be the target. Luckily the bullet harmlessly struck the old General's wooden leg. Thereafter, Ewell left the city and headed for a farmhouse in the vicinity of the almshouse. There he established a temporary headquarters. The time was around 3 P. M. and all signs of battle had died away. Trimble remarked: "We had won [the battle] handsomely."²²¹

As victory stared Ewell in the face, a disturbing feature emerged. He appeared to cast about in an uneasy state. Trimble addressed the problem to Ewell frankly. "Well, General, we have had a grand success. Are you not going to follow it up and push our advantage?"

Ewell responded by eluding to Lee's wish of not bringing on a major engagement until he had arrived on the field.

Trimble countered: "That hardly applies to the present state of things, as we have fought a hard battle already and should secure the advantage gained."²²² Trimble was visibly displeased. He saw Lee's intention of smashing the Federal army through piecemeal destruction threatened by Ewell's timidity. While others in the group appeared sympathetic to

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

Trimble's views, nothing changed. Trimble's attempt at prodding Ewell into action failed.

At once Trimble set out to reconnoiter the terrain. Riding to the north, Trimble came upon a wooded hill northeast of Gettysburg, known as Culp's Hill. Trimble noticed its preeminent elevation in comparison to the surrounding countryside. Even Cemetery Hill shrank in stature to this hill. Briefly Trimble examined the various angles of the hill and then hurried off to inform Ewell of his new discovery.

Around 4 P. M., Trimble located Ewell at his makeshift headquarters. Ewell looked rather embarrassed as he awaited word from Lee. Trimble spoke quickly: "General, there (pointing to Culp's Hill) is an eminence of commanding position and not now occupied, as it ought to be by us or the enemy soon. I advise you send a brigade and hold it if we are to remain here."

Ewell retorted: "Are you sure it commands the town?"

Trimble briskly replied: "Certainly it does, as you can see, and it ought to be held by us at once."²²³

Then the conversation became heated, with Trimble's assertiveness apparent.

²²³ Ibid., 211-12.

Randolph McKim noted Trimble's boldness at this juncture. Trimble explained: "Give me a division and I will engage to take that hill."

Ewell abruptly declined the offer.

Next Trimble said: "Give me a brigade and I will do it."

Still Ewell responded negatively.

In final desperation Trimble uttered: "Give me a good regiment and I will take that hill."

Ewell responded with a firm no.

At this, Trimble thrust out his sword and shouted: "I will not serve any longer under such an officer!"²²⁴

Off Trimble rode in search of Lee, hoping to find the General before the Federals fortified Culp's Hill. Soon, however, he returned to Ewell's encampment alone and spent the night there.

July 2 dawned quiet. Culp's Hill had been fortified. At 9 A. M. Lee appeared at Ewell's headquarters. With Ewell absent, Trimble greeted the commander. Lee asked Trimble where a vantage point might be found to survey the entire battlefield. Trimble suggested the cupola atop the almshouse. Both men proceeded to the building and climbed the stairs to the top. From this view, Cemetery Hill, Round Top

²²⁴ S.H.S.P., XL (1915), 273.

and Culp's Hill could easily be seen. Lee turned to Trimble and said: "The enemy have the advantage of us in a shorter and inside line, and we are too much extended. We did not or we could not pursue our advantage of yesterday, and now the enemy are in good position."²²⁵

Trimble nodded his head in approval and thought back to the blunders committed by Ewell the day before. Lee's smashing victory had been sidetracked by Ewell's reluctance to attack. Then both men departed, traveling first to A. P. Hill's headquarters and later to other points. At each stop, Lee took up the topic he had recently discussed with Trimble.

As the day progressed and consultation gave way to decision, Lee appeared to opt for a concentration of his forces on the right to break the enemy lines. Yet to the surprise of Trimble, the movement failed to materialize. Instead, Lee ordered Longstreet to attack on the right, which he did about 4 P. M. Similarly, near sunset, Ewell's forces assailed Culp's and Cemetery Hill. Longstreet's attack bogged down at Little Round Top. Ewell's attack continued into the darkness and waited to be settled at first light the next morning. The second day of battle drew to a close with no clear-cut advantage for either side. With the

²²⁵ Confederate Veteran, XXV (1917), 212.

din of battle so distinct, Trimble itched at the opportunity to participate.

The third day of battle ushered in an expectation of renewed hostilities. Lee's flanking movements against the enemy had failed; now he prepared to commit the fresh division of George E. Pickett into the fray. Lee's order of the day read: "General Longstreet will make a vigorous attack on his front; General Ewell will threaten the enemy on the left or make a vigorous attack should circumstances justify it; General Hill will hold the center at all hazards."²²⁶

Trimble paced feverishly as he awaited the outcome of Lee's order. Every moment seemed an eternity to Trimble. In despair, he implored Lee to assign him to active combat command. Two positions were open, one in Henry Heth's and the other in Dorsey Pender's division. At noon Trimble received an order to proceed to Pender's division and assume command. Trimble at once embarked for that destination.

When Trimble reached Pender's division, he found Brig. Gen. James H. Lane in charge. Lane had already reported to Longstreet and complied with that General's wishes, moving his two brigades to the rear and right of Heth's (now J. J. Pettigrew's) division. Trimble's new command consisted of

²²⁶ Ibid.

Scales's brigade with the 13th, 16th, 22nd, 34th and 38th North Carolina, and Lane's brigade with the 7th, 18th, 28th, 33rd and 37th North Carolina. Without further ado, Trimble began to inspect his troops.

At a single glance, Trimble noticed his two brigades bore the marks of recent and heavy combat. The ranks were extensively depleted, and few line officers remained. Yet even if the two brigades appeared in a shabby condition, Trimble felt inspired by their rough composure.

He immediately sought to reinstitute confidence within his troops. The new commander spoke briefly to his assembled men. "No gun should be fired until the enemy line was broken," and Trimble vowed that he would advance with them to the farthest point.²²⁷ Then he rode down the entire battle line, reiterating his previous address and adding: "I am a stranger to you and have been sent to command you in the absence of your wounded general, and will lead you upon Cemetery Ridge."²²⁸ With that, Trimble settled down to await the command to attack.

Around 1 o'clock a terrific artillery bombardment erupted from the center of the Confederate line. The ground trembled and quaked as a multitude of shells were hurled

²²⁷ S.H.S.P., IX (1881), 33.

²²⁸ Walter Clark (ed.), Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina (Raleigh, 1901), II, 661.

against the enemy positions along Cemetery Ridge. Quickly the Federal gunners responded and shells began to rain down on the Confederate lines. Trimble's men were posted in a woods and therefore escaped much of the destructive fire. For nearly two hours the artillery duel lasted. Only when the Federal batteries slackened their fire and the Confederates countered with a short but intensive volley did the battlefied once again revert back to a semi-tranquil state.

As the guns fell silent, the smoke obscuring Cemetery Ridge began to lift. Trimble peered anxiously across the open plain for telltale signs of massive destruction. Surprisingly, nothing could be detected beyond the stone wall crowning the ridge. The bulk of the enemy fortifications remained hidden from view.

As Trimble continued to scan the opposite ridge, he thought momentarily to himself about the upcoming charge. He hoped that the enemy artillery had been effectively disabled. He also knew his men must cross nearly a mile and a quarter distance before reaching the summit of Cemetery Ridge.²²⁹ In striving to gain this objective, the attackers would encounter numerous fences and depressed areas that would hinder their advance. Shrugging off this concern, he prepared his two brigades for the charge.

²²⁹ S.H.S.P., IX (1881), 31.

Scales's brigade occupied the right with Lane's brigade on the left. Perched on the far west side of Seminary Ridge, they awaited the signal to charge. Trimble looked at his troops one last time, making sure that they were properly organized to begin the advance. Around 3 p. m. orders arrived to commence the charge.

Pettigrew's division moved forward at a steady pace. About 150 yards behind and in support followed Trimble's force. "As soon . . . as Pettigrew's and Trimble's divisions fairly appeared in the open ground at the top of Seminary Ridge, furious discharges of artillery were poured on them from the line in their front, and from their left flank by the line which overlapped them near Gettysburg."²³⁰

The men under Trimble endured the artillery fire and soon came into contact with small arms fire. As they continued to advance, they exhibited the poise and grace of being on parade. Whenever a soldier fell, the line quickly closed up and filled the existent hole. Onward they marched.

Trimble occupied a central position in the attacking wave. He had stationed himself between his two brigades. As he rode atop his horse Jinny, he noticed that Pickett's division on his right struck the enemy works first. In

²³⁰ Ibid.

front, Pettigrew's division being about "one hundred and fifty yards from the Emmettsburg road, seemed to sink into the earth under the tempest of fire poured into them."²³¹ On the left, Davis' and Brockenbrough's brigades faltered under the weight of an enemy flanking barrage of musketry. With each additional step, the deadliness of artillery and small arms fire became more pronounced.

Shortly a courier came running back with a message from Pettigrew. In a breathless voice, Captain Louis G. Young, instructed Trimble to hasten forward in support of Pettigrew.²³² Trimble motioned for his men to accelerate their pace, and he also directed them to wheel farther to the left in order to protect the newly exposed flank. He stated: "We passed over the remnant of their [Pettigrew's] line, and immediately after some one close to my left, sung out, 'Three cheers for the Old North State;' when both brigades sent up a hearty shout; on which I said to my aid, 'Charley [Grogan], I believe those fine fellows are going into the enemy's line.'"²³³ At that instant, a savage battle raged over the fence bordering the Emmittsburg road.

²³¹ Ibid., 33.

²³² Clark, Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, V, 127-28.

²³³ S.H.S.P., IX (1881), 33.

Momentarily Trimble's attention shifted from his front to that on the right. Pickett's charge had preceded Trimble's and had been centered around the copse of trees to the south. Now Trimble was anxious to see how the attack fared. He noted: "I perceived that the enemy's fire seemed to slacken there, and men in squads were falling back on the west side of the Emmittsburg road."²³⁴ Not a moment could be lost.

At the fence his troops took cover and sortied with the enemy. While so engaged, many within his command fell victim to the enemy's musketry and artillery. Trimble knew his men could not long endure such punishing blows. He therefore attempted to resume the charge. On horseback and appearing impertinent to the destructful fire around him, he coaxed his men to mount the fence and head for the stone wall beyond. While employed in such labors, he was struck in the left leg by a musket ball.²³⁵

Trimble stayed at the fence while his men surged toward the stonewall. More and more within the ranks succumbed to the murderous fire directed against them. Lane recalled:

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Confederate Veteran, XXV (1917), 213. Although his diary and letter in the S.H.S.P., IX, give conflicting and differing views, this statement seems the most plausible and consistent in comparison with James H. Lane's and William L. J. Lowrance's official battlefield reports, O.R., Pt. 2, 666, 659-60, 671-72.

"When within a few hundred yards of the enemy's works, the line in front being entirely gone, the division moved rapidly up, connecting with the troops on the right, still stubbornly contesting the ground with the enemy, reserving their fire until within easy range, and then opening with telling effect, driving the artillerists from their guns, completely silencing them, and breaking the line of supports formed on the crest of the hill."²³⁶

As the Confederate battle flags waved atop Cemetery Ridge, the smoke of battle drifted across the landscape. Impatiently Trimble awaited the result. Seated upon his wounded horse with his aide beside him, Trimble felt sad over being unable to participate in the current fighting. Then his aide, Charlie Grogan spoke: "General, the men are falling back, shall I rally them?"

To this question, Trimble again turned to his right. What he saw consisted of "a few men in squads moving to the rear, and at a considerable distance from the Emmettsburg road." Trimble paused and said: "No, Charley, the best thing these brave fellows can do, is to get out of this."²³⁷ Trimble then walked his enfeebled horse in the direction of his retreating men.

²³⁶ O.R., XXVII, Pt. 2, 659.

²³⁷ S.H.S.P., IX (1881), 35.

The effects of battle were everywhere visible among his men. Many could not walk without the help of others. All appeared tired and worn-out. Trimble noted that they marched back in a slow, deliberate and orderly fashion. Of his staff, all had lost their horses to enemy fire. Charlie Grogan remained the only member to escape injury. Trimble's men had marched the farthest, been exposed the longest, and were the last to leave the field. As Trimble eyed his retreat, he concluded that "Pickett's, Pettigrew's and his own division were literally 'shot to pieces.' And the small remnants, who broke the first Federal line, were too feeble to hold what they had gained."²³⁸

Trimble halted his troops at their old position on Seminary Ridge. He dismounted from his wounded horse and briefly examined the makeshift line of defense being constructed. Feeling faint from his wound, he nevertheless addressed his men: "That is right, my brave fellows, stand your ground, and we will presently serve these chaps as they have us."²³⁹ When the enemy attack failed to materialize, Trimble turned command over to Gen. Lane. As he departed, Lane heard Trimble say: "If the troops I had the honor to command today couldn't take that position, all hell can't

²³⁸ Ibid., 32.

²³⁹ Ibid., 33.

take it."²⁴⁰

At the field hospital, Trimble's condition steadily worsened. The next morning, July 4, he was informed that amputation of his left leg, below the knee, had become necessary. William C. Oates recalled Trimble's response: "When told that he must suffer amputation he cursed the surgeons who had saved his leg from the first wound, and said had they amputated it then, as he tried to get them to do, he would not have received the second wound, as that shot would had missed him."²⁴¹ In a defiant mood, Trimble yielded to the surgeons' advise.

The operation went smoothly. Drs. McGuire, Black and Hays performed the surgery.²⁴² When Trimble regained consciousness, he reviewed the numerous mistakes committed by Ewell and Longstreet at Gettysburg. He surmised that if Lee's battle plan had been correctly followed, the battle in Pennsylvania would have secured Southern independence.²⁴³ The future now looked grim, and his injury remained serious.

²⁴⁰ Clark, Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, V, 564.

²⁴¹ William C. Oates, The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, (Dayton, 1974), 143.

²⁴² Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 12.

²⁴³ Confederate Veteran, XXV, 213.

Chapter V

TOWARD AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Late on July 4, Lee's army began its retreat from Gettysburg. As rain poured down, the Confederate forces wearily trudged toward Hagerstown and the Potomac River beyond. Trimble remained outside Gettysburg, unable to move because of the danger of erysipelas arising. Close at hand lay his trusted subordinate, Charlie Grogan, who had been wounded shortly after Trimble left the battlefield. In a dejected state, Trimble decided to fall a prisoner rather than risk the life-threatening journey to freedom.

On the 6th, Trimble became a Federal prisoner of war. Provost Marshal Marsena R. Patrick directed him to be moved to the household of a Mr. McCardy inside Gettysburg. While here, Trimble penned a short letter to Gen. Meade. "Having been wounded on Friday last, suffered amputation of a foot within your lines I having long had acquaintance with your family . . . respectfully apply for permission for some of my family to bring me from Baltimore such articles as my condition renders necessary."²⁴⁴ Yet little came of this measure.

²⁴⁴ Isaac R. Trimble to George G. Meade, July 16, 1863, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives.

Soon after, complaints surfaced of Confederate wounded receiving better medical care than their Federal counterparts. In response to this charge, Trimble again moved under Federal orders to Seminary Hospital, about a half mile west of town. On arrival at the hospital, Trimble recalled: "I at once sent word to Gen. Meade that I had lost a leg, and he at once gave orders to have me well cared for."²⁴⁵ With this assurance, Trimble settled down to endure the routine of hospital life.

Treatment at the hospital proved fair. While there, Trimble discovered many friends among the wounded. Several came to visit him as he rested in bed. Henry K. Douglas, James L. Kemper and Robert M. Powell in particular enjoyed the long and casual conversations conducted at Trimble's bedside. Even under such relaxed conditions, the depredations of prison life were apparent. For instance, sentinels guarded the doors and forbade the admittance of food and

²⁴⁵ Isaac R. Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864: The Attempt to Relieve Rebel Prisoners in the West (n.p., n.d.), 1, Trimble Papers, in possession of William C. Trimble, Baltimore. Trimble further elaborated: "My brother [David C. Trimble], when in Congress, did him [Gen. Meade] a service which he never forgot. Meade's brother, who was a merchant in Spain, was thrown into prison, and my brother offered a resolution in Congress that three Spanish citizens living in this country be arrested and put in prison in retaliation for the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Meade. It passed, but through the intervention of the Spanish Minister, no arrests were made, and Mr. Meade was released."

vistors from the outside. A certain lieutenant of the guard, Mr. Rice, tried to intimidate and subvert all privileges granted to the prisoners. Trimble sarcastically noted: "May the chances of war put Lieutenant Rice some day in our hands."²⁴⁶

As Trimble remained confined in Gettysburg, many with the Federal government expressed deep animosity toward him. Former secretary of war Simon Cameron voiced this sentiment to President Lincoln: "General Trimble is a dangerous man. He burned the bridges between Philadelphia and Baltimore in the beginning of the rebellion. Within the last ten days he directed and superintended the burning of the bridges between Baltimore and Columbia, and York and Harrisburg. He is in close connection with all the rebel sympathizers in Baltimore city."²⁴⁷ To this chorus Stanton and President Lincoln soon adhered. Trimble's future life as a prisoner seemed paved in a bed of thorns.

A clear sign of Federal hostility took place when Trimble's aide, Maj. Alfred Hoffman, received permission to journey to Baltimore for medical attention. It had been agreed by Trimble's captors that he would follow his aide a

²⁴⁶ Isaac R. Trimble, "The Civil War Diary of General Isaac R. Trimble," Maryland Historical Magazine XVII (1922), 13; Henry K. Douglas, I Rode With Stonewall (Chapel Hill, 1968), 254.

²⁴⁷ O.R., XXVII, Pt. 3, 646.

short time later, when his health became better. Hoffman's arrival at that city prompted his immediate arrest and confinement to Fort McHenry. Federal authorities acted as though Hoffman's presence indicated a conspiracy to free Trimble in the future.²⁴⁸ Suddenly it became clear that any experiences Trimble would have in Baltimore would be harsh.

Trimble continued to recover rapidly at Gettysburg. Doctors Janes and Ward of the I Corps medical staff helped Trimble in his restitution. On August 4, Trimble sadly noted both Grogan's and Powell's departure. A new change in hospital administration followed that relieved the tightness in security.²⁴⁹

On August 20, Trimble left the confines of Gettysburg. He traveled to Baltimore aboard a lime-car padded with straw. The ride proved rough and burdensome, but Trimble bore the trip well. When the train chugged into the station, Trimble was whisked away to a clean and comfortable hospital located on Lexington Street.²⁵⁰ His stay at such a fine facility proved brief. On the 23rd, orders arrived transferring Trimble to Fort McHenry. There he joined Hoffman and others of his staff in confinement. Orders prohi-

²⁴⁸ Ibid., VI, 103, 107-08.

²⁴⁹ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 13.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

bited any visitation with Trimble and curtailed all communication with the outside world. His isolation even included being denied attendance to the fort's chapel on Sundays.²⁵¹ In desperation Trimble requested an audience with the fort's commandant. General W. W. Morris, a West Point classmate of Trimble's, granted the interview.

With all the military protocol in evidence, Trimble confronted Gen. Morris. He initiated the conversation by asking: "Why have I been confined?"

Gen. Morris responded: "You are to be tried by court-martial for having burned the railroad bridges upon the railroads leading into Baltimore just after the riots of the 19th of April, 1861."²⁵²

At this point the discussion ended and Trimble returned to his cell.

Trimble mulled over the situation carefully before he decided on a course of action. He correctly concluded that "the [Federal] government had been led to believe that while he was in command of the Maryland militia, he had willfully burned the bridges because of some misunderstanding he had with the railroads before the war."²⁵³ To offset this prob-

²⁵¹ Ibid., 13-14.

²⁵² Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864, 1.

²⁵³ Ibid., 1-2.

lem, he addressed a letter to Secretary of War Stanton. He requested a leave of absence from prison in order to examine the Police Department records of Baltimore. His letter achieved a partially desired result. Immediately thereafter, the Federal government sent agents to investigate the police records. They discovered that the Baltimore mayor and Maryland governor had ordered Trimble against his will to destroy the railroad bridges. With this evidence, the court-martial proceedings planned against Trimble were dropped.

Trimble's life inside Fort McHenry continued to be intolerable. In retaliation for gross injustices, Trimble and others declined to pay for privileges that had already been denied them. The result amounted to a reduction in the quality and quantity of their diets. Trimble recalled: "We now received food, if food it can be called, from the hospital--chunks of dark beef in a greasy tin pan, two slices of bread steeped in spilt coffee and two tin cups of dark liquid for coffee, is our meal--no butter, no vegetable, no salt or pepper no condiment to seduce the appetite."²⁵⁴ Under such trying circumstances, Trimble struggled to keep body and soul together.

²⁵⁴ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 16.

Slowly privileges began to reappear. On September 6, Trimble gained access to worship in the chapel on Sundays. As the restrictions eased, so his health improved. Anxiously Trimble awaited the arrival of his newly ordered artificial leg. He preoccupied himself in such pleasures as hobbling around the interior of the fort on crutches and catching glimpses of the ladies responsible for supplying him with fruits and other foods. In more passive moments, he found relaxation through reading. All the time, however, he hoped for an early exchange that would enable him to rejoin the Confederate army and resume the struggle for Southern independence.²⁵⁵

Then, on September 15, Trimble was sent to West Hospital on Concord Street under strict orders that no one be allowed to communicate with him. The hospital looked out on Union Dock and the wharves. It had previously been the warehouse for the Baltimore Steam Packet Company. The interior was dark and gloomy, with poor sanitary and hygienic facilities, and it lacked any adequate ventilation system. In the stagnant heat, the foul smells of the dockyard were everywhere abundant. Trimble and thirty-five other Confederate officers spent two weeks there before being escorted under Federal guard to the Calvert Street railroad station.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 16-17.

They boarded boxcars for Pittsburgh en route to Sandusky, Ohio.²⁵⁶

During the ride to Sandusky, Trimble experienced some physical discomfort. Upon his arrival he noted: "I am very much fatigued, but my leg remains well." To the others within the party, he appeared haggard and helpless.²⁵⁷

At the disembarkation point, Trimble enjoyed a brief moment to shake off the tiresome effects of the train ride. Soon, however, he and the rest of his group made their way under armed guard to an awaiting steamboat. The small boat steamed out across Lake Erie for Johnson's Island. Nervously the prisoners strained their heads to catch the first glimpse of the island. The island appeared as a flat stretch of land, being about 2 1/2 miles from Sandusky city. It measured to be about a mile long and a half mile wide. The prison rested on the southern end of the island and occupied a space of 200-300 yards. A wooden stockade surrounded the entire perimeter. At the two corners facing the lake, blockhouses bristled with artillery and rifle defenses.²⁵⁸ The security seemed rigid and quite adequate.

²⁵⁶ Henry E. Sheperd, Narrative of Prison Life at Baltimore and Johnson's Island, Ohio (Baltimore, 1917), 6-7.

²⁵⁷ Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864, 2; Sheperd, Narrative of Prison Life, 8.

²⁵⁸ Walter Clark (ed.), Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina (Raleigh, 1901), IV,

With excitement subsiding, the boat moored at the dock. A contingent of guards had formed to usher in the new prisoners. Trimble struggled to walk and edged toward the prison gate; but before passing through it, an order was given for the prisoners to form into lines. As the camp commandant--Lieut. Col. William S. Pierson--watched, the prisoners answered roll call. On responding to the call, each prisoner walked to a window and turned over whatever money he possessed.²⁵⁹ Trimble followed this procedure and, like all the rest, entered the prison yard called the "bull pen."

Trimble quickly acquainted himself with his new environment. Sentinels patrolled the sixteen-foot-high stockade day and night. Thirteen buildings called blockhouses stood inside the prison compound. Each block included two messes with bunks arranged in three tiers to accommodate two men sleeping in each one. Around 3,000 Confederate officers of all grades inhabited the camp. Most of this number had been captured at Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Port Hudson. The Vicksburg and Port Hudson prisoners bore visible scars of accute starvation.²⁶⁰ Under these circumstances, Trimble attempted to adjust to his new living standard while conva-

667, 689.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 666.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.; Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864, 2.

lescings from his battlefield injury.

Trimble's plight as a prisoner of war remained a prime concern of the Confederate government. As early as October 12, James L. Kemper wrote the adjutant and inspector general, Samuel Cooper, on behalf of Trimble's personal safety. Kemper expressed outrage over Yankee barbarity directed against Trimble. He suggested that the government use greater pressure to win enemy guarantees prohibiting future mistreatment of Trimble. Even Gen. Robert E. Lee supported Kemper's efforts. In response to this concern, Confederate Agent of Exchange Robert Ould contacted his Federal counterpart in an endeavor to learn Trimble's condition and to negotiate his early release.²⁶¹ The only hitch continued to be the Federal suspension of the cartel of exchange which had taken place in July. Trimble's hopes for release remained high.

His daily routine revolved around a few routines. Every morning the men answered roll call. Each mess selected a chief to administer domestic affairs and a police force to carry out required chores. The duty of the police force included keeping the outside grounds tidy, sweeping rooms, cutting and splitting firewood and bringing it into the

²⁶¹ James L. Kemper to Samuel Cooper, Oct. 12, 1863, and Samuel Cooper to James L. Kemper, Oct. 14, 1863, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives; O.R., Ser. II, VI, 386, 451.

block.²⁶² Such a system worked smoothly and efficiently.

The distribution of food and other necessary items proved reasonable. Prisoners received a regular soldier's provisional allotment. Whatever they were unable to acquire from the prison authorities, they could purchase from the sutler's store located inside the prison grounds. An account at the sutler's store depended on what relatives and friends were willing to send each prisoner. Once an account had been established, a prisoner could purchase such items as butter, cheese, sugar, dried fruit, tobacco, letter stationery, postage stamps and the like.²⁶³ Trimble fared well, thanks to his family and friends continual contributions. He noted: "The purchase [of such] articles make a good table, costing 2 to 3\$ per week. . . ." ²⁶⁴

The "times of plenty" soon dried up. The Federal government began hearing atrocity stories about their own soldiers starvation at the Richmond and other Southern prisons. In retaliation for such atrocities, the sutler's store closed on Johnson's Island; many of the benefits granted to the prisoners ceased. Trimble noted: "We now have rough soldiers rations and scant at that--with not wood enough to

²⁶² Clark, Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, IV, 669.

²⁶³ Ibid., 670.

²⁶⁴ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 17.

cook over two meals a day and often but one. We get good bread--but fat salt pork, neck, shins and other refuse of beef (no whole quarters, only eatable when boiled). Rice, no vegetable, vinegar, salt, sugar or coffee. The fare is so rough that the Vicksburg and Port Gibson officers reduced to starvation point in those regions during the siege, eat rats, which they say are equal to frogs or chicken."²⁶⁵

The scarcity of food represented only the tip of the iceberg. The long accepted practice of allowing boxes and packages from home to be delivered to prisoners stopped. Many vital essentials for survival had made their way to the prisoners by this process. Now not even the crates so often used as kindling passed into the prisoners hands. For six months this rule remained in force. The immense depredations caused by it began to appear more frequently.

The island's water supply proved inferior. During both the cold months and restrictive periods, prisoners relied on three shallow wells for water. This water tasted terrible and usually triggered dysentery. The only reprieve from such misery came in the form of Lake Erie. When camp privileges were relaxed and warm weather prevailed, prisoners could draw buckets of water from the lake. This source tasted good and did not foster illness. But in late 1863,

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

with the onset of winter and all privileges rescinded, prisoners suffered anew from the effects of the water provided by the wells.²⁶⁶ Quickly the sick list began to grow.

Even firewood, the essential ingredient needed for cooking and heating, became scarce and of the lowest quality. The greenness of the wood provided little heat and demanded larger quantities to be burned for cooking. The meager amount combined with a coarser quality made complete exhaustion inevitable. In the end, daily use far exceeded allotted supply. This predicament became more pronounced as winter set in and temperatures plummeted.

In late November, Trimble noted: "We have here about 2000 officers, two or three die daily--from want of proper food and attendance--not a bit of food allowed the sick except what we can get in by stealth--such as eggs, chicken, milk, sago etc. such neglect I could not have believed, of a people, called civilized and Christian--neither is proper clothing allowed the sick, or well."²⁶⁷ In such a state, Trimble and the rest labored to survive. All they could do was attempt to make the plight of the afflicted more pleasant.

²⁶⁶ Clark, Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, IV, 668.

²⁶⁷ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 18.

With punitive measures pursued by the Federal authorities, the likelihood of future exchanges appeared remote. Trimble correctly grasped the reasons behind the situation when he commented: "The Federal Government certainly mean to stop exchanges not on the unwillingness to put our slaves on the footing of soldiers--but because they thus think to reduce our force in the field, the doctrine announced by Simon Cameron at Gettysburg, that 'it was cheaper to feed us than to fight us' has prevailed though not very complimentary to Yankee prowess."²⁶⁸ Thus Trimble prepared himself for a protracted internment, while hoping that such would not be the case.

Under desperate circumstances, however, Trimble found the inner strength to withstand the every-day hardships. He struck a defiant posture in the midst of open tyranny when he said: "We will see who can fare longest, ourselves or the Yankee prisoners in Richmond--who so far beat us in whining about poor fare, though theirs is no worse than ours."²⁶⁹

In a combative mood, Trimble asserted himself among his fellow colleagues and strove to unite them in a stand against Yankee injustice. On January 26, 1864, Trimble pre-

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

sented himself as a spokesman for the prisoners. He addressed a letter to the new commandant, Brig. Gen. Henry D. Terry, and enumerated the major grievances. An inadequate supply of water, firewood and edible meat existed and that Federal guards fired unjustly on prisoners as they made their way to and from the privies. In addition, Confederate officers were expected to do intolerable things like dig sinks, remove privies and load kitchen garbage. Trimble summarized his views by declaring: "I now ask your attention to these points referred to, partly as a matter of just complaint on the part of prisoners and partly that the simple statement of facts may reach you, in the hope that an officer of rank who has seen active service in the field may not think such treatment the best or most honorable of subduing an enemy."²⁷⁰

Yet as Trimble openly expressed these grievances, he also plotted secretly to reverse the situation by a coup de grace. Trimble was not content to remain a prisoner while the fortunes of the Confederacy were decided on a distant battlefield. Being the senior ranking prisoner within the camp and an outspoken critic of Federal policy, Trimble's involvement in an escape attempt proved only natural.

²⁷⁰ O.R., Ser II, VI, 901-2.

Several had attempted a prison break before Trimble instituted such a plan. Trimble noted in his diary that "every week attempts are made to escape by some one, always a failure, except in Charlie Grogan's case who got off very cleverly and is in Richmond."²⁷¹ As Trimble acquainted himself with his new artificial leg, he set about devising a scheme whereby to escape.

As the winter months descended, the prisoners wrapped themselves in blankets and whatever outer garments were available and stood huddled together for warmth, while Lake Erie began to freeze. Unused to such a harsh climate, the Southerners suffered excruciatingly from the cold. Yet with continued low temperatures, often hovering in the range of between 15 and 20 degrees below zero, the ice hardened and solidified on the lake.²⁷² A real avenue of escape presented itself, for if a person could resist the extreme cold and frostbite, then he might succeed in crossing the lake to Canada and gain his freedom. Trimble held a keen knowledge of the Great Lakes, from his days as a topographical officer in the regular army, and knew the feasibility of such an escape. He and his co-conspirators watched with intense interest as the ice grew denser.

²⁷¹ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 18.

²⁷² Sheperd, Narrative of Prison Life at Baltimore and Johnson's Island, Ohio, 16.

Trimble's escape plan differed from all previous ones, for several reasons. First, the participants involved in the conspiracy comprised a vast majority of the prison populace. All thirteen blocks were organized to undertake the escape attempt. Trimble held the position of commander-in-chief, while all but one block had a corps commander to direct operations. Under the corps commander, a block commander tended to the functions of the regiments and companies. These men included: Block One, Gen. J. R. Jones; Two, Col. D. Howard Smith; Three, Col. B. D. Fry; Four, Col. L. M. Lewis; Five, Col. D. M. Shannon; Seven, A. G. Godwin; Eight, Capt. L. W. Allen; Nine, Gen. J. W. Frayser; Ten, Col. R. M. Powell; Eleven, Col. J. R. Herbert; Twelve, Capt. Johnson; and Thirteen, Gen. M. Jefferson Thompson.²⁷³ This in itself was quite an impressive accomplishment for a secret organization subjected to the rigors of abject oppression.

Another significant difference involved the highly articulated plan of escape. A meticulous and carefully thought-out plan had been devised. The actual escape involved four stages: 1) Getting out of the enclosure; 2) Capturing the garrison; 3) Escaping from the island; 4) Returning to the South.²⁷⁴ Of these four elements, several mi-

²⁷³ S.H.S.P., XIX (1891), 287.

nor details had to be resolved before success could be reasonably assured.

In getting out of the enclosure, either the plank fence surrounding the "bull pen" had to be broken or a means devised to climb over the wall. If neither of these plans materialized then bribing the guards either to open the gate or to turn a blind eye toward the escape would be necessary. Of all the options, the first seemed most likely to succeed and the last to fail.

The capture of the garrison appeared even more precarious. An attempt by 1,500 to 2,000 unarmed prisoners to overpower and capture an armed force of 800-1,000 soldiers seemed unlikely. It could only succeed if outside help were enlisted or the smuggling and making of weapons progressed at a satisfactory pace. To this predicament Trimble would have to use immense finesse if he planned to carry out his proposed objective.

The actual means of escaping from the island centered on two possibilities. One depended on the capture of a small steamer that frequented the island. Through numerous passages, all the prisoners could be evacuated and deposited safely in Canada. The other approach relied on the thickness of the ice and the ability to walk across the frozen

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 284.

lake to freedom. From the standpoint of Trimble's thinking, a march across the frozen expanse seemed the best tactic to pursue.

The last leg of the journey back to the Confederacy promised to be the easiest. Upon reaching Canada, passage aboard a blockade runner could be arranged. Or a swift march by horseback through Ohio and Kentucky might be undertaken. Trimble knew this phase to be the least troublesome; therefore, he concentrated his energies toward perfecting the actual escape.

While Trimble planned the escape, conditions within the prison continued to decline. Trimble sadly observed the sufferings of his fellow companions. Later he noted: "I have heard from inmates of the larger rooms containing over 60 persons that during the winter they had to take turns going to bed and sitting by stoves to keep warm, 1/3 at stoves, 1/3 in bed, and 1/3 running about the room or dancing to protect themselves from freezing. These rooms were simply barns--outside weather boarded-- daylight shining through in many places--no plaster on sides or overhead, between the floor and roof cold winds blowing under the floor, making water to freeze by day and night in the buckets set near stoves."²⁷⁵ Trimble rapidly realized that the

²⁷⁵ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 19-20.

escape must come soon or the men's strength would be entirely sapped. Once this occurred, little chance remained of seizing the prison.

Trimble hurriedly took into account what remained to be done and then started to analyze what strengths his enemy possessed. He recalled: "The troops that guarded us were not soldiers who had seen active service. They were little better than militia, and it would have been an easy matter to frighten and demoralize them by a night assault. We therefore had a conference among the leading officers and agreed to make the attempt."²⁷⁶

Equipping and arming the prisoners assumed vital importance. Consummated skill went into the endeavor. Trimble observed: "We had revolvers, axes, hatchets and almost everything else with which to fight, smuggled into us and hid away. We cut the slats from out of the bottom of our bunks and made pikes out of them by grinding knives down to a sharp point and fixing them on their ends. Regular reports were made to me of the progress each company was making in securing arms."²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864, 2.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

As the procurement of weapons proceeded on schedule, the ice upon the lake glazed over in thicker sheets. Continual arctic weather pummeled the tiny island and with each successive day, the ice froze to a rock hard consistency. Soon not only a man could walk across the ice, but wagons could cross it without the least hazard. In an estatic mood, Trimble stated: "By the time the ice became thick enough to bear us the discipline and organization was good, and the arms we had in hand ample to insure our success. Our plan was to break the stockade in several different places with axes, so as to force a divison of the troops guarding us, then to cut through and charge the troops and then put off upon the ice and escape to Canada. All our arrangements were perfected and the night had been set apart for the assault."²⁷⁸

Just at the moment of fruitation, however, the promising bud wilted. For some time, Federal authorities had suspected a major prison break in the making. To offset such an event, the commandant announced that the system of exchange had been resumed and that a trainload of prisoners would depart Johnson's Island the next day for points of final exchange. Trimble somberly noted: "The next day trainload was removed, but I felt certain--and it afterwards

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

transpired that I was entirely correct--that the Government had ascertained that we were to make an effort to escape and had simply done as a ruse to defeat our purpose."²⁷⁹

As Trimble remained steadfast in his determination to attempt a prison break, many within the secret organization began to waver. Quickly Trimble moved to salvage the escape plan. On the night of the train's departure, Trimble called the officers of the escape committee together. He attempted to instill a strong consensus to go ahead with the escape plot. To a reluctant audience he said: "These officers would not be exchanged. We ought not to be deterred from making the attempt to escape upon the very night that had been originally agreed upon. The assault could be successfully made and without the loss of one man."²⁸⁰ Unfortunately Trimble's speech did not convince the majority of the council members. When he had concluded his argument, all but one person--Col. Shannon of Texas--voted against going through with the plan. With the meeting adjourned, the officers retired to their quarters, vowing to maintain the organization but not to participate in any breakout.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

Trimble lamented the lost opportunity. The enemy continued to exercise a stringent policy. "No more officers were taken away," Trimble commented, "and those who were taken were transferred to Point Lookout, where their condition was infinitely worse than ours in the bull-pen on the lake. When this fact became apparent to the officers the ice had broken up and the easiest chance of escape we could possibly have had was gone. After this we settled down to bear our confinement as best we could."²⁸¹ The Federal ploy had worked admirably well. With its success, Trimble's chances of early freedom had been stymied.

Late in February 1864, a new commandant came to govern over the prison. Brigadier General Alexander Shaler proved worse than his predecessor. He announced a policy whereby any prisoner suspected of attempting to escape would be fired on by guards. No prior questions or forewarning would be given. In addition, the bull pen became progressively dirtier with raw sewage and garbage allowed to accumulate.²⁸² This negligence resulted in a sharp increase in sickness among the prisoners.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Clark, Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, IV, 672.

As the rate of sickness grew, so did Trimble's temper. He became infuriated over what he considered to be lax medical treatment accorded the sick. "The hospital fare and treatment wretched--filthy and overrun with vermin--no proper food allowed and none allowed to be purchased by us for the sick."²⁸³

As conditions deteriorated, a ray of hope slowly appeared. Early April brought a modest improvement in prison life. Rations were increased and the sutler's store reappeared. Trimble's comments about outlasting the Federal prisoners in respect to endured hardships seemed to be partially true. Now the prisoners of Johnson's Island enjoyed more articles of comfort, yet at a high cost. Purchasable items included stationary, tobacco, potatoes, cabbage, apples and dried fruit. The filth of the prison yard remained, but much to the satisfaction of Trimble, medical care improved.²⁸⁴ As Trimble noted: "Since Dr. Everman, assistant Surgeon put in charge, new equipments supplied in full, and cleanliness produced."²⁸⁵ Basic survival had become more certain, while some of the immense suffering had

²⁸³ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 19.

²⁸⁴ Clark, Histories of Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina, IV, 676; Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 19.

²⁸⁵ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 19.

been ameliorated.

Likewise, April brought a resumption to the practice of special exchanges. Although special exchanges were viewed as unjust by many prisoners, because they often passed over a longer for a shorter internee, it still represented a welcome sign to the hard-pressed captives. On the 22nd, 156 sick and wounded officers left the island. Trimble's name appeared on the roster of those being exchanged. Yet soon thereafter he noted: "From some influence, it was stricken off and I retained here. It was a disappointment, but I bear up in the prospect of a general exchange soon."²⁸⁶

As Trimble returned to an optimistic outlook about the future, he remained convinced that an escape must be attempted if the sufferings of the many were to be alleviated. Only one avenue remained open and he delighted in trying it.

In the past, Trimble had contacted reliable people to suggest a combined prison escape. Now he proposed an uprising by the prisoners while outside aid provided secure passage to freedom. A Baltimore lady, Mrs. P. C. Martin, relayed Trimble's ideas to Confederate authorities. At Trimble's request, all future correspondence between the conspirators would be conducted through the personal columns of the New York Herald. At the beginning of November 1863,

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

Trimble and his colleagues received an important message in the Herald. It read: "A. J. L. W. fully appreciated his solicitude. A few nights after the 4th of November a carriage will be at the door, when all seeming obstacles will be removed."²⁸⁷ Trimble and his party waited. Soon another message appeared that cancelled the attempt. At this juncture the issue remained until April, 1864, when again a message hinted at an outside rescue attempt.

The escape attempt once again gained momentum. As Trimble struggled to coordinate its strategy, he recorded further abuses visited upon the prisoners. In the process of special exchanges, he noted: "Our sick were kept from 2 a.m. to 6 outside in a rain, undergoing a search and receiving money. Many will die on the way as their anxiety to get off induced them to get out of sick beds." To this he added: "The mortuary list shows over 200 deaths--one half of whom at a low estimate died for want of clean beds, medicines and proper attention. Many cases are known where persons died of fever, and delirious, who had but a log of wood for a pillow."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁷ S.H.S.P., XXIII (1895), 286.

²⁸⁸ Trimble, "Civil War Diary," 19.

As time progressed, those who had shown a reluctance to escape now clamored for such an attempt. Trimble had a full consensus backing his efforts. Nevertheless, several problems confronted Trimble as he prepared for the final breakout. The infiltration of spies within the prison populace made communication among the organization members treacherous. A standard rule was adopted, that no conspirator discussed the topic, even to a close associate. Thus, Federal authorities were denied any access to valuable information. In corresponding with the outside, the task proved much easier. Trimble noted: "The system of communication between those of us in prison and those operating on the outside was so complete that we had no difficulty in getting out these advertisements, and of course no trouble in buying the New York Herald which would contain the replies."²⁸⁹

Soon an important message appeared in the Herald. It reported an outside rescue attempt to be imminent. As Trimble recalled: "Through this medium we were finally informed that we were to be released on a certain day in July, and that the signal for us to help ourselves was to be the opening of fire upon the Island from a boat in the bay, and that we would by keeping a lookout, be apprised of the beginning of the movement by the appearance of a steamer upon the side

²⁸⁹ Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864, 3.

of the Island, which was to take us ashore as soon as the assault our friends were to make from the outside was successful."²⁹⁰

This endeavor obviously depended on the seizure of the Federal gunboat Michigan, the only warship on the lake. Trimble and his men busied themselves with last-minute preparations and anxiously sought the eventful day.

With each passing day, a restlessness seethed inside the prison populace. This feeling swelled until a few days before the appointed date given for the escape. Trimble made sure that the signal for the escape would not pass unnoticed. He recalled: "One side of the stockade ran down into low ground, and by posting a man in the upper tier of bunks where we slept, one could see out over the lake, on that side of the Island the steamer which was to be the signal apprising us that the movements of our release had begun and that friends were near at hand."²⁹¹

When the day arrived, all who knew of the scheme listened attentively for the lookout to give the signal whereby the prisoners would spring upon their unsuspecting guards. Excitedly Trimble awaited the expected call to arms. The hours passed, and Trimble's patience drew short. By dusk he

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 3-4.

knew that something had gone wrong. That night Trimble slept uneasily and the next day eagerly sought the Herald.

The Herald provided answers to Trimble's queries.

"When we got it we found in the accustomed place among the personals the information that there had been a failure to accomplish the object sought on that day but that the plan was only delayed not abandoned and that another day would soon be fixed and the attempt renewed."²⁹²

Trimble's active leadership in agitating for reforms within the prison did not subside. When shootings at innocent prisoners occurred, Trimble forcefully protested to Federal authorities over the gross barbarity. In a letter dated July 24, 1864, Trimble vented his anger at the new camp commandant, Col. Charles S. Hill. Trimble began by asserting: "This shooting business, Colonel, has, you may not be aware, gone on quite actively during the last week and without any provocation--six shots fired on the night of the 15th and 16th, one on the 19th, one on the 22nd and the more successful one last night inflicting [two woundings]." Trimble next reminded the Colonel of his duty to provide safety for the prisoners and questioned this officer's own involvement in the affair.

²⁹² Ibid., 4.

Then Trimble turned to the latest shooting episode. He stated: "We have proof that at the time two sentinels were talking together, and one said, 'I have had no shot yet, let me have a chance at the damned rebel.'" At this Trimble said: "Who may attempt to comment on the atrocity of such conduct?"

Trimble concluded his discourse. "I gravely tell you, [the random shooting of prisoners] must be stopped--we have borne it in silence as as long as we intend to do and if we get no satisfaction that it shall be discontinued, we will seek redress from authority to which you are responsible and from our Government--not just possibly to protect us, or to retaliate our own way."²⁹³

Trimble's boldness acted as a stabilizing influence among the inmates and prompted a Federal investigation into the reported misconduct. After a Federal commission had examined the grounds of the prison yard at Johnson's Island, they rendered an official verdict. The report found most of Trimble's charges groundless and would not concede that any wrongdoing had been perpetrated on the part of the prison authorities.²⁹⁴ With such a decision reached, the issue faded.

²⁹³ Isaac R. Trimble to Charles S. Hill, July 24, 1864, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives.

²⁹⁴ O.R., Ser. II, VI, 900-1.

ed from public view.

Meanwhile, the planned escape matured. Confederate authorities selected a new date for the rescue mission. Trimble recalled: "Finally the 19th of September 1864, was fixed as the day upon which the attempt to capture the gunboat Michigan was to be made and we were to be released."²⁹⁵ All the necessary measures were again adopted by the prisoners to guarantee the event's success. As they waited, a high state of excitement grew. The lookout stared longingly at the distant horizon, while Trimble made a last-minute check to see that everything remained in order.

As the day progressed, tensions mounted. In afternoon the lookout reported a sighting. Slowly the little steamer made its way toward the island. Soon a name could be read across its bow. Trimble recounted: "It was the Philo Parsons, and it was in the hands of our friends. Eagerly, yet without seeming interested, we watched every movement of that vessel, momentarily expecting the boom of the cannon that was to announce the fact that the Michigan [anchored off the island] had been captured by our friends and its guns turned upon the Federal force guarding us."²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864, 4.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

The signal cannon orchestrating the prison uprising did not sound, and a short time later the Philo Parsons steamed away. In disbelief and frustration, Trimble watched. Quickly prisoners began murmuring to themselves over the reasons for the ship's departure. Trimble stated: "We knew that again there had been a failure, but why, whose fault it was of whether there was still another effort to be made, we could not tell."²⁹⁷ As darkness descended, Trimble and his fellow comrades prepared themselves for a restless night, all the while wondering what had gone wrong in the intended rescue attempt.

The next day, they sought the Herald in search of answers. In its pages a message stated that there had again been a failure. A feeling of disgruntlement enveloped Trimble as he read the printed reply.

What little hope remained for an escape suddenly foundered with Federal intervention. The use of spies and informers strongly indicated a conspiratorial element among the Johnson Island prisoners. The Philo Parsons episode only heightened this suspicion. To counteract such a danger, Trimble and other suspected general officers a few days later, were deported to Fort Warren.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

Trimble's transfer to Fort Warren, in Boston harbor, did not curtail his representative role concerning the plight of Confederate prisoners. Instead, his position as spokesman became enhanced through outside forces. Being a sound critic demanding prison reform, Trimble's aspirations for improved living conditions coincided with that of Federal and Confederate authorities. Both of these governments continually toyed with the notion of sending much-needed supplies to ailing soldiers incarcerated by the enemy. Discussions over this topic took place informally for nine months between agents of exchange. Then it stagnated until mid-October 1864, when Gens. Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant discussed the issue. After a month's negotiation, a tentative agreement was reached. Such items as food and clothing would be transported by each government and distributed among the needy prisoners. In addition, the agreement stressed that "government supplies were consigned to to officers of the respective parties, those representing the Confederate authorities at the North being Generals Trimble and Beall, and those representing the Federal authorities at the South being General Hays and Colonel Wild. All these officers would be granted paroles to enable them more efficiently to discharge their duties."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ S.H.S.P., X (1882), 327.

The agreement proceeded to take shape in the following weeks. On November 11, the Confederate agent of exchange, Robert Ould, wrote Gen. Grant to elaborate on Trimble's duties. He stated: "Major-General Trimble, now at Fort Warren, has been selected as the Confederate officer to whom the consignment shall be made at New York, who will there make the necessary and proper arrangements for the sale of the cotton, and the purchase of the articles needed by our prisoners. In the event of the disability of Major-General Trimble, Brig. Gen. William N. R. Beall is designated as his alternate."²⁹⁹

As the winter months descended, the Confederate authorities worked feverishly to finalize the relief effort. In accordance, 1,000 bales of cotton were loaded aboard a ship in Mobile for passage to New York, then the unexpected happened to Trimble. Many within the Federal government remembered his acts of sabotage in Baltimore and feared his temporary freedom in the North. On November 16, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton enumerated this suspicion to Gen. Grant. "It is objectionable on several grounds to let General Trimble have any parole, or trust, or indulgence in relation to supplies for prisoners, or any other purpose. He cannot be trusted, and is the most dangerous rebel in our

²⁹⁹ O.R., Ser. II, VII, 1117.

hands. General Beall is believed to be unexceptionable, and may be designated as the officer or agent under your arrangement with Mr. Ould."³⁰⁰

With this objection, Trimble's chances of helping his fellow comrades fell apart. Not knowing of the Federal decision to exclude him from the provisioning process, Trimble on November 11 sent an urgent letter to Grant. "I ask you the favor of doing what you can with propriety to procure for me permission to associate with six or more Confederate officers (among them General W. N. R. Beall) 'on parole,' to aid in effecting the satisfactory execution of the business."³⁰¹ With disappointment, Trimble noted the Federal animosity and made one last attempt at salvaging the designated position promised him.

On December 5, Trimble wrote Confederate authorities in an endeavor to secure his release. He addressed Robert Ould over the impropriety of the Federal act to deny him his position. "If I was nominated, or appointed by you, and General Beall to take my place in case of disability, or other cause preventing me from doing the duty, then this selection is contrary to the spirit of the proposal."³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 1131.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 1164.

³⁰² Ibid., 1192.

Trimble frantically hoped that Ould could intercede on his behalf. Yet when Federal authorities remained adamant. Trimble begrudgingly abandoned his role as prison spokesman. The length of his internment, sickness in health and poor diet compelled him to choose a drastic measure to insure his survival. In a despondent mood, Trimble once again wrote Confederate authorities. "I am heartily worn out with prison life and as eight or nine of our general officers have been exchanged since I had been in prison, I wish to make an effort (never before made by me) to effect an exchange. I propose to ask to exchange me for another [Yankee] officer of equal rank or for his equivalent."³⁰³ Trimble's precarious health had temporarily won the upper hand over his strong resolve to resist.

Three long and excruciating months elapsed before Trimble's freedom became certain. During that time, his physical condition remained feeble and delicate. Only with the favorable exchange of Trimble for two Federal generals--George Crook and Benjamin F. Kelley--did prolonged imprisonment finally end.

³⁰³ Isaac R. Trimble to W. R. Lee, Dec. 9, 1864, Trimble Papers, in the possession of William C. Trimble, Baltimore.

On March 10, 1865, Trimble left the drab surroundings of Fort Warren for City Point, Va. Happily he acknowledged his parole and hoped he soon would be healthy enough to join the Confederate army in the field. After being processed at City Point on March 15, Trimble set out in an ambulance under a flag of truce toward the Confederate lines. Along the way, he later reported to Secretary of War John C. Breckinridge that he heard a garrulous ambulance driver say the Federal IX Corps had crossed the northern shore of the James River that morning.³⁰⁴ Trimble traveled to a private residence in Richmond to seek recovery from his illness.³⁰⁵

With a proper diet and plenty of rest, Trimble steadily regained his health. But as he did, so the end of the Confederacy loomed ominously close. Quite unexpectedly, on April 2, Trimble found himself caught up in the mass evacuation of Richmond. Knowing his place to be with the army, in its hour of greatest danger, he set out to locate Lee. As the Army of Northern Virginia retreated westward, so did Trimble in pursuit. Unfortunately, by April 9, Trimble had reached Lynchburg where he heard of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. Trimble vacillated before formally surrendering on

³⁰⁴ O.R., XLVI, Pt. 2, 1313.

³⁰⁵ He most probably went to Senator James Mason's house. See McHenry Howard, Recollections of a Maryland Confederate Soldier, 1861-1866 (Baltimore, 1914), 359.

April 16 to Federal forces. The war had finally drawn to a
unhappy close for the aging warrior.

Chapter VI

THE PAST BEFORE HIM

Once civil war ended, Trimble returned to his beloved city of Baltimore. There he reunited with his wife and two sons. Trimble established a residency both in Baltimore city and county. He spent the hot summer months at eloquent "Ravenshurst," a 38-room mansion in Dulaney Valley, and the cold months at a neat home located on Maryland Avenue. As he attempted to re-acclimate himself with civilian life.

An immediate concern involved economic recovery from losses sustained during the war. Much of the family savings were gone. However, Trimble's hallmark features of a strong resolve and determination again availed themselves. He unhesitatingly returned to his old post as a civil engineer. In this venture he proved successful by achieving consultation positions with waterworks and various railroads.³⁰⁶ Through hard work and constant assertiveness, Trimble's economic status again rose to a healthy level.

Only in the realm of insurance did Trimble's business acumen falter. Joining in a partnership with ex-President Jefferson Davis and Wade Hampton, the three endeavored to

³⁰⁶ George W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, from Its Establishment, in 1802, to 1890 (Boston, 1891), 286.

develop a large insurance firm. Success proved evasive and only marginal profits resulted.³⁰⁷ In spite of this poor business performance, Trimble retained his sound economic position until his death.

As the economic picture fluctuated, Trimble's interest increasingly centered on the legacy of the Confederacy. He had fought and suffered the hardships of battle; his belief in the Confederate cause's justness had reached unshakeable proportions. Being the second oldest and highest ranking Confederate officer from Maryland, Trimble's selection as spokesman for the defense of Southern principles appeared quite natural. Trimble did not shy away from the tedious aspects of such a job. Instead, he asserted himself usefully.

Trimble's first honorary position of upholding the Confederate cause came soon after the struggle ended. On January 19, 1866, Trimble accepted the presidency of the Society of the Army and Navy of the Confederate States in Maryland. As its founding president, Trimble pursued a multitude of functions. These included coordinating banquets and reunions to commemorate Maryland's military role in the civil war, decorating and maintaining the graves of fallen comrades, establishing a soldiers' home for maimed veterans, and pre-

³⁰⁷ Isaac R. Trimble Papers, in possession of William C. Trimble, Baltimore.

serving historical "truths" about the Confederacy. In these duties, Trimble performed so remarkably well. A building at the Pikesville soldiers' home and a veterans camp were both named in his honor.

With the demise in 1870 of Gen. Robert E. Lee, an association committed to honor his memory began. The organization officially became known as the "Lee Memorial Association." Its objects were to collect revenue for the erection of a statue of Lee in Richmond and to decorate his grave site in Lexington. Trimble and other respected Confederate soldiers gathered at the First Presbyterian Church in Richmond and devised common strategy as well as elected officers. Trimble became representative for the state of Maryland.³⁰⁸

After a rigorous campaign of fund-raising, the association achieved its goal. The noted sculptor Edward V. Valentine produced a statue of Lee asleep on his headquarters cot. Trimble and an entourage of Maryland veterans attended the unveiling ceremony in Lexington, Va. A prideful spirit stirred inside Trimble as he noted the impressive resting place of Lee and remembered that general's gallant grace upon many a distant battlefield. Trimble thought that with such historic markers dedicated to the Confederate past, fu-

³⁰⁸ S.H.S.P, XI (1883), 390; XVII (1889), 189-90.

ture would remember the efforts of their forefathers. The Confederacy's ideas would endure and survive as long as the flame were kept alive.

As Trimble pursued his business and societal interests, many former Confederate figures visited his home. Both Wade Hampton and Jefferson Davis were familiar faces at Ravenhurst. "Winnie Davis, daughter of the Confederate president, planted a tree in the front yard of the place and, while on a visit, General Hampton gave a 'Martha Washington' cup and saucer to one of the general's numerous small relations."³⁰⁹ The leisure hours passed in enjoyable fashion, with Confederate veterans reminiscing into the early-morning light about past deeds during the "War Between the States."

Trimble's presence at Ravenhurst in the 1870s often bordered on the strident. His great-grandniece, Minna Reynolds, remembered his conduct: "The general was rather overwhelming. He wore a frown most of the time and on weekdays he wore a peg leg which made a hollow tap-tap sound when he marched down the boardwalk to the orchard to court martial us for eating green apples. On Sundays he let Johnson, a fine-looking old colored man, who had been his 'body servant' during the war buckle on his very best leg. Johnson would open the door of the general's dressing room and

³⁰⁹ "Ravenhurst," The Sun Magazine, May 31, 1981.

give us a full view of the Sunday leg, made of cork and strips of thin wood, and garter- like buckles and a most elegant boot on the foot; and this for us was a shivering joy, for we knew that Uncle Trimble lost his leg in the war."³¹⁰

Trimble's thoughts often returned to past battles. Miss Reynolds commented again: "The Civil War was terribly real to me on one of those summer nights when the general, in his recurrent nightmare of Pickett's Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg, let forth the Rebel yell in full voice to echo through the peaceful valley."³¹¹

In idleness, Trimble's mind often wondered back to the battles of the war. He seemed always hoping to correct previous errors committed and rekindle friendships with fallen comrades.

Trimble grew older, but he continued to possess a military bearing characterized by an erect carriage and well-knit frame. He had a full round face ringed by gray whiskers cut in Burnside fashion. He spoke, in a clear and convincing manner. When granting interviews on the Civil War, he repeatedly warmed to the theme and seemed in the midst of the scenes he was describing.³¹² Trimble remained a

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid.

diehard rebel and continually espoused the virtues of the Confederacy.

In 1879 tragedy struck. His second wife, Ann, died. Her departure seemed to spark a restlessness in Trimble. The joyous days of Ravenshurst now disappeared as Trimble sought solace through work.

He traveled extensively in his last years. Attending two West Point reunions in 1884 and 1887, being present for a multitude of Southern Historical Society meetings, and witnessing the unveiling of the "Stonewall" Jackson monument in Richmond. While on a visit with relatives in Ohio, in December, 1887, Trimble caught cold. His highly busy life suddenly came to a standstill.

The days passed, and Trimble's condition worsened. He struggled home to Baltimore. After a few short weeks, his cold developed into pneumonia. On Friday, December 30, 1887, Trimble's condition deteriorated to a life threatening state. For four days, Trimble's life hung in the balance. With each new dawn, Trimble's vital signs weakened. As Trimble lapsed into a deeper coma, the visions of the Civil War became apparent. "In the last hours of his life Gen. Trimble's mind wandered away from his surroundings, and was busy with the thrilling events of the field. His last words

³¹² Isaac R. Trimble, The Conspiracy of 1864: The Attempt to Relieve Rebel Prisoners in the West, (n.p., n.d.), 5.

were orders to one who had been his subordinate. 'Keep steady; keep steady!'"³¹³ At 5:15 p. m., January 2, 1888, Trimble breathed his last.

With the announcement of his death, the city of Baltimore went into mourning. Elaborate burial plans materialized. Even those who could not attend the funeral offered high praise for the deceased. Congressman W. H. F. Lee commented that Trimble personified "the able soldier and gallant gentleman." Bradley T. Johnson credited Trimble as being "a brave soldier, a true citizen and an able man." Perhaps Jubal A. Early summarized Trimble best when he said: "Trimble was one of the foremost soldiers of the Army of Virginia."³¹⁴

During the morning hours of Wednesday, January 4, Trimble's casket lay in the parlor of his grandson's home. Here a few old friends came to gaze upon his remains and to bid him farewell. The casket bore a simple design, with a silver plate attached, giving his name, date of birth and death. The only other decorations consisted of a flower pillow and a and cross.

³¹³ "General Trimble's Funeral Arrangements," The Sun, Jan. 4, 1888.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

When the visitation closed, the pallbearers took their respective places. Colonel J. Lyle Clarke, Maj. R. C. Hoffman and J. T. M. Barnes, Capt. George W. Booth, Theophilus Tunis, N. Lee Goldsborough, Gustav Lurman and Raleigh C. Thomas bore the casket to the hearse. Wearing the badge of the Society of the Army and Navy of the Confederate States and a black crape on their left arms, they proceeded to walk on either side of the hearse.³¹⁵

When the service at Emanuel Church concluded, the funeral procession moved to Greenmount Cemetery. At the family vault, Bishop A. M. Randolph read the last rites.

As Trimble would have wished, famous Confederate figures such as Gens. Joseph E. Johnston, Cadmus M. Wilcox, John W. Daniel, Alfred M. Scales and George G. Steuart were present for the final rites.

Trimble's military exploits would long be admired by these seasoned veterans. His dash and daring on the battlefield had earned him admiration. By a strong resolve and dedication to purpose, Trimble had achieved a sacred honor as champion of the Confederate cause. His bravery remained unsurpassed, to be similarly admired by future generations.

³¹⁵ "An Old Hero Laid to Rest," The Sun, Jan. 5, 1888.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Manuscripts

- Baltimore, Maryland. Isaac R. Trimble Papers, in the possession of William C. Trimble.
- Baltimore, Maryland. Maryland Historical Society. Manuscript Division. Isaac R. Trimble Papers.
- Washington, D.C. National Archives. War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109. Isaac R. Trimble Papers.

Primary Sources

- Ambrose, Stephen E. Duty, Honor, Country; A History of West Point. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966.
- Booth, George W. Personal Reminiscences of a Maryland Soldier in War Between the States, 1861-1865. Baltimore, Maryland: Press of Fleet, McGinley & Co., 1898.
- Caldwell, J. F. J. The History of a Brigade of South Carolinians, Known First as "Gregg's" and Subsequently as "McGowan's Brigade". Philadelphia: King & Baird, Printers, 1866.
- Carter, Charles F. When Railroads Were New. New York: H. Holt & Co., 1910.
- Clark, Walter, ed. Histories of the Several Regiments and Battalions from North Carolina in the Great War, 1861-1865. 5 vols. Raleigh, North Carolina: E. M. Uzzell, 1901.
- Confederate Veteran. 40 vols. Nashville, Tennessee: Confederate Veteran Association, 1893-1932.
- Cullum, George W. Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy, at West Point, New York, from Its Establishment March 16, 1802, to the Army Reorganization of 1866-67. 2 vols. New York: Houghton & Mifflin Co., 1868.
- Douglas, Henry Kyd. I Rode with Stonewall. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940.

- Forman, Sidney. West Point: A History of the United States Military Academy. New York: Columbia University Press, 1950.
- Freeman, Douglas Southall. Lee's Lieutenants. 3 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944.
- Goldsborough, William W. The Maryland Line in the Confederate Army, 1861-1865. Baltimore, Maryland: Press of Guggenheimer, Weil & Co., 1900.
- Hamlin, Percy G., ed. The Making of a Soldier: Letters of General R. S. Ewell. Richmond, Virginia: Whittet & Shepperson, 1935.
- Henderson, Lillian. Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia, 1861-1865. 5 vols. Hapeville, Georgia: Longino & Porter, 1955-58.
- Howard, McHenry. Recollections of a Maryland Confederate Soldier, 1861-1866. Baltimore, Maryland: Williams, & Wilkins Co., 1914.
- Johnson, Allen, ed. Dictionary of American Biography. 22 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1946-1958.
- Jordon, Weymouth T., Jr. North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster. 6 vols. Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1977.
- King, Alvy L. Louis T. Wigfall, Southern Fire-eater. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970.
- Manakee, Harold R. Maryland in the Civil War. Baltimore, Maryland: The Garamond Press, 1961.
- McDonald, Archie P., ed. Make Me a Map of the Valley: The Civil War Journal of Stonewall Jackson's Topographer. Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1973.
- McKim, Randolph. H. A Soldiers Recollections. New York: Longsmans, Green, & Co., 1911.
- Newman, Harry W. Maryland and the Confederacy. Annapolis, Maryland: Published By Author, 1976.

Nineteenth Annual Reunion of the Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy, At West Point, New York, June 11th, 1888. East Saginaw, Michigan: Evening News Printing & Binding House, 1888.

Nye, Wilbur S. Here Come the Rebels! Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965.

Oates, William C. The War Between the Union and the Confederacy and Its Lost Opportunities, with a History of the 15th Alabama Regiment and Forty-eight Battles in which It was Engaged. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1974.

Paxton, John G., ed. The Civil War Letters of General Frank "Bull" Paxton, C. S. A. Hillsboro, Texas: Hill Junior College Press, 1978.

Poor, Henry V. History of the Railroads and Canals of the United States of America. New York: J. H. Schultze & Co., 1860.

Reports of Confederate Military Operations during the Rebellion, 1860-1865. Washington, D.C.: War Publications Office, 1881.

Robertson, James I., Jr., ed. Proceedings of the Advisory Council of the State of Virginia, April 21-June, 19, 1861. Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1977.

Sheperd, Henry E. Narrative of Prison Life at Baltimore and Johnson's Island, Ohio. Baltimore: Commercial Printing and Stationary Co., 1917.

Southern Historical Society Papers. 52 vols. Richmond, Virginia: Southern Historical Society Association, 1876-1959.

Thomas, Henry W. History of the Doles-Cook Brigade. Atlanta, Georgia: Franklin Printing & Publishing Co., 1903.

Trimble, John F. Trimble Families of America. Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Co., 1973.

Trimble, Isaac R. Report of the Engineers on the Reconnoissance and Surveys made in Reference to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Baltimore, Maryland: W. Woody Printer, 1828.

Report of the Engineer [Isaac Trimble] Appointed by the Commissioners of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, On the Subject of the Maryland Canal. Baltimore, Maryland: Lucas & Deaver Printers, 1837.

The Replies of I. R. Trimble to the Inquiries Propounded to Him, by Samuel M. Felton, Esquire, before the Committee of Investigation, of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad Company, Appointed Under a Resolution of the Board of Directors, Together with the Report of the Committee. Baltimore, Maryland: F. A. Hanzsche, 1854.

Investigation into the Alleged Official Misconduct of the Late Superintendent of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad Company. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Press of J. H. Bryson, 1854-55.

The Conspiracy of 1864: The Attempt to Relieve Rebel Prisoners in the West. n.p.

War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies. 70 vols. in 127. Washington, D.C.: Office of Government Documents, 1880-1901.

Warner, Ezra J. Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1964.

Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1959.

Secondary Sources

Bigelow, John, Jr. The Campaign of Chancellorsville: A Strategic and Tactical Study. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1904.

Brown, George W. Studies in Historical and Political Science. Baltimore and the 19th of April, 1861. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1887.

Casler, John O. Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1981.

Chambers, Lenoir. Stonewall Jackson. 2 vols. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1959.

- Chandler, Alfred D. The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1977.
- Cleaves, Freeman. Meade of Gettysburg. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960.
- Coddington, Edwin B. The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968.
- "Communication from the Mayor of Baltimore with the Mayor and Board of Police of Baltimore City," Political Pamphlets. vol. 44. Frederick, Maryland: Elihu S. Riley, 1861.
- Early, Jubal A. War Memoirs. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960.
- Eliot, Ellsworth, Jr. West Point in the Confederacy. New York: G. B. Barker & Co., 1941.
- Evans, Clement A., ed. Confederate Military History. 12 vols. Atlanta, Georgia: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899.
- Freeman, Douglas Southall. Unpublished Letters of General Robert E. Lee, C. S. A. to Jefferson Davis and the War Department of the Confederate States of America, 1862-65. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1957.
- French, Samuel G. Two Wars: An Autobiography of General Samuel G. French, Mexican War; War Between the States, A Diary; Reconstruction Period, His Experience; Incidents, Reminiscences, etc. Nashville, Tennessee: Confederate Veteran, 1901.
- Gibbon, John. Personal Recollections of the Civil War. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928.
- Hall, Charles B. Military Records of General Officers of the Confederate States of America: Commander-in-Chief, Generals, Lieutenant Generals and Major Generals. Austin, Texas: Steck Co., 1963.
- Hamlin, Percy G. "Old Bald Head (General R. S. Ewell): The Portrait of a Soldier. Strasburg, Virginia: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1940.

- Hassler, Warren W., Jr. Crisis at the Crossroads: The First Day at Gettysburg. Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1970.
- Henderson, George F. R. Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War. 2 vols. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902.
- Hood, John B. Advance and Retreat. Personal Experiences in the United States and Confederate States Armies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959.
- Jackson, Mary A. Memoirs of Stonewall Jackson. Louisville, Kentucky: CourierJournal Job Printing Co., 1895.
- Johnson, R. U. and Buel, C. C., ed. Battles and Leaders of the Civil War. 4 vols. New York: The Century Co., 1887-89.
- Johnston, Joseph E. Narrative of Military Operations Directed, During the Late War Between the States. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959.
- Journal of the Military Service Institution. 61 vols. New York: Published by Institution, 1879-1917.
- Krick, Robert K. Lee's Colonels: A Biographical Register of the Field Officers of the Army of Northern Virginia. Dayton, Ohio: Morningside Press, 1979.
- Long, A. L. Memoirs of Robert E. Lee: His Military and Personal History. New York: J. M. Stoddart & Co., 1887.
- Longstreet, Helen D. Lee and Longstreet at High Tide. Gainesville, Georgia: Published by Author, 1904.
- Longstreet, James. From Manassas to Appomattox. Memoirs of the Civil War in America. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960.
- McClellan, H. B. I Rode with Jeb Stuart. The Life and Campaigns of Major General J. E. B. Stuart. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958.
- Meade, George G. The Life and Times of George Gordon Meade. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.
- Our Living and Our Dead. 4 vols. Raleigh, North Carolina: Southern Historical Society, 1874-76.

- Schildt, John W. Roads to Gettysburg. Parsons, West Virginia: McClain Printing Co., 1978.
- Stewart, George R. Pickett's Charge: A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1959.
- Tanner, Robert G. Stonewall in the Valley. Thomas J. "Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign Spring 1862". Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1976.
- Taylor, Walter H. General Lee, His Campaigns in Virginia, 1861-1865, with Personal Reminiscences. New York: Press of Braunworth & Co., 1906.
- Tucker, Glenn. Hancock the Superb. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1968.
- _____. High Tide at Gettysburg: The Campaign in Pennsylvania. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958.
- Vandiver, Frank E. Mighty Stonewall. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1957.
- Wakelyn, Jon L. Biographical Dictionary of the Confederacy. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Ward, James A. That Man Haupt: A Biography of Herman Haupt. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1973.
- Washburne, George H. A Complete Military History and Record of the 108th Regiment New York Volunteers, from 1862 to 1894. Rochester, New York: E. R. Andrews Press, 1894.
- Who was Who in American Military History--The Military. Chicago, Illinois: Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 1975.
- Worsham, John H. One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry. Jackson, Tennessee: McCowattMercer Press, 1964.
- Young, Jesse Bowman. The Battle of Gettysburg. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1913.
Newspapers
- Richmond Dispatch, November 25, 1861, Richmond, Va.
- The Sun, March-April, 1861, Baltimore, Md.

VITA

William M. Grace, the son of Mr. William T. Grace and Mrs. Martha M. Hartl, was born July 20, 1956 in Springfield, Illinois. As a young adolescent, he moved to St. Louis, Missouri. Both parents still reside within the suburban metropolis of this city.

After attending Clayton High School, he entered the University of Missouri at St. Louis. In December of 1981, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. Upon graduation, he has spent the past two years as a graduate assistant in Virginia Polytechnic and State University History Department.

William M. Grace

ISAAC RIDGEWAY TRIMBLE, THE INDEFATIGABLE AND COURAGEOUS

by

William M. Grace

(ABSTRACT)

The outbreak of civil war convulsed the entire nation. Nowhere were its effects felt stronger than in the border states. The states of Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri found their inhabitants loyalties closely split over the secessionist issue. Under such an explosive situation, men of great courage and foresight were needed to safeguard the liberties of these states and avert the prospect of massive bloodshed. Isaac R. Trimble represented such a man capable of accomplishing such a task.

Trimble had long been exposed to rigorous challenges. His loyalty rested with Maryland and its right to decide its own destiny. "Isaac Ridgeway Trimble, The Indefatigable and Courageous," is a story about this man's quest to resist what he considered to be Federal tyranny and regain his state's sovereignty. No matter what the hardship or price, Trimble willingly sacrificed to see his dream materialize. With the Confederacy, Trimble placed his fortune and fought to insure its survival. Even in defeat, Trimble remained convinced of Confederate virtue and Union despotism. Throughout the remainder of his life, Trimble continued to be a diehard warrior espousing the justness of the

Confederate cause.