

THE 7TH VIRGINIA INFANTRY REGIMENT, C.S.A.

by

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CHAPTER I

A SIGH OF RELIEF, WAR

War, and all the hell this word entails, finally became preferable to debate. In 1861, the democratic process of compromise was no longer a viable concept. A sigh of relief went out across much of the South. At long last the interminable arguing was done! Volunteers flocked to the defense of the little corners of the South they called home. Some of these men would perform heroic deeds; others would desert their comrades-in-arms, and many would die. Such men as these composed the 7th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

A large part of the 7th Virginia came from the general area of northern Virginia. The counties of Culpeper, Madison, Orange and Rappahanock form a solid geographical block from this area, and each furnished men to the regiment. One lone company from Giles County in southwest Virginia joined the regiment at Camp Wigfall. Washington, D.C., furnished one company, which later was disbanded by order of General Joseph E. Johnston.¹ Albemarle and Greene counties furnished one company each.

¹Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Virginia, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Archives, Microfilm Roll 452. Hereafter cited as Service Records.

Madison County furnished two complete companies to the regiment. Company A, "Richardson Guards," enrolled in the Confederate service April 28, 1861, for a period of twelve months. Raised and captained by John Welch, the "Richardson Guards" saw service even before their official muster at Culpeper Court House. On April 23, the company received orders to go to Alexandria to augment graycoat forces in that city. The men marched twenty miles to Gordonsville then took the train to Alexandria. Several days later they returned by the same route to Madison. From here they marched twenty-three miles to Culpeper to be mustered into the Confederate army. Colonel James L. Kemper reported that the company was in a good state of discipline and drill. Company A was also one of the better armed companies. It had been equipped with modern Springfield muskets. Many of its sister companies would temporarily have to make do with old flintlock muskets that had been altered to percussion. The men continued to drill under the watchful eye of Capt. Welch and, on June 30, finally joined the 7th Virginia at Camp Wigfall.²

Madison County's other unit was not as prosperous as its sister company. Officially designated Company K, the "Madison Grays" got off to a poor start. The company was inferior in

²Ibid.

both discipline and drill to Company A. However, by June 30, Col. Kemper was able to report that "their drill and discipline is improving."³

Company K was also inadequately supplied with uniforms and possessed no accoutrements at all. Lastly, it was armed with the altered percussion muskets of inferior quality. In May, the "Grays" enrolled in Confederate service at Culpeper. From here the men travelled by rail to Camp Pickens and then marched two miles to Camp Wigfall. Captain William Lovell understandably had difficulty in getting the company both outfitted and in good spirits.

Rappahanock County also contributed two companies to the regiment. The "Rappahanock Guard" soon gave up its colorful title and became Company G. Captain Austin J. Walden led his men to Culpeper for the muster into Confederate service. Until June 27, the unit remained at Camp Henry in Culpeper County. Constant practice at drill, and even greater practice at discipline, occupied the men's attention. On June 27, the "Guard" travelled by rail to Camp Pickens and then marched two miles to Camp Wigfall. Here they were assigned to the regiment commanded by Col. Kemper.⁴

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

This same county furnished another colorfully titled company to the regiment, the "Sperryville Sharp Shooters". Composed of eighty men recruited by Capt. J. Catlett Gibson, this unit remained but a brief while with the 7th Virginia. On August 7, 1861, the "Sharp Shooters" were permanently transferred to the 49th Virginia Infantry. On June 8, the company enrolled at Sperryville. On July 13, the unit reached Camp Henry at Culpeper Court House, but did not join the 7th Regiment until July 21, the day of the battle of First Manassas.⁵

The 7th Virginia lost another of its companies less than a year after the departure of the "Sharp Shooters". The "Washington Volunteers" were some of the first orphans of the war. Originally recruited in the District of Columbia, the unit became Company H of the 7th Virginia. Yet it was in terrible shape for fighting a war. Because its members had refugeeed from their homes early in 1861, they lacked all manner of equipment except altered flintlocks. This disparity in equipment was soon remedied at First Manassas. Company H lacked nearly everything except discipline and a drilling ability that, Col. Kemper noted, was its one shining asset.

⁵Ibid.

Captain Reuben Cleary led his men to Camp Wigfall by June 30, where they joined the new regiment.⁶

Company C was another northern Virginia outfit. Raised mostly in Culpeper County, the company did have a sprinkling of militiamen from neighboring Orange. Some men from the Raccoon Ford area in Culpeper were also in the unit. On April 30, Company C joined the Confederate service at Culpeper Court House. John C. Porter, a native of the county, remained as captain of the unit for only a short time. His successor was J. W. Almond of Orange. By June 30, the company was at Camp Wigfall under the watchful eye of Col. Kemper.⁷

On April 20, Capt. Thomas B. Massie led his "Washington Grays" into Confederate service at Culpeper Court House. Later to be designated Company B, 7th Virginia, this unit lacked a drill officer and so was in poor condition at the outset. Each man at enlistment received one uniform, altered flintlock musket and camp accoutrements. Composed of ninety men, Company B was somewhat larger than some of its sister units. By June 30, the "Washington Grays" were with the regiment at Camp Wigfall.⁸

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

The "Hazelwood Volunteers" were raised in a county that already had five other infantry companies to its credit. On May 28, under Capt. John Taylor, the unit enrolled in Confederate service. Thomas B. Harris succeeded Taylor and served until wounds in 1864 forced his resignation. The men were well drilled and disciplined. Army quartermasters furnished each man with black shirt, gray pants and one of those antiquated flintlock muskets. Their waistcoats and shoulder pouches were made in Culpeper while they were encamped at Camp Henry. Lieutenant Colonel A. S. Taylor reported: "All they needed to make the unit complete were enough blankets to go around."⁹

Albemarle County contributed Company I, the "Holcombe Guards". This unit was organized in May at White Hall and, on June 3, joined the Confederate army. Private Wilbur Davis stated: "The company was organized at once and started drilling."¹⁰

⁹Ibid. See also "Roster Book 1a," Confederate Service Records, 356, Virginia State Library. Hereafter cited as "Roster Book 1a."

¹⁰Wilbur Davis, "Recollections of My Life--Especially During the War, 1861-65--For My Children," Davis Family Papers, 41, Manuscripts Division, University of Virginia. See also Service Records, Roll 452. Colonel Kemper was satisfied that the men were "respectably drilled and disciplined." Ibid.; "Roster Book 1a," 376.

The members of Company I were well attired as the ladies of Albemarle County had made their uniforms before the unit left for active service. On June 21, Company I reached Camp Wigfall to join the 7th Virginia.¹¹ Capt. John J. Winn commanded the "Volunteers" throughout the war. As usual, the men initially received altered flintlock muskets. Company F, recruited from Greene County and led by Capt. J. N. McMullan, also came to join the regiment at Wigfall about this time.

The lone company from Giles County in southwest Virginia perhaps had the most colorful title. Early in May, Capt. James H. French raised the "Giles Mountain Boomers". The captain was a socially prominent man in the county who raised an even 100 men for duty. When the regiment was reorganized by law in April, 1862, Capt. French relinquished command to Capt. Joel Blackard, who was to die shortly thereafter at Frazier's Farm. The "Boomers," later designated Company D, were organized in Pearisburg, the seat of Giles County. There, in a final review before leaving for active service, the usual presentations were made. Private Joseph Bane accepted the battle flag from Miss Mary Woodrum. The pupils of Pearisburg Academy presented Pvt. J. Tyler Frazier with the company's Bible. Patriotic ladies in the area rushed to

¹¹Ibid. See also extract from diary of Pvt. Clark of Co. I. Clark gave the date as June 22. Records of the 7th Regiment of Virginia Volunteers, Virginia State Library.

complete the men's uniforms before they departed. Thus, suitably equipped for both bodily and spiritual needs, the company set out on foot for Dublin Depot.¹²

The "Boomers" arrived at Dublin about 4:00 p. m. very tired after a long dusty march. Once there, the citizens of this small hamlet treated each soldier like a hero. The men listened to several speeches and then started out on some more enjoyable activity--courting the girls. By 9:00 p. m. the men were all back in line as Col. French was expecting the train any moment. After a considerable wait and another speech, the troops entrained for Lynchburg.

In Lynchburg, after passing an inspection, the troops marched up and down Main Street several times to the utter delight of several onlookers. One man treated the whole unit to lemonade at the local pub. On May 31, the troops assembled at the train station and made ready for the ride to Manassas Junction. The men boarded old box cars that did not have any windows, but, in the words of A. L. Fry, "we got hold of an ax and soon made some." On June 1, the "Mountain Boomers" reached Manassas after twenty hours in the box cars without food or water.

¹²David E. Johnston, The Story of a Confederate Boy in the Civil War (Portland, 1914), 36. Hereafter cited as Johnston, Confederate Boy. See also David E. Johnston, Four Years a Soldier, (Beckley, 1884), 60. Hereafter cited as Johnston, Four Years. "Roster Book 1a," 351; Service Records, Roll 452.

Between June 1 and June 22, the company was in the 24th Virginia; but owing to some difficulties with Lt. Col. Harston, the unit received a transfer to the 7th Virginia. Here the "Boomers" were satisfied, as they considered both Col. Kemper and Lt. Col. Williams to be gentlemen.¹³ The unit arrived at Camp Wigfall in time to train with the regiment before the battle of First Manassas.

Farmers and men with farm-related occupations overwhelmingly composed the 7th Virginia Regiment. Nearly 62% of the men listed their occupation as farmer. These men came from rural counties such as Madison, Rappahanock and Culpeper. One all-city unit, the "Washington Volunteers," furnished the regiment with an artist, dentist, brass finisher, horse jockey, teacher, musician and gardener. The regiment also contained 25 clerks, 15 students, 14 merchants, 5 millers, 5 tailors, 5 shoemakers and 2 civil engineers. Ten men gave their occupation as "soldier." Ranging in age from 15 to 59, somewhat over 75% of the men were twenty-five or younger. Of this 75%, nearly 40% were not yet twenty-one. Under the provisions of the 1862 Conscription Act, those men over 35 years of age were discharged in April of that year. Yet only 1.5%

¹³Pearisburg Gazette, June 29, 1861. Typewritten copy in possession of James I. Robertson, Jr., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg.

of the men were over thirty. The 7th Virginia was a "young" regiment in more ways than one. Many of these boys would have four years of bloody campaigning behind them by the time they reached twenty-two.¹⁴

At Camp Wigfall (named for a Confederate general-turned-legislator), the 7th Virginia became a regiment. From early June until the first fighting took place, the companies strove to become a single, disciplined, military unit. Standing picket was a new and sometimes terrifying assignment for raw recruits. Anything that moved in the direction of the Yankee lines was apt to find musket balls whining through the night air in search of a target. Many false alarms were sounded in this manner. On one such occasion, Pvt. Joseph Bane, the company ensign, was responsible for distributing cartridges to the men upon hearing the alarm. (The troops were so new that they were not allowed to keep cartridges themselves for fear of a shooting accident.) This night Pvt. Bane rushed through camp and gave each man a handful. Someone

¹⁴Service Records, Rolls 452-63.

remarked that Bane was not giving out exact numbers, to which Bane replied: "It's no time to be counting cartridges now!"¹⁵

Bane's hurry was mistaken for fear. This proved to be unfounded, as the private was a brave and loyal soldier until killed at the battle of First Manassas. Many soldiers, in a hurry like Bane, fell into line without shoes, pants and--in some cases--even their weapons. For the new soldiers, learning came from experience.

How to cook rations that would be at least edible was a major experience for the recruits. The regiment received adequate rations of rice, beans, bread, coffee and sugar. Many men later remarked that they would gladly have eaten in 1865 what they had thrown away in the first year of the war. In the Civil War, troops were issued amounts of raw rations such as sides of beef, beans and potatoes. The assumption was that the men would know what to do with the food. Such was not generally the case. Private William Layton of Company D solved the problem of cooking several articles and possessing only one kettle by cooking everything together. Beans, peas, rice, pork and beef all constituted Layton's first stew. He was not asked to cook for his mess for a long time thereafter.¹⁶

¹⁵Johnston, Four Years, 64

¹⁶Ibid., 67.

Commander of the regiment was James Lawson Kemper, a gentleman^a of means in Madison County before the war. On May 2, 1861, he was assigned to command a regiment then being formed of Virginia volunteers. Although given the colonelcy of the regiment, Kemper had little previous military background. He was one of several civilians-turned-soldier who would do well under the discerning gaze of Robert E. Lee. Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. Williams was his second in command. Williams was a stern disciplinarian who later became colonel of the 1st Virginia. Walter Tazewell Patton was the regiment's major. He would later command the 7th Virginia and receive several citations for bravery and ability in combat. On July 3, 1863, Patton was mortally wounded in Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg. The second major was Charles C. Flowerree, who was the regiment's third and last commanding officer. He took charge of the 7th Virginia after Gettysburg and led it until April, 1865, when the entire unit was captured at Sayler's Creek. The 7th Virginia lost none of its dash and verve under either of the men who succeeded Col. Kemper.

On July 1, 1861, the 7th Virginia enrolled in Confederate service for one year. Very few of its members realized that it would be four long years before the regiment's duties

would come to an end.¹⁷ Between July 1 and the fight at Blackburn's Ford on July 18, the 7th Virginia joined a brigade composed of the 7th Louisiana and the 24th Virginia Regiments under caustic Col. Jubal A. Early. An energetic and pugnacious officer, Early led the brigade for only a short time, but he was blessed with fine regimental commanders. Colonel William R. "Buck" Terry would later command the brigade that contained the 7th Virginia and its illustrious sister units: the 1st, 3rd, 11th and 24th Virginia Regiments. Colonel Harry T. Hays was a Tennessean transplanted to New Orleans before the war. He first commanded the 7th Louisiana in Early's Brigade and later "rendered outstanding service" in the Army of Northern Virginia. Colonel James L. Kemper entered the war as colonel of the 7th Virginia and rose to brigade command before being severely wounded at Gettysburg. Destiny had marked all three of these men as real fighters.¹⁸ On July 18, the 7th Virginia marched with the brigade to Camp Walker, near Bull Run. From this point the brigade marched to the front gate of the McLean Farm and remained here until called to a support position when the fight

¹⁷Johnston, Confederate Boy, 87; Service Records, Rolls 452-63.

¹⁸Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Gray (Baton Rouge, La., 1959), 130, 169-70, 303.

opened.¹⁹ The brigade was in the rear of, and equi-distant from, Mitchell's, McLean's and Blackburn's Fords so as to be able to support any of the three that might need help.

About noon that day, Federals attacked Longstreet's brigade at Blackburn's Ford. Early received an order to relieve Longstreet's troops at this ford. His brigade moved out quickly. On the way, several artillery shots fell close to the 7th Virginia's line of march. At this point a Negro servant, Bob (owned by the brothers Joe and Sam Shannon of Company D), took to his heels. Bob had bragged how he could whip Yankees too, so his flight amused the men in the ranks and provided a temporary relief. Some soldiers remarked that Bob "made better time than a horse."²⁰

On the way to Blackburn's Ford the men of the 7th Virginia passed some walking wounded from the 1st Virginia. The untried troops stared nervously at gaping wounds and pale drawn features. This provided an introduction to the horrors they were about to face. On the way up to the line, Pvt. John W. East doubled over and complained of stomach pains.

¹⁹Johnston, Four Years, 73. See also U. S. War Department (comp.), War of the Rebellion; A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. II, 463. Hereafter cited as Official Records; all references will be to Ser. I.

²⁰Johnston, Four Years, 75.

The roar of battle seemed to have afflicted some of the men with this curious malady. After the fight, East rejoined his company in perfect health. One section of the "Washington Artillery," under a lieutenant, accompanied the 7th Virginia into battle.²¹

Early's brigade came up in the rear of Longstreet's men just as the attack ended. However, heavy small arms fire still fell on the positions the Confederates had to take. Troops of the 7th Louisiana relieved the 17th Virginia and took position to the right and left of Blackburn's Ford. The men made this maneuver under a brisk fire but coolly maintained their formations. Minutes later, the 7th Virginia marched into line to the right of the ford and linked up with the right flank of the Louisianans. While completing this maneuver, the regiment came under heavy musket fire apparently directed specifically at them. The ranks momentarily broke in confusion. Several muskets fired accidentally. However, Lt. Col. Williams quickly rallied his men and led them to their positions on the bank of Bull Run.²²

²¹Ibid. In the Fall of 1861, the very renowned band of this artillery battery provided a welcome diversion for men of the 7th Virginia more than once. Robert E. Nelson to unknown person, Oct. 24, 1861, Robert E. Nelson, Sr., Papers, Duke University.

²²Official Records, II, 464. Colonel Kemper was in Richmond as a member of the Virginia legislature at this time and did not rejoin the regiment until just prior to the Battle of First Manassas.

During the advance and subsequent musketry and confusion, one amusing incident occurred. When the men first came under heavy fire, many of them flopped to the ground for safety. On the extreme end of the regimental line, Pvts. Isaac Hare and John Martin prudently dropped to the ground with Martin on the outside closest to the enemy fire. Suddenly, Martin jumped over Hare and left him on the outside. A furious Hare cursed Martin and demanded that he resume his former position.

As the day passed, Union artillery continued dropping solid shot around the 7th Virginia's position. It had been extremely hot for several days. Here and there, next to the Run, stood stagnant pools of water. Sergeant Bill Peters suddenly came upon one of the non-commissioned officers lying in one of these pools of green water with only his eyes, nose, and mouth showing. The submerged but terrified man cried out to Peters: "Oh Bill, if the _____ asks where I am, tell him here I am!"²³

Such were the actions of men new to the roar of cannon and the whine of musketry. Some reacted gallantly, while others let fear seize control of them. Some of the men were powerless to control their feelings, but others would not

²³Johnston, Four Years, 77.

fight and could not be made to go into action. The troops in the 7th Virginia were just like men everywhere, with the weak and the strong intermixed. Finally, just as the firing began to slacken, six companies of the 24th Virginia came up and formed to the left of the Louisianans.

The action ended late in the afternoon with the Union withdrawal from Blackburn's Ford. That night--the first that troops had spent on a field of battle--was an eerie one for many. Groans of the wounded drifted across the night air. Private David Johnston, a member of Company D, noted that even the hooting of an owl "made for a very disagreeable night."²⁴

The men spent all of the next day digging entrenchments on the stream bank. Early's brigade, plus the 11th Virginia of Longstreet's brigade, held the position at the ford that night and the next day. Because the 1st and 17th Virginia had borne the brunt of the Union attack, they withdrew a few hundred yards to the rear to rest. The 7th Virginia spent part of July 20 in the Blackburn's Ford lines before Early's brigade returned to a position in some pines on the road from Camp Walker to McLean's Farm. Here the men

²⁴Ibid., 79.

in Company D received packages of food and clothing from home.²⁵

On July 21, Early's brigade waited in the pines and acted as support for Longstreet's and Jones' brigades. On this day Longstreet's regiments returned to Blackburn's Ford while Jones guarded McLean's Ford. Early soon received an order to reinforce Longstreet again. He dispatched Hays' Louisianans and the 24th Virginia to Longstreet's support. Longstreet next ordered Early to take the 7th Louisiana and Virginia regiments across at McLean's Ford to silence some Union batteries. Order and counter-order: the war seemed to be that way. No sooner had Early dispatched the Louisianans than he had to recall them. The two regiments then left for McLean's Ford. It was a terribly hot day with not a breeze stirring. Extra equipment fell along the wayside as fatigue engulfed the troops.²⁶

On reaching McLean's Ford, Early received another counter-order. General P. G. T. Beauregard bade him to come at once with his brigade. Quickly Early recalled his command and, with the gallant Barksdale's Mississippians substituted for Terry's Virginians, proceeded toward the

²⁵Ibid., 80-81. See also Official Records, II, 555-56.

²⁶Ibid.

extreme Confederate left.²⁷ The march of seven miles was trying, to say the least. By now it was 1:00 p. m. As the troops half-walked and half-jogged, all excess baggage fell by the roadside.²⁸

Early's brigade marched in the rear of Mitchell's Ford toward the firing in the direction of the stone bridge. Men dropped to the ground to drink from stagnant puddles along the road. General Joseph E. Johnston met the reinforcements from the right flank and ordered them to attack the Union right. Early quickly arrived at the appointed place and deployed the Virginians in line of battle. The Mississippians and Louisianans formed on the left of the 7th Virginia, which enabled the Confederate battle line to overlap the position of the Union soldiers. At this point, Early became confused about the identity of the troops advancing against his lines. However, the uncertainty lasted

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Johnston, Four Years, 82. Inexperienced soldiers had a curious habit of loading their knapsacks with useless articles. White dress gloves and camp stools were favorites in the beginning of the war. As time passed, these fancy and heavy extras became less a fixture in the men's accoutrements. By 1863, most Confederate troops carried only the minimum essentials rolled in a blanket. The men then wrapped this improvised knapsack over one shoulder and tied it under the opposite arm.

but a moment, and one volley from his men routed the Federal skirmishers.²⁹

With a shout, the whole Southern brigade advanced. The Northerners hurriedly withdrew over the crest of the hill. As the Confederate line surged forward, Pvt. John Palmer fell a step or two behind his comrades. He later claimed that the lines bunched together and forced him to step back. In any event, Capt. French gave Palmer a whack with the flat of his sword. The surprised soldier leaped back into his place.³⁰ At the crest of the hill, one of Col. Cocke's regiments joined Early's line and the advance continued. Colonel Phillip St. George Cocke was a distinguished Virginian who won command of the 5th Brigade in time to lead it at First Manassas.³¹ The advance fought past the Matthews' and Drogan's houses. As the regiment passed the Carter house on the north side, the Federals were still in retreat. The pursuit finally ended a mile north of the stone bridge, where the regiment bivouacked for the night. Earlier in the day, Capt. Gibson's "Sperryville Sharp Shooters" joined the

²⁹Official Records, II, 557.

³⁰Johnston, Four Years, 89. In February, 1862, Palmer deserted the regiment.

³¹Warner, Generals in Gray, 56-57.

7th Virginia. That night was their first with their new comrades.³²

The 7th Virginia did not sustain great losses in the battle of First Manassas, yet their casualties were the heaviest in the brigade: 9 killed and 38 wounded.³³ For most of the Virginians, the glamor had vanished from war, never to return.

As the Federals retreated northward toward Centreville and Washington, the triumphant Confederates gave slow pursuit. The brigade followed the enemy to Centreville, where the men encamped for several days. Many of the Southerners were indignant to find handcuffs among the captured material. They felt such devices worthy only of felons, not brave foes like themselves. The brigade resumed the march toward Fairfax Court House. Here they again made camp, and the 7th Virginia quickly marched to the scene of a small skirmish with enemy scouts.³⁴

One important change for the 7th Virginia took place four days after the battle. On July 25, Longstreet's brigade was reorganized as the 4th brigade. It contained the

³²Official Records, II, 558. See also Johnston, Four Years, 89.

³³Official Records, II, 558.

³⁴Johnston, Four Years, 91-94.

1st, 7th, 11th and 17th Virginia Infantry Regiments.³⁵ The first three of these regiments served together from that point until the end of the war. A comraderie developed that served to make this brigade an excellent one.³⁶

At Fairfax Court House, the regiments of Longstreet's brigade began the tedium of camp life. Brief stints on picket duty around Munson's Hill gave the men a relief from the everyday affairs of camp. In August, while on picket on Munson's Hill, men in the 7th Virginia noted a Federal balloonist observing the Confederate lines. The appearance of this novelty intrigued the Southerners. A Confederate artillery piece soon fired on the high-flying observers, and the balloon quickly withdrew. Also in August, a couple of brisk skirmishes took place between the opposing troops in the 7th Virginia's area. On one occasion, Companies K and D under Capt. William Lovell made contact with Federal scouts. The Virginians repulsed the enemy without loss. Another fight took place the next day at Bailey's Crossroads between Companies B and D and a portion of the 2nd Michigan. Again

³⁵Ibid., 1000.

³⁶Charles T. Loeher, War History of the Old First Virginia Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond, 1884), 53. Hereafter cited as Loeher, First Virginia. In 1864, Robert E. Lee inspected some trenches held by men of this brigade. Of them he stated: "All right, I know these men, and they will do their duty." Ibid., 53.

the regiment took no losses, although several of the enemy were wounded. Major Patterson of Company B commanded this successful foray.

While in camp at Fairfax, the diet of the troops suffered from an irregular commissary department. The men had to scrounge at times to get something to eat. One principal article of food was green field corn boiled in the mess kettle. Alexander Bolton, in Company D of the 7th Virginia, ate seventeen ears at one meal. This routine of camp life and picket duty prevailed until October 16, 1861, when the regiment marched seven miles back to Centreville in preparation for winter quarters.³⁷ The move was less than pleasant for some members of the 7th Virginia. Several soldiers lost their tents and extra clothes in an accidental fire while preparing for the march.³⁸ With winter approaching, these were serious setbacks for a Confederate soldier. Clothing, and especially tents, were hard to replace in the agricultural South.

³⁷Ibid., 94-101. See also William H. Morgan, Personal Reminiscences of the War of 1861-65 (Lynchburg, 1911), 87. Hereafter cited as Morgan, Reminiscences.

³⁸George Wise, A History of the Seventeenth Virginia Infantry, C. S. A. (Baltimore, 1870), 42. Hereafter cited as Wise, Seventeenth Virginia. See also Morgan, Reminiscences, 92.

Upon arriving at Centreville, the Virginians erected temporary dwellings made of tents with chimneys at one end. These tent-houses lasted until cold weather arrived in November. To withstand the blasts of a northern Virginia winter, the men built stout log huts of various sizes. Most of these shanties were constructed of ax-cut and trimmed logs with mud daubed in the chinks to block out the wind. Some men would split other logs to make boards for a roof, but most put up tent flys for the top. Then they completed their handiwork with a chimney of mud and sticks at one end of their quarters. Crude and not very pretty, these huts were nevertheless quite comfortable.³⁹

Lieutenant Colonel Williams was again in command of the regiment, for Kemper was in Richmond attending the legislature most of the winter. Because Williams was a rigid disciplinarian, individuals many times found themselves in trouble. Drinking and camp pranks sometimes took on serious overtones, but most of the time, everyone forgave and forgot. One incident occurred in Company D while the regiment was at Centreville. Private George "Dutch" Knoll was very fastidious in keeping his extra clothes folded and placed near his bunk. Knoll was a huge man of tremendous strength, but

³⁹Bell I. Wiley, The Common Soldier in the Civil War (New York, 1952), 60-61.

unfortunately a poor sport. One day, Knoll's messmates took his neatly packed clothes and stuffed them into Pvt. George Layton's knapsack. Layton, who earlier in the year had cooked his first stew, knew nothing about the joke. Knoll came into the hut and noticed that his clothes were gone. In a great rage, he questioned all the other men about his clothes, and each man presented his own knapsack for inspection. When Layton presented his, he stared in amazement at Knoll's clothes! Only the quick intervention of his messmates saved Layton from a thrashing. Knoll and Layton were both furious, while everyone else enjoyed a good laugh.⁴⁰

Camp life, of course, was not all fun and laughter. The boredom and confinement often served to strain a soldier's complacency and good humor. Fights over trivial things erupted from time to time, after which the unfortunate squabblers generally spent a shivering night in the unheated guardhouse. The bad humor of many men showed up in their letters home. An unknown soldier of the 7th Virginia wrote to a girl friend: "I long to see you and make some plan to leave this little damned hole . . ." This citizen-soldier

⁴⁰Johnston, Four Years, 110-14.

then added: ". . . damn the first time I ever come here . . ." ⁴¹

Disease was also a constant companion to the men in the ranks, especially in winter quarters. Such present-day mild diseases as measles and mumps killed large numbers of soldiers. Men who were new to the army and living in close proximity to great numbers of other people were highly susceptible to disease. Sickness hit the country boys, who composed the bulk of both armies, especially hard. Besides measles and mumps, respiratory infections and acute diarrhea were deadly foes. ⁴² Private David Johnston of the 7th Virginia noted that five men in Company D died during the regiment's short stay at Fairfax Court House. He also observed that "the slighter, more wirey men survived better than the big husky men." ⁴³

As December came, requisitions for shoes, coats, pants and underwear came in increasing volume to Lt. William Cave, Quartermaster for the regiment. When a man wanted a particular article for his personal needs, he applied to his

⁴¹Unknown soldier in the 7th Virginia to Ann, undated letter, Bolton Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

⁴²Paul Steiner, Diseases in the Civil War: Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865 (Springfield, Ill., 1968), 10-12.

⁴³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 78.

company commander. If the need was genuine, the captain wrote out the necessary requisition and sent the soldier to Lt. Cave. The Quartermaster received three such requisitions for large amounts of clothing in the first two weeks of December. Unlike later in the war, he then had something to give the men. Boxes of clothing from home also supplemented these requisitions. As a result, the 7th Virginia was comparatively well-clothed during its first winter of war.⁴⁴

By the end of 1861, the 7th Virginia had gained an identity of its own and a feeling of kinship with its sister units. The regiment had heard the roar of battle, felt the joy of victory, and marched nearly to the gates of Washington, D. C. All of this and the war had barely begun! The next three years of this war would temper the fine cutting edge of the regiment that had its beginnings at Blackburn's Ford and First Manassas. Unknown to the troops, they would shortly be put to more arduous tasks.

⁴⁴ Requisition slips from company commanders to Quartermaster William Cave, Cave Family Papers, University of Virginia.

CHAPTER II

HIGH HOPES AND MANY DEATHS

New Year, 1862, dawned bitter and cold on the Centreville camp of the 7th Virginia. In the first week of January, the whole regiment went on picket duty near Fairfax. Although the weather was extremely cold, the men were well protected by new pants, jackets and caps. While on picket duty the men of the 7th Virginia first became aware of body lice. The "greybacks," as the soldiers called them, would be their near-constant companions for the next three years.¹

After an uneventful tour of picket duty, the regiment returned to camp, where it remained until March and active campaigning resumed. The men reluctantly endured the tedium of camp life. J. P. Perrin of the 1st Virginia wrote to his brother John: "I tell you, there is very little fun in soldiering, so far as I have seen."²

Colonel Kemper, serving in the Virginia legislature, was absent from the regiment for most of the winter. His

¹Johnston, Four Years, 118.

²J. P. Perrin to John Perrin, Mar. 1, 1862, John Perrin Papers, Virginia State Library, Richmond.

subordinate, Lt. Col. Lewis Williams, did not make things any easier for the men. He took an especially dim view of drunkenness among the troops; as a result, hung-over soldiers frequently awoke in the guardhouse. David Johnston of the 7th Virginia offered another commentary on the temptations of enforced idleness when he noted that "religious services were held all too infrequently."³

On March 8, 1862, the regiment received orders to cook three days' rations and to be prepared to move at a moment's notice. The next day the brigade moved out under the command of Brig. Gen. Richard S. Ewell, as Longstreet had been previously promoted to divisional command. Richard S. "Baldy Dick" Ewell's tenure with the brigade was short. He ultimately became a somewhat controversial corps commander in the Army of Northern Virginia.⁴ The troops marched through Gainesville, Warrenton, Amosville, Woodville and then to Culpeper. William R. Smith of the 17th Virginia noted that Culpeper was "a very pretty town with numerous muddy streets." He later stated in an almost regretful

³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 86-87.

⁴Warner, Generals in Gray, 84-85. See also Official Records, I, 527, 1029.

tone: "But there were guards at every door and crossing to prevent us straggling off in the town."⁵

Some of the men in the 7th Virginia found a whiskey still which they temporarily impressed into Confederate service. Private Johnston noted some of the men had a "good time" on the march the next day.⁶

On or about March 18, the marching column reached Orange Court House. Ned Barnes of the 11th Virginia wrote to his mother that he had arrived at Orange "after a tedious march of ten miles" with his knapsack and accoutrements "all weighing about fifty pounds each."⁷ The troops did some foraging to supplement their regular rations while on the march. Private Smith noted in his diary that "if we wanted anything to eat we stood a better chance with the poorer classes than with the rich."⁸

⁵Diary of William Randolph Smith, 17th Va., Mar. 23, 1862, University of Virginia Library. Smith was killed at Frazier's Farm. George S. Pickett continued to record the regiment's actions in Smith's diary. Hereafter cited as Smith-Pickett Diary.

⁶Johnston, Four Years, 123.

⁷Edward C. Barnes to mother, Apr. 2, 1862, Barnes Family Manuscripts, University of Virginia. Hereafter cited as Barnes MSS.

⁸Smith-Pickett Diary, Mar. 23, 1862.

The brigade camped at a spot near the town until March 23, when the troops marched to Camp Taylor. Here, at the junction of the Central and the Orange and Alexandria railroads, the brigade camped until April, when the march to Richmond commenced. While encamped at Orange, the troops had daily company and brigade drills. The men would soon need all the discipline they could muster to face the bloody weeks ahead.

An important change in brigade command came just before the troops started for Richmond. Colonel Ambrose Powell Hill was promoted to command the brigade.⁹ Powell Hill had entered the war as colonel of the 13th Virginia Infantry. His advancement to brigade command was not his last promotion. Before his death at Petersburg near the end of the war, he was to become one of Lee's most capable corps commanders.¹⁰

In the first week of April, the brigade left Camp Taylor in a driving rain and knee-deep mud.¹¹ Private Smith of the 17th Virginia noted in his diary that "of all the places on

⁹Ibid., Apr. 5, 1862.

¹⁰Warner, Generals in Gray, 134-135.

¹¹Southern Historical Society Papers, XXI (1893), 104. Hereafter cited as S. H. S. P.

this earth for mud Orange C. H. takes the lead."¹² The brigade's route lay through Louisa, Hanover and Henrico counties. This was relatively easy country to traverse, but the march was a hard one because of rain and mud. The brigade had many stragglers. On April 10, the brigade halted near Louisa Court House to allow the slower men to catch up. The next day the troops were on the march again. On April 14, the brigade reached camp near Richmond after an exhausting week of marching.¹³

The regiment remained only a short time in Richmond. Orders came on April 16 for the brigade to march at once to the landing at Rocketts and there to board transports for the Peninsula. The 7th Virginia arrived at King's Landing, about ten miles from Richmond, and then marched toward Yorktown. General John B. Magruder had been quite active in building trenches to delay the Federal advance; and on April 19, the 7th Virginia filed into these works. The troops were under sporadic shelling without suffering any loss, although Pvt. Smith was moved to remark: "Indeed it [the Peninsula]

¹²Smith-Pickett Diary, Apr. 2, 1862.

¹³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 95; Johnston, Four Years 125-26; Morgan, Reminiscences, 96.

is quite unhealthy now, owing to the numerous shells thrown upon it by the opposing armies."¹⁴

On April 23, the soldiers left the trenches for a relatively drier and safer camp two miles to the rear. Here the 7th Virginia remained while the regiment reorganized and elected new officers. On April 26, Col. Kemper was elected to continue in command of the regiment. The soldiers also elected W. T. Patton as lieutenant colonel and Charles C. Flowerree as major. Private Johnston noted that several disciplinarians were replaced in the company elections. Captain James French in Johnston's own Company D failed to retain his post. In the 17th Virginia, Pvt. Smith noted some dissatisfaction with the new conscription law that kept men between eighteen and thirty-five in the army. Smith personally approved of the law because he felt that it would prod slackers into the service.¹⁵

By April 28, the 7th Virginia returned to the Yorktown trenches. Little action occurred for a time except for a constant and deadly sniper fire. Private Smith stated in his diary that "the enemy keep a sharp look-out, for if we

¹⁴Smith-Pickett Diary, Apr. 25, 1862; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 95; Morgan, Reminiscences, 96.

¹⁵Johnston, Confederate Boy, 96-98. See also Smith-Pickett Diary, Apr. 28, 1862.

but show our heads . . . they will fire at us with their long range rifles."¹⁶ However, on May 2, the whole brigade went back into camp with but minimum casualties.

On May 3, the brigade retreated up the Peninsula as far as Lebanon Church. May 4 found the troops marching through "mud nearly knee deep." The Federals followed the retreating Virginians so close the brigade had to halt and form line of battle about 3:00 that afternoon. When no attack came, the column resumed its march. As the 7th Virginia passed by William and Mary College, an elderly lady, in full view of the passing troops, made a fervent prayer to God to protect them in the coming battles. Private Johnston noted that this made a great impression on the men of the regiment.¹⁷

May 5 dawned with the prospect of battle in the air. Like other Confederate infantrymen, Pvt. Smith dined on coffee, bread and bacon for breakfast and then made ready for battle. About 9:00 a. m., the brigade moved out on the Yorktown Road as support for Brig. Gen. Richard H. Anderson in Fort Mageruder. The troops marched through Williamsburg

¹⁶Ibid., Apr. 29, 1862. Smith also noted that he and his comrades fired back, but that "the distance is too long to be certain of killing any of the scoundrels." Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., May 4, 1862. See also Johnston, Four Years, 135.

and deposited their baggage on various porches in the town. The men then proceeded to a clump of woods in the rear and to the right of Fort Magruder. However, Anderson then reported to Powell Hill that he needed no support.¹⁸

This was not the end of the battle, only the beginning. Hill then answered a call for help from Brig. Gen. Cadmus M. Wilcox. As the brigade formed in the rear of Wilcox's troops, the men of Hill's unit came under a severe artillery fire which Hill said "was borne with all the steadiness of veterans." Soon Wilcox attacked the Federals. Hill's brigade surged forward some 800 yards in support. The 7th Virginia rushed forward and, as Powell Hill proudly noted, "dashed in with a cheer." The enemy quickly fell back under this onslaught and the Virginians fell in behind a rail fence only forty-five yards from the Federals. The rest of the brigade came up and formed with 17th Virginia on the left and the 11th Virginia on the right of the 7th. The 1st Virginia had become separated in the densely wooded area and was fighting on the right flank of the 19th Mississippi Regiment.¹⁹

¹⁸Johnston, Confederate Boy, 100; Morgan, Reminiscences, 104; Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 575-76; Smith-Pickett Diary, May 5, 1862; S. H. S. P., XXI (1893), 107.

¹⁹Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 576.

The furious clash did not stop for a moment. Next a line of Federal infantry advanced against the board fence. Colonel Kemper called Hill's attention to them and then ordered the men to fire. A destructive volley tore into the Federal ranks and left a distinct row of dead and wounded men. Nevertheless, the Federals continued to return the Confederate fire shot for shot. Hill then ordered Kemper's 7th Virginia to charge the Federal position. Hill later stated in his official report that "their gallant colonel" led his men as they "bounded over the fence" to attack the enemy.²⁰ The 11th and 17th Virginia regiments joined in this attack. The Federals retreated step by step under the constant pressure of Hill's assault.

The Federals retreated out into an open field upon which they had erected a barricade of felled trees and earth. Hill's exultant troops advanced to within thirty yards of this work (although the Confederates were still in the woods), and exchanged volleys with the enemy for two hours. Ammunition soon began to run low. Hill ordered his troops to give the enemy the bayonet. The Federal troops

²⁰ Ibid.

fled in the face of this new attack, and the 1st Virginia and several companies of the 19th Mississippi started in pursuit.²¹

The 17th Virginia halted at the Federal works and replenished its ammunition from the cartridge boxes of dead Union soldiers. The 7th and 11th regiments were very disorganized by this time. They fell back to reform and refill cartridge boxes as their comrades in the 17th Virginia had done. Hill's brigade performed yeoman service that day. The Federals lost eight artillery pieces and one flag to the Virginians--a lofty achievement in itself. Colonel Kemper, Lt. Col. Patton and Maj. Flowerree all received citation for gallant conduct in Hill's report. Private Mays, Color-Bearer of the 7th Virginia, likewise received the commendation of his brigade commander. Mays had the flagstaff shot from his grasp twice, and the flag itself received twenty-seven bullet holes.²²

The cost was heavy for such gallant conduct. The 7th Virginia lost 13 men killed and 64 wounded in the battle of

²¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 100; Morgan, Reminiscences, 105-09; Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 577; Smith-Pickett Diary, May 5, 1862; S. H. S. P., XXI (1893); 107-09. Col. Williams of the 1st Va. fell severely wounded in this pursuit.

²²Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 577. Colonel Kemper even came before the attention of the commander of the entire army, Gen. J. E. Johnston, in his report of the day's action.

Williamsburg. This was the second highest loss in the brigade behind that of the 11th Virginia. This record is only natural in that these two regiments were in the thickest of the fighting all day. The brigade remained until 7:00 p. m. on the ground it had won. The men kept busy burying the dead, removing the wounded and collecting the abandoned small arms scattered about the field. Groans of the wounded could be heard through the evening. Private Smith stated: "The shrieks and moans of the wounded made the evening air hideous."²³ That night, the 7th Virginia, along with its brigade, fell back to Williamsburg.

On May 6, the brigade fell back to Bushes Mill and camped. The day's march was a hard one. Muddy, almost impassable, roads combined with a gnawing hunger to exhaust the men. Not until May 8 did the troops receive regular rations. On May 9, the brigade arrived at Bottom's Bridge on the Chickahominy River. Here the troops camped for several days while they drilled and refitted for the battles that lay ahead. On May 15, the troops bivouacked on the Darbytown Road. Two days later, the brigade made camp at Howard's Grove.²⁴

²³Smith-Pickett Diary, May 5, 1862. See also Official Records, XI, Pt. 1, 577.

²⁴Johnston, Confederate Boy, 103; Morgan, Reminiscences, 110-18; Smith-Pickett Diary, May 6-May 30, 1862; S. H. S. P., XXI (1893), 109.

On May 31, Kemper's brigade arose early to begin the movement that led it into the battle of Seven Pines. It had been raining most of the previous day and a good part of the night. By the time the brigade got underway, streams were swollen into rivers. Progress toward the field of battle was very slow. However, by about 4:00 p. m. that afternoon the brigade was in a position in support of Gen. G. W. Smith's division, which was engaged in desperate combat with Gen. Silas Casey's Federal division. The brigade formed to the right of the road leading to Seven Pines, about three-fourths of a mile from the Federal lines.²⁵

Shortly after the brigade reached its position, Kemper received orders to attack in support of Smith. He ordered the brigade into the woods at the double quick, with his old 7th Virginia in the van. Upon entering the woods, the troops met many walking wounded leaving the battle area. As the brigade moved into the attack, it came under an increasingly heavy artillery and small arms fire. Yet the "veterans of Williamsburg" did not flinch. Finally, to the right, appeared

²⁵Johnston, Confederate Boy, 104; Morgan, Reminiscences, 121; Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 65. Colonel Kemper was now in command of the brigade though he had not yet been promoted. See Official Records, XI, Pt. 3, 569, for Lee's recommendation of Kemper for promotion to brigadier general.

the Federal camp, through which the brigade marched in column. Suddenly a tremendous fire ripped through the closely packed ranks.²⁶ Many men were killed and wounded, while others flopped to the muddy ground in search of protection from the whinning minie balls. The surprised and even terrified troops recoiled backward toward the entrenchments at the edge of the Federal camp. Here, in a muddy ditch, the men exchanged shots for two hours with Federals in the woods ahead. Finally a flank attack organized by Gen. Kemper cleared the woods of the enemy and won the day in that sector. The brigade held the captured ground until 9:00 that night, when it withdrew a short distance to the rear to bivouack.²⁷

Private Smith commented in his diary on the battlefield pilfering that took place after the fight. Through the darkness lights were seen slowly traversing the battleground from side to side. Confederate soldiers carried these lights. Some of these men were undoubtedly searching for missing comrades, "but the greater portion [was] in search of booty." The soldiers especially sought the knapsacks of dead Yankees.

²⁶Morgan, Reminiscences, 122-25. See also Alexander Hunter, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank (New York, 1905), 132-37.

²⁷Morgan, Reminiscences, 129. See also Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 65-71.

Smith noted that as the dead were examined, "if a foe, his pockets are unceremoniously rifled; if a friend, he is passed by with a sigh."²⁸ Later in the war the lack of food, and clothing especially, forced Confederate soldiers to strip the Federal dead of useful articles.

The Seven Pines fight had been brief but costly. The Federals had caught the brigade in closely packed ranks where the Confederates could be shot without being able to return an effective fire. The 17th Virginia lost 79 men, most of whom fell in the initial confusion in the camp. The 7th Virginia was at the head of the column and, in this exposed position, lost heavily.²⁹

On June 1, the brigade returned to the scene of the previous day's fight. The men formed a line of battle at right angles to the entrenchments and faced Fair Oaks, where the sounds of battle grew louder as the day passed. The Federals staged a brief counterattack upon this line to re-capture the camp, but the effort was repulsed. That night the brigade tramped six miles through mud back to camp and, at daylight, arrived at a site about three miles northeast

²⁸Smith-Pickett Diary, June 2, 1862.

²⁹Hunter, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, 137; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 104-06. This writer has not been able to ascertain the 7th Virginia's casualties, but feels they must have been heavy because of its position in the column as well as the heavy losses of the other regiments.

of Richmond. Private Smith spent the whole day washing the mud from his clothes.

On June 3, the brigade marched some two miles down the Williamsburg Road and went into camp that night and most of the next day. On the afternoon of June 4, the troops marched to a new camp about midway between Richmond and the battlefield of Seven Pines and to the left of the Williamsburg Road. Heavy rains drenched the troops. Many of the soldiers had lost their baggage, including oil clothes and other protections from the downpour.³⁰

The brigade spent a relatively quiet two weeks in camp. There were daily company and regimental drills, inspections of arms and accoutrements, and several false alarms to fall into line. Rain fell often; and when it did, the above activities (except the false alarms) were cancelled. On June 18, Pvt. Smith recorded a heavy skirmish in which the Confederates sustained 30-40 casualties. He also noted in this same entry the popularity of the game of marble shooting. Whenever there was a lull in the picket duty or a spare moment in camp, the men and officers alike could be found gathered around a circle drawn in the dust.³¹

³⁰Smith-Pickett Diary, June 2 and 6, 1862. See also Morgan, Reminiscences, 129.

³¹Smith-Pickett Diary, June 10-24, 1862; Morgan Reminiscences, 130; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 109.

While in camp, Pvt. Smith also noted some of the prices the Confederate soldier had to pay if he wanted extras to supplement his diet. Smith quoted coffee at \$1.50 per pound, sugar at 50¢ per pound, cornmeal at \$1.00 per pound and molasses an expensive \$4.00 per gallon. He also noted that writing paper and envelopes cost 5¢ each, and that newspapers were a dime.³² The Confederate private could afford few such luxuries as these on a regular basis.

The brigade had time to refit and rest while in camp, but a field report for Kemper's unit told a strange though apparently common story. On June 23, the returns showed the 1st Virginia with 100 men present and 200 men absent. The 7th Virginia had 417 present and 272 absent. The other regiments in the brigade followed this pattern. The 24th Virginia had 455 men present and an astounding 488 men absent from the ranks. The 11th Virginia was no better. Kemper's brigade had been marching and fighting for two months, and this field return showed the results.³³

On June 26, after cooking three days' rations and receiving ammunition, the brigade moved down Nine Mile Road.

³²Smith-Pickett Diary, June 10, 1862.

³³Official Records, XI, Pt. 3, 481, 615. The 24th Va. joined the brigade just after the battle of Williamsburg. The paper strength of all the regts., as stated in an Apr. 30, 1862, field return, was: 1st Va., 400; 7th Va., 700; 11th Va., 750; 17th Va., 600; 24th Va., 740.

The next day, the troops marched toward Mechanicsville, where they stayed in reserve and took no part in the fighting at Gaines' Mill. Powell Hill, their old brigade commander, did well this day by his division's capture of sixteen artillery pieces. On June 29, the brigade advanced down the Charles City Road. The next day, about fourteen miles from Richmond, the men deployed in line of battle and waited in vain for a fight.³⁴

On the afternoon of June 30, the brigade filed off to the right of the Charles City Road and formed in line of battle. Skirmishers deployed and immediately came under enemy fire, but the brigade's advance did not begin until 4:00 p. m. For about two hours, the men were under severe artillery fire. Private Johnston of Company D saw a shell fragment tear into a pocket bible in the shirt pocket of the man next to him. That small testament saved the man's life.

Kemper's brigade formed the extreme right flank of the Confederate battle line. The brigade's regiments were formed in line from left to right as follows: 24th, 7th, 1st, 11th, and 17th Virginia. Quickly the outermost

³⁴Smith-Pickett Diary, July 2, 1862. This entry was made by Fred Ebhardt because Smith was killed on June 30 at Frazier's Farm. When the diary resumed on Nov. 21, 1862, George S. Pickett was the writer.

companies of the 17th regiment were ordered to form an obtuse angle with the main line in order to guard against a flank attack. After this maneuver was accomplished, Gen. Kemper ordered the men to advance. This advance continued in good order over very broken ground until the troops began to perceive themselves almost upon the Federal entrenchments. As this feeling became general, the brigade charged at a run. The enemy lines were not as close as the men had thought; the charge served only to disorganize the troops and draw more artillery fire.

Men were falling quickly now at every step. The thick underbrush was not sufficient to stop a roundshot or a minie ball. The troops double quicked through two pieces of woods and an open field. On the way, the 17th Virginia had to sidestep a swampy area and thus got a little behind the main line. The advancing Confederates came upon a second field, where the Federals had some twelve guns with infantry support. Without hesitation, the 7th and 1st Virginia charged the Union works and carried the rest of Kemper's brigade with them. Private Johnston stated that "the brigade . . . met a shower of shot, shell, cannister, and storm of leaden bullets; it never faltered."³⁵

³⁵Johnston, Confederate Boy, 115.

Demoralized by such a stubborn attack, the Federals fled, leaving all of their artillery pieces. Unfortunately, the brigade in support of Kemper's left had not kept pace with the rapid advance. The Federals also curled around the flank companies of the 17th Virginia on the brigade's right.

Kemper's men had no choice but to retire from the field. The veterans of Williamsburg and Seven Pines did not take kindly to orders to fall back, but retreat was a necessity. The fruitless assault had been another chapter written with the regiment's blood. Captain Joel Blackard of Company D and Lt. W. W. Goodman of Company K were both killed. Adjutant E. B. Starke was killed, Sgt. Maj. Tansill and Color Bearer Mays were wounded. The latter had distinguished himself by planting the 7th Virginia's flag on the enemy guns. The regiment suffered a fourth of the casualties in the five-regiment brigade. Together with the 1st Virginia, these two units accounted for over 50% of the brigade's losses. The 7th Virginia had 14 men killed, 66 wounded and 31 captured. Colonel Patton, Lt. Col. Flowerree and Maj. Starke all received commendation for gallantry during the fight. Colonel Patton even received mention in Gen. Longstreet's official report of Frazier's Farm.³⁶

³⁶Ibid., 112-16; Morgan, Reminiscences, 113-37. Morgan fell ill just before the battle, so his account helps only to construct the events prior to the June 27 fighting. Smith-Pickett Diary, July 2, 1862. Official Records, XI, Pt. 2, 762-66; Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 76-85.

The 7th Virginia spent that night on the field and mourned its missing comrades. On the night of July 2, skirmishers brought word that the Federals were in full retreat. The next day the brigade followed in pursuit. "After a fatiguing, disagreeable, all-day march," the troops found the Federal lines drawn securely at Westover on the James River. For several days the brigade reconnoitered the enemy lines preparatory to an attack. The great hope was that the Yankees would come out from under the protection of the Federal naval forces in the James River and "fight fair." While the 7th Virginia camped in front of the Federal lines, foraging expeditions were launched against Federal supplies that were within reach. Company D escorted one of these wagon trains which came under the fire of one of the Federal gunboats. Private Johnston stated that "we fired quite a number of volleys . . . at close range," and in return the men received a severe shelling from a ship. However, there were few casualties and at length the commissary raiders returned to camp.³⁷

On July 8, the 7th Virginia, with its brigade, returned to camp near Richmond. Two days later, the brigade moved to a camp near Darbytown and remained there for over a month.

³⁷Johnston, Confederate Boy, 116-18.

As usual in camp, the inactivity and close proximity to masses of men brought sickness and death. As Pvt. Johnston noted, "there was much sickness among the men."³⁸ The heat and the swampy geography of the Peninsula was instrumental in even further reductions of the strength of the regiment. While in camp the men inspected their weapons, performed some drill and did a lot of work strengthening the trench systems surrounding Richmond.

On August 9, Gen. Longstreet ordered Kemper to put his brigade in readiness to move at a moment's notice. The orders specified that the men would cook three days' rations, leave all personal baggage in camp and carry only rations, a blanket and weapons. This news sounded ominous indeed to the men in the ranks. Fast marching and hard fighting seemed to be the only fair prospect for their near future. The men turned in their picks and shovels, left their sick at the division hospital and, on August 10, boarded railroad cars for Gordonsville.³⁹

The brigade arrived at Gordonsville that afternoon and camped two miles southwest of the village. On August 16, the troops resumed their travels in the direction of Orange

³⁸Ibid., 119. See also Wise, Seventeenth Virginia. 90.

³⁹Official Records, LI, Pt. 2, 604. Also see ibid., XII, Pt. 2, 928-29, for Lee's Special Orders #181 to Longstreet.

Court House and spent the night camped near Taylor's Farm. By August 21, the brigade had passed down the Plank Road from Orange, crossed the Rapidan at Raccoon Ford and arrived at Stevensburg, where it spent one day. The next day the men made the short march to Brandy Station. Here, on August 24, several Confederate brigades formed line of battle on the plains west of the station. Sporadic picket firing erupted, but the Federals retired without making a serious attack. By August 28, the brigade had crossed the Rapidan at Amissville and reached Thoroughfare Gap. Rations by then consisted chiefly of green field corn gathered by the men as they marched. Soldiers in the 17th Virginia pilfered local gardens as a substitute for their non-existent commissary department. The men's uniforms and shoes were falling apart after much hard use. Private Johnston noted: "It was pathetic to see the boys with feet bare and bleeding endeavoring to keep pace with their comrades."⁴⁰

On August 29, the Confederates flanked the enemy out of Thoroughfare Gap and then pushed on toward the sound of firing in the distance at Manassas. About noon the brigade halted three miles from Gainesville and immediately formed line of battle in the rear of Gen. Micah Jenkins' brigade. The 7th

⁴⁰ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 119-26. See also Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 92-62.

Virginia took position between the Warrenton Pike and the Manassas Gap railroad. Shortly after this, the brigade moved forward to a position just east of the railroad, and the 24th Virginia shifted to support Rogers' battery. Quickly the brigade changed positions again, this time to the west of the railroad and just on the outskirts of a small wooded area. Here the brigade formed line of battle, and the 7th Virginia went out in a skirmish line into a field in their front. While changing position, the men came under severe artillery fire. Yet the 7th Virginia had no casualties.

The regiment rejoined the brigade, and the entire unit started to advance toward another patch of woods some 400 yards distant. The men came under artillery fire but kept their formation. Suddenly the brigade contacted enemy troops on its right and rear. The men quickly halted; Maj. Herbert of the 17th Virginia went to see if any Confederate troops were out there. None could be found, so the troops immediately fell back a short distance. After resting here for a brief time, Gen. Thomas F. Drayton's brigade relieved Kemper's men. The troops then marched back to the east of the railroad. This brief advance and subsequent retreat ended the day for the 7th Virginia.⁴¹

⁴¹Official Records, XII, Pt. 2, 625.

On the morning of August 30, Kemper's brigade moved forward toward Manassas on a narrow country road bordered by a rail fence. Here the men rested until ordered to advance late in the afternoon. While the men waited in the road, Pvts. John Martin and A. J. Thompson nearly got into a "serious fight," only to have Col. Patton step between them. Shortly after this incident, the crash of battle sounded on the brigade's left. Quickly the men sprang to their posts and began to advance in support of Jenkins' and Hunton's brigades. As the Confederates moved toward the Chinn House, the Federals opened on them with musketry and artillery fire. The Southerners pushed past the Chinn House, with the battle getting hotter by the minute. One volley followed another. The Virginians returned the fire and charged a Federal battery supported by the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry. The brigade's momentum was irresistible as the exultant Confederates overran the battery after a short but desperate resistance.

Federal infantrymen scattered, abandoning their wounded and the regimental colors. As Capt. Joseph Hamhick of the 24th Virginia stated in his report, "the men dashed forward in splendid style." Lieutenant Colonel Skinner of the 1st Virginia was the first among the gunners, while "the valiant

Patton led the heroic 7th Virginia." During the advance, the brigade came upon a rail fence. As the 7th Virginia came to this barrier, Lt. Col. Flowerree shouted: "Up to the fence 7th regiment, and give them hell!" The brigade pursued the retreating Federals until relieved later that evening.

Longstreet's attack was brilliantly executed--but costly. The 7th Virginia lost nearly every man on the regimental command level. Colonel Patton, Lt. Col. Flowerree, Maj. Swinler, Adj. Patton and Sgt. Maj. Park were all severely wounded--the last two being permanently disabled. Captain Phillip S. Ashby led the regiment from the field. Three other captains and five lieutenants were wounded. Altogether, the 7th Virginia lost 6 men killed and 53 wounded. John Martin, who earlier had almost struck his comrade, lay dead on the field.⁴²

After the battle Pvt. Johnston went in search of trousers and shoes. He finally located a dead Federal about his size and took his shoes and trousers. The shoes were too small, so he gave them to a fellow soldier; but the trousers he kept. Unfortunately the trousers had been occupied by more

⁴²Official Records, XII, Pt. 2, 625. See *ibid.*, LI, Pt. 1, 134-36, for the reports of Capts. Hamhick and Ashby. See Johnston, Confederate Boy, 129, for Flowerree's stirring words.

than the dead soldier. Young Johnston began itching and scratching. He now had to contend with a new batch of "graybacks."⁴³

On the Sunday after the battle, the men of the 7th Virginia spent the day burying the dead and bringing in the wounded. On September 1, the regiment, along with its brigade, marched toward Chantilly. Regular rations were still scarce, as indeed they had been ever since the regiment left Richmond. Some men in the 17th Virginia obtained beef from the carcasses of cattle killed by the retreating Federals. However, at the end of the first day's march, the army commissary improved this poor state of affairs when it issued four ounces of bacon and two hardtack crackers to each man.

The brigade was not engaged in the skirmish at Chantilly. During September 3-5 the Virginians marched to White's Ford on the Potomac.⁴⁴ The brigade camped at this place for less than twenty-four hours; and when the unit crossed into Maryland, most of its regiments could muster barely a corporal's guard. This was the result of an order by Gen. Lee that all the sick and shoeless men were to

⁴³ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 130.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 130-31. See also Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 105-07.

assemble at Winchester and await the army's return. Many men turned the good intentions of the order to selfish or cowardly purposes. Doubtless many men had heartfelt convictions about waging a defensive war to achieve independence, but the end result was to reduce drastically the strength of the army. The 7th Virginia was no exception to this phenomena. Private Johnston stated that "judging other commands by my own, . . . too large a number of men remained at Leesburg, stretching the pretext to cover far more than was intended by the order."⁴⁵

On September 6, while singing "Maryland, My Maryland," the brigade waded across the Potomac and made camp that night at Buckeystown. The next day the men marched to the railroad bridge over the Monocacy River, where the unit camped for three days and witnessed the destruction of the railroad trestle. On September 10, the brigade marched through Frederick, Middletown and bivouacked near Hagerstown. While marching through Frederick, the 7th Virginia encountered "unmistakable signs of friendship." The regimental battle flag had been unfurled for the march through the town. Upon seeing the words "Seven Pines"

⁴⁵ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 131. See also Hunter, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, 274. Both men indicated that the loss to the army from this order was quite serious. S. H. S. P., XXXI (1904), 38.

inscribed on the banner, several young women proposed "three cheers for the battle flag of Seven Pines."⁴⁶

On September 14, the brigade received orders to come at once to Turner's Gap to support Gen. D. Harvey Hill's troops, who were then under heavy attack. Private Johnston noted that the day was very hot and dusty. These conditions, combined with rapid marching, caused a number of the men to collapse along the roadside.

Brigadier General Kemper had returned to the command of his brigade after Second Manassas, and Gen. D. R. Jones now commanded the division. This division hurried up South Mountain to extend Hill's lines. Kemper's and Garnett's brigades filed into position on a ridge above and to the left of the pass. The Federals immediately attacked. Battle raged for several hours. The Confederates, heavily outnumbered, nevertheless managed to contain the Federal attacks until nightfall forced an end to the fighting. The troops then withdrew "in comparatively good order to the foot of the mountain." In the 7th Virginia, Tapley P. Mays, who had carried the regimental colors with much bravery and distinction, was killed "with his flag unfurled and its staff clenched in his hands."⁴⁷

⁴⁶Johnston, Confederate Boy, 138.

⁴⁷Ibid., 139-42. See also Official Records, XIX, Pt. 1, 885, for D. R. Jones' report on the withdrawal of the troops.

The fight at South Mountain was only the beginning. The toughest, most dedicated men remained with the Army of Northern Virginia after it crossed the Potomac. The Confederate resistance at South Mountain was the initial indication that these particular rebel soldiers would "take a lot of killing."

On the night of September 14, the brigade began a march toward Sharpsburg. At noon of the following day, the men reached their destination after making an all-night march with nothing but green corn and apples to eat. The 7th Virginia took a position on the extreme Confederate right, but for two days the men marched and counter-marched to give the illusion of a larger number of troops. Actually Kemper's brigade, and its sister units, were pitifully small. The 7th Virginia, with 117 men commanded by Capt. Phil S. Ashby (Col. Patton was severely wounded at Second Manassas), was the largest unit in the brigade. The 1st Virginia was by far the smallest, with but 30 muskets.⁴⁸

On September 17, the battle of Sharpsburg opened on the Confederate left, and it was not until late afternoon that the 7th Virginia moved to fill the gap between the 24th Virginia and the other troops. The regiment took a position in the road leading from Sharpsburg to Harper's Ferry and

⁴⁸Johnston, Confederate Boy, 147.

awaited the approach of the enemy. About 4:00 p. m., the Federals drove Gen. Robert Toombs' Georgians from the bridge on the Confederate right. The Yankees then started up the small hill toward the thin line of waiting Confederates. Captain Ashby, a Mexican war veteran, calmly announced to the 7th Virginia: "Men, we are to hold this position at all hazards. If need be, we will die together here in this road."⁴⁹ The men crouched silently behind the board fence that lined the edge of the road and waited for the Yankees to approach within musket range.

The Federals sensed victory after disposing of Toombs' force. The enemy battle line smothered the grayclad skirmishers, killing or capturing all of them. Without a halt, the Federal lines pressed on up the hill. Their battle line overlapped that of Kemper's brigade. As a result, the 7th and 24th Virginia regiments broke quickly and fled into the town of Sharpsburg. Later, as the result of a battle-saving counterattack by A. P. Hill's "Light Division," the 7th Virginia was able to re-occupy its initial position.⁵⁰

The 7th Virginia hence took very little part in the battle of Sharpsburg. In the words of Pvt. Johnston, the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 150.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 153. See also Official Records, XIX, Pt. 1, 885-87.

regiment, except for its skirmishers, "did not pull a trigger."⁵¹ The men were under artillery fire prior to the day of the battle and, on September 17, received scattered artillery and musket fire. The regiment's losses were light: 2 men killed and 10 wounded.

This was the only instance in which the 7th Virginia failed to hold fast under attack. Assaulted on both the right flank and front, the regiment faced either capture or a hopeless fight. Kemper's brigade lost 15 men killed, 102 wounded and 27 missing. This made a total of 144 casualties out of approximately 300 men who went into battle. Two men in the 17th Virginia won commendation from Gen. Kemper for their bravery. Private Samuel Coleman captured the battle flag of the 11th Pennsylvania, and Lt. William W. Athey captured the colors of the 103rd New York.⁵²

The men in the 7th Virginia spent the day after Sharpsburg collecting the wounded, burying the dead and searching the pockets of slain Federals. One soldier in the regiment was shot and killed by a sniper as he attended to the needs of wounded Federals.

⁵¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 155.

⁵²Official Records, XIX, Pt. 1, 810; pt. 2, 677.

On the night of September 18, the brigade recrossed the Potomac at Shepardstown and made camp about three miles from the river. Here the men rested and recounted their trials during the late campaign. For most, the mood was one of "carry me back to old Virginia" instead of "Maryland, My Maryland." In a couple of days, the brigade marched first to Bunker Hill and then to Winchester. At Winchester, many sick, wounded and shoeless men returned to the ranks, which was a godsend for the depleted army.⁵³

On October 6, Kemper reviewed the brigade at its camp near Hopewell Meeting House. He had only praise for the men's conduct during the arduous Maryland campaign. On October 20, the brigade left camp and moved to White Hall, where the men remained for about a week. The brigade's next objective was Culpeper Court House. The men arrived at a spot one mile from the town after passing through Winchester, fording the Shenandoah River and crossing the mountains at Chester Gap. By October 31, the brigade was comfortably encamped at Culpeper. Here the command remained for almost three weeks. Several companies of the 7th Virginia were from Culpeper and surrounding counties. These soldiers

⁵³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 160-61.

soon received clothing and extra food from friends and relatives.⁵⁴

By the time the army reached Culpeper, a general re-organization had been effected. Kemper's brigade was placed in Gen. George E. Pickett's newly created division, along with Pryor's, Armistead's, Jenkins' and Pickett's old brigade. A field return for October 10 put the new division at 4,194 men. By November 14, the division had grown to 6,868 effectives. Brigadier General Richard B. Garnett had by now been assigned to lead Pickett's old unit, and a new brigade was created and given to newly promoted Brig. Gen. Montgomery D. Corse.⁵⁵

About November 21, the brigade fell into line for a march to Fredericksburg. The men got an early start and did eighteen miles of "awful muddy marching . . . the mud was over our shoetops in a good many places." The brigade crossed the Rapidan at Raccoon Ford and pushed on despite

⁵⁴Ibid., 165; Morgan, Reminiscences, 142-43; Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 121-22. Between June 27 and Oct. 24, Capt. Morgan of the 11th Va. was absent sick. His recollections were therefore of no value to this study for that time period. The same is true of the Smith-Pickett Diary.

⁵⁵Johnston, Confederate Boy, 166; Official Records, XIX, Pt. 2, 683, 660, 713. The 3rd Va. joined Kemper's brigade on Nov. 10 to replace the 17th regiment that Corse took with him to his new brigade. Ibid., XXI, 539. See also Walter Harrison, Pickett's Men: A Fragment of War History (New York, 1870), 69-70. Harrison was Asst. Adj. and Inspector General of Pickett's division until the end of the war.

fatigue and inclement weather. By November 23, the unit was in camp three miles from the town. The campsite was unwisely situated because of the scarcity of wood and water. However, while at this spot, one cheering event took place: new recruits came into the ranks.

The next day, the men moved to a stand of pines where wood and water were adequate. Private Pickett noted that it was "a nice warm place." Despite the better campsite, things were not perfect by any means. A November field report showed 2,071 barefooted men in Pickett's division. Captain Morgan saw many men in the 11th Virginia trying to make moccasins from fresh cow hides. He noted that they met with little success. Private Johnston served an apt comment on the commissary department when he noted that eating their meals gave the men less trouble than finding where the next one would originate.⁵⁶

The command lounged in relative inactivity until December 11, when the call to arms caused the men to prepare to march. The men stayed on the alert for two days, which "proved a severe task on the staying powers of the strongest men." On December 13, the brigade marched to the center of the Confederate line south of Fredericksburg and

⁵⁶ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 168; Morgan, Reminiscences, 144; Smith-Pickett Diary, Nov. 21-24, 1862; Wise, Seventeenth Virginia, 122-23.

went into a reserve position. However, the brigade was at this point only a short time. The men then marched to the left at double quick. While making this shift the brigade came under heavy artillery fire. The men broke into a run to get out of range. The troops crossed Hazel Run and moved upon Marye's Heights. Here the men halted and again went into a support position. While here, Gen. Kemper made a short speech to each regiment in the brigade. Private Johnston noted that it "had a good effect upon the men." Many of the troops needed an inner fire of this sort to keep them warm, for they had no overcoats. These soldiers stood shivering in the cold fog as Kemper made his speech.⁵⁷

Near the end of the day, the brigade hurried down to the main line in response to a call for aid. The men filed into a position just to the left of a stone wall, but by this time the Federal assault had ended. With their bayonets, tincups and boards the Confederates threw up shallow breastworks. By midnight the men had made a line sufficient to stop minie balls, but not much else. The troops then slept among a scattering of dead Confederates left by the Georgia and North Carolina troops whom the Virginians had relieved.

⁵⁷Johnston, Confederate Boy, 168-70. See also Morgan, Reminiscences, 145-50; Official Records, XXI, 569.

The 7th Virginia had remained in a reserve capacity until nearly the end of the battle, and when the regiment did go into the lines the fight was over. Therefore the unit suffered few casualties; four men being wounded only.⁵⁸

On the next day, December 14, the Virginians engaged in a sharp-shooting duel with the Federals. Each of the Confederates had been issued 100 rounds of ammunition in expectation of an attack that never came. Some men in the 7th Virginia carried water to wounded Federals lying out in front of the Confederate lines--often at great risk to themselves.⁵⁹

On December 16, the brigade retired to the woods near Guinea's Station and established winter quarters. The men went on occasional picket duty, but the greatest part of the time was spent in inactivity. The troops suffered greatly from the lack of shoes and overcoats, but they never doubted the ultimate success of their under-provisioned army. To keep warmer at night, soldiers would build fires on the spot where they intended to sleep. Just before turning in for the night, the men rolled away the burning logs and swept away the ashes. They then laid down

⁵⁸Morgan, Reminiscences, 152; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 172.

⁵⁹Official Records, XXI, 559.

on the warm ground where the fire had been and covered themselves with ragged blankets.⁶⁰

The Christmas season contained less in the way of food than the men would have liked, but the soldiers did as all soldiers have done--they made the best of their situation. In the 7th Virginia, one particular incident both embarrassed the men and gave them grim satisfaction. Dan East, a perpetual slacker in Company D, received his just punishment. At first he was forced to march through camp with a fence rail on his shoulder and a placard with the word "coward" on his back. This did not even phase the incorrigible East, for he shortly helped himself to a comrade's personal belongings. The men then whipped Pvt. East out of the service forthwith.⁶¹

The year 1862 had been a time of high hopes and many deaths for the 7th Virginia. The men did not know it yet, but Sharpsburg was as close as they would ever be to the dream of an independent Southern Confederacy. At the end of that year, except for clothing and occasional shortages of food, the Southern army was stronger than ever before. The coming year would deal a crushing blow to Lee's forces in general and to Pickett's men in particular.

⁶⁰ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 173; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 72.

⁶¹ Hunter, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, 325-38; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 175.

CHAPTER III

ALL GOOD MEN MUST RALLY

The second winter of war was not particularly trying for the Confederate army. Rations, clothing and furloughs might be hard to obtain, but the men felt confident that the coming year would bring final victory.

Late in January, Kemper's brigade fought its first major battle since Fredericksburg--with snowballs. One evening the men in the 17th Virginia discovered Toombs' Georgians sneaking up on the camp. The Georgians had come prepared with haversacks filled with hard packed snowballs. Before a general alarm could be sounded, the Georgians were charging through the Virginians' camp. The snowball fight developed into a huge affair with nearly the whole of six brigades involved in charge and counter-charge across the snowy hills. Before this "battle" ended, several bloody noses and black eyes were in evidence.¹

On January 20, the brigade fell into line and marched toward Bank's Ford to counter a reported Federal thrust across the river. The weather was horrible. The men

¹Hunter, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank, 329-30.

outmarched their supply wagons, had to camp all night in a slushy wooded area without fires and then never encountered any enemy soldiers! The next morning the brigade returned to its old camp. The bitterness of the Southerners knew no bounds when the men surveyed the ruins of their once-comfortable dwellings. Camp followers had stolen everything that could be of value--chairs, tables, kettles and, worst of all, the men's excess clothing. Private Alexander Hunter of the 17th Virginia spoke for many when he dejectedly stated: "What military dunderhead we had to thank for this delectable manoeuvre we never found out . . ." ²

The troops remained in their camp for about three weeks and tried not to think about lost possessions. On February 16, the brigade again embarked on a move. After two days "of miserable marching," the men reached Hanover Junction before continuing to a point near Manchester on the Richmond and Petersburg Turnpike. There they camped for a short time. By March 1, the men had arrived at Prince George Court House, where the brigade camped for nearly three weeks. While the 7th Virginia was in Richmond on its way to Prince George Court House, Lt. Col. Flowerree drank "one too many" and was placed under arrest by Gen.

²Ibid., 333.

Kemper. However, Flowerree was not alone in his predicament: several other officers in the same condition received this punishment.³

On March 21, the brigade boarded railroad cars for a trip to Goldsboro, N. C. The weather was still quite cold and the men did not relish a long ride in unheated box cars. Consequently, they piled earth in the center of the car and built a fire on the dirt. The men arrived in Goldsboro warm but begrimed with smoke from their fires. While in Goldsboro, three men were executed for desertion. The whole brigade formed an open square and watched as the firing squad riddled the three unfortunates.⁴

The next day the men took railroad cars to Kinston, where the brigade made camp just south of the Neuse River. On March 29, the 1st and 7th regiments went out on a scout toward New Berne. For two days the men marched and counter-marched through swamps and muddy roads before they fought a small skirmish at Tuscarora. By April 4, the tired, mud-spattered men were back in Kinston. While at Kinston,

³Loehr, First Virginia, 33; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 179-81; Morgan, Reminiscences, 156. Flowerree's detention was fortunate for the 7th Virginia in that he missed Gettysburg and thus was available for command after Col. Patton's death.

⁴Morgan, Reminiscences, 157.

rations of rice, sweet potatoes, black-eyed peas and bacon were much more plentiful than they had been in war-ravaged Virginia.

On April 5, the Virginians boarded cars and travelled westward through Goldsboro and Weldon to Franklin Station, Va., on the Blackwater River. Because the weather was warm, many men rode on top of the cars to see the view and catch the pleasant breeze. One soldier, Manly Reece of the 24th Virginia, did not see one of the many overhead bridges that crossed the tracks. He stood upright, was knocked from the car and killed.

The brigade camped at Franklin Station for several days. On April 11, they began a two-day march to Suffolk. The men entrenched there and spent their time on picket duty or awaiting attacks that never materialized. The purpose of this inactivity was to hold the Federals inside their lines so the Confederate commissary could gather supplies from the surrounding countryside. While at Suffolk, three men of the 7th Virginia deserted to the enemy.

On May 3, the brigade quietly slipped away from its entrenchments and crossed the Blackwater River at South Quay. The line of march lay through forests and swamps. The frogs "appeared to have gotten up a special concert" for the troops as they marched through the night. The column reached the

little settlement of Jerusalem the next day. On May 6, the troops marched sixteen miles and camped at Littleton. Three days later, the brigade advanced through Petersburg and camped on Dunlop's Farm near Chester Station. Several days later, the men arrived at Taylorsville, where the brigade rested and refitted until the start of the Gettysburg campaign.⁵

While at Taylorsville, the 7th Virginia experienced a religious revival in somewhat the same fashion as the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia. The regimental chaplain, Rev. Florence McCarthy, wrote to fellow cleric J. William Jones: "We did not experience such blessings as have descended on other parts of the army . . ." Nevertheless, there were 25 conversions in the brigade, 13 of which came from the 7th Virginia. Private Johnston noted that "our soldiers are loyal to their country, and Oh! how grand if they would only be loyal to God."⁶

During the brigade's stay at Taylorsville, it patrolled across the Pamunkey River into King and Queen County. The men stayed there only a short time and then returned to

⁵Loehr, First Virginia, 34. See also Johnston, Confederate Boy, 182-84; Morgan, Reminiscences, 158-62; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 75-77.

⁶William Jones, Christ in the Camp (Atlanta, 1904), 310. See also Johnston, Confederate Boy, 186.

Taylorville. Several days later, Gen. George E. Pickett staged a divisional review. A little street urchin from Richmond named John Whitlock was the drummer boy for the 7th Virginia. As Pickett passed down the carefully formed ranks of soldiers, each drummer would sound a long roll. Young Whitlock did not like being drummer boy and had thrown his sticks away. Colonel Patton ordered the roll started and was infuriated by a complete silence. Thereafter, Whitlock was very careful to have his sticks with him at all times.⁷

On June 3, Pickett's Division, ominously minus Corse's and Jenkins' brigades, started the march north to rejoin the main army. By June 10, the brigade had reached Culpeper. Enroute to Culpeper, the 3rd and 11th Virginia marched back to the Pamunkey River in support of some artillery which hoped to capture two Federal gunboats. The effort was unsuccessful and the men had to be contented with "scaring all the Yankees we could find out of their wits." In Culpeper, the men prepared their accoutrements in light marching order and cooked three days' rations. By June 14, the brigade had completed preparations for the summer campaign. The troops were in high spirits as everyone speculated on the army's goal.⁸

⁷Ibid., 186-87.

⁸Edward C. Barnes to mother, June 7, 1863, Barnes MSS.

On June 16, the brigade left Culpeper and marched eighteen dusty miles toward Gaine's Cross Roads. Three days later, the men were at Snicker's Gap atop the Blue Ridge. The next day the troops crossed the Shenandoah River and bivouacked near Berryville. Captain John Dooley of the 1st Virginia noted that the "heat was frightful," and that sunstroke victims littered the roads. On June 24, while still in camp at Berryville, the troops first learned of the ultimate goal of their army. Some disagreed with the plan to invade the North, but this time no mass absences from the ranks occurred that had preceded the Sharpsburg campaign. Yet, Pickett sent to Lee an urgent request that Corse's and Jenkins' brigades be returned to his division, which was the smallest in the army.⁹

On June 25, the troops passed through Martinsburg, crossed the Potomac at Williamsport and encamped two miles beyond the river. While there, the soldiers watched the execution of a man from the 18th Virginia in Garnett's brigade. The next day the brigade marched through Hagerstown, entered Pennsylvania and rested outside Greencastle. On

⁹Official Records, XXVII, Pt. 3, 910, 1090-91. See also Johnston, Confederate Boy, 194; John Dooley, John Dooley, Confederate Soldier; His War Diary, ed. by Joseph T. Durkin (Washington, 1945), 95. Hereafter cited as Dooley, War Diary.

June 27, the men marched through Chambersburg and bivouacked three miles beyond the town on the Harrisburg Road. Two days later, the brigade returned to Chambersburg and began picket duty. The invading Virginians noted that the natives were "very sullen and maliciously disposed." All the liquor that could be found had been locked up in the court house and put under guard by the provost marshal.

On June 30, the men performed the arduous task of destroying the Chambersburg-Hagerstown Railroad. This task occupied the whole day and "was very thoroughly done for a mile or more." The usual method was to build huge bonfires using the railroad cross-ties. The men then put the iron rails on the fire until the rail was heated and soft enough to wrap around the nearest tree. This particular method of destruction was extremely efficient.¹⁰

On July 2, Pickett's Division got an early start on its march to Gettysburg. By mid-afternoon, the column had trudged twenty-three miles under a blistering sun. The men halted about three miles from the field where the conflict had been raging for two days. On the way the troops passed the smoldering ruins of Thaddeus Stevens's iron

¹⁰ Ibid., 97-98; Official Records, XXVII, Pt. 3, 1090-91; S. H. S. P., XXXIV (1906), 328; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 196-98; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 87.

foundry that had been burned by Jubal Early's troops. As the men started their camp fires and began to cook rations, they wondered why they were not ordered into battle. Some men looked on this with foreboding. They felt that when "Marse Robert" held them back one day, it would be doubly hot for them the next. As night fell and coffee came to a boil, the troops talked among themselves and agreed that they would wage a fearful battle on the morrow.¹¹

Early on the morning of July 3, the columns formed and headed toward the battlefield. Pickett's Division, with Kemper's brigade in the van, marched through a small valley whose mouth opened on Seminary Ridge and was directly opposite the center of the Federal lines on Cemetery Hill. Quickly the veteran troops formed just behind the Confederate artillery. Kemper held the right and Garnett was on his left. Armistead formed in the rear of these two brigades because of the restricted front. On the left of Pickett's Division was Heth's Division, now under the command of Brig. Gen. Johnston Pettigrew. Pender's Division, commanded by Brig. Gen. Trimble, was on Pettigrew's left. Brigadier Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's brigade was to move up in support as the Confederate battle line

¹¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 196-98; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 87; Loehr, First Virginia, 35-36.

moved past. Such were the dispositions of the troops at 7:00 a. m. on the third day at Gettysburg.¹²

The Confederates were exposed to the rays of the hot July sun. As the hours passed, many men crept back into the shade of the nearby woods. They were in a cheerful if somewhat cautious mood. Colonels Patton and Mayo of the 3rd Virginia exchanged comments on this fact as they surveyed their waiting troops. The officers noted the apparent strength of the position they would have to assault. Walter Harrison, one of Pickett's adjutants, noted that "the strength of the position of the enemy was frightful to look at." He also felt that the troops were anxious at the delay and wanted to "be up and at 'em." Up on the line, Pvt. Dooley of the 1st Virginia saw several dead Confederates and noted that one was decapitated with the head "in bloody fragments upon the ground."¹³

At 1:00 p. m., the report of a single Confederate Whitworth cannon echoed across the field. Quickly a second shot sounded. This was the signal for the heaviest artillery bombardment the war had yet seen. About 160 guns hurled shells upon the Federal positions while over 100

¹²Harrison, Pickett's Men, 90-91.

¹³Dooley, War Diary, 102; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 91-94.

enemy guns replied. The 7th and 3rd Virginia were in a slight depression that exposed both to Federal artillery fire. Scores of men in Pickett's Division were wounded by enemy shells that overshot the Confederate gunners. For the men in the ranks, having to lie there and receive shell fire without moving, was extremely trying. All the men could do was to hide as best they could. Private Dooley noted that "I never . . . got closer to the earth than on this occasion." Adjutant Harrison recalled that "such a tornado of projectiles it has seldom been the . . . misfortune of anyone to see."¹⁴

The hours crept by for the men on both sides. Finally came the command to form line of battle. Many men were horrified to see the number of soldiers still on the ground. Many were dead or wounded, some had fallen victim to heat stroke, and a few simply lacked the courage to rise to their feet. General Pickett rode to the front of each brigade and shouted: "Up, men, and to your posts! Don't forget today that you are from old Virginia!"¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., 96, 103. Brigadier Gen. Wilcox stated in his report that Kemper's brigade suffered severely from the pre-attack Federal counterfire. S. H. S. P., VII (1879), 285.

¹⁵Dooley, War Diary, 105. Dooley was shot through both legs and captured when the Confederates retreated from Cemetery Hill. See also Johnston, Confederate Boy, 207.

The effect of this battle cry on the men was tremendous. Quickly the lines formed; the regiments moved out of the woods and guided on the colors. Colonel Patton was the only field officer present with the 7th Virginia at this time.¹⁶

The Virginians had to march almost a mile across open ground to reach the Federal defenses. As the men moved out, there was no cheering, only a mood of grim determination. When the Confederate ranks came into cannon range, the Federal artillery opened with solid shot. Gaps appeared in the Southern ranks, but the troops closed up and presented an orderly front to the enemy. About midway to their goal, the troops had to perform a difficult oblique movement to the left. In doing this, the Confederate lines marched parallel to the Federal lines--all the while under a heavy fire. The Confederates also lost many men when they had to knock down a fence and reform while exposed to the enemy. When about 250 yards from their objective, the Virginians screamed out their "Rebel Yell" and dashed for the first line of cannon. About twenty paces from the stone wall, the troops recoiled from a concentrated musketry and artillery fire. The Virginians began to drift to their left and bunch together in front of the wall.

¹⁶Ibid., 202-03.

Suddenly the men fired an effective volley at their antagonists and then dashed the last few yards into the Federal lines.¹⁷

At the corner of the stone wall, Col. Patton fell mortally wounded. The color-bearer, Lt. Watson, and all eight of the color guard were either killed or wounded. The last one to carry the flag, a mere boy named Tolbert, was killed as he tried to plant the colors of the 7th Virginia on that bloody wall. A soldier in the 82nd New York had shot Tolbert in the head and grabbed the flag of Frazier's Farm and Second Manassas.¹⁸

Vermont troops got on Kemper's right flank and poured a destructive fire into the 11th Virginia. On the far left flank of the attack, Brockenbrough's brigade had broken and fled to the rear. The pressure on both flanks and front rapidly became too much for the Confederates. Once the mass of the soldiers perceived that all was lost, they quickly broke for the Confederate lines. As the fleeing soldiers recrossed the open field, they came under the most murderous fire of the day. More men fell during the

¹⁷S. H. S. P., XXXII (1904), 184-203. Captain John H. Smith of the 11th Virginia wrote this account of the charge. See also Official Records, XXVII, Pt. 2, 386, for the report of Maj. C. S. Peyton.

¹⁸Johnston, Confederate Boy, 215; S. H. S. P., XXXII (1904), 35.

retreat than had been lost in the advance. Adjutant Harrison stated: "In the attack it was heavy, but unheeded; in the retreat it became terrible."¹⁹

The survivors gathered behind Seminary Ridge in shocked disbelief that they had been repulsed. Men stood in small--very small--groups and relived their various experiences. Ned Barnes wrote to his mother after the battle and stated that he felt that the charge would have been successful had it been properly supported. Many of Pickett's men must have felt this way. Only 300-400 men of Pickett's Division regathered on the ridge that afternoon. On the morning of July 4, not 1,000 muskets could be counted. One of the best divisions in the army had sustained "a loss never to be fully repaired."²⁰

General Lee rode up to greet the survivors as they drifted back into the Confederate lines. While here he noticed Gen. Kemper being carried by on a stretcher and inquired if there were anything he could do for him. Kemper, in much pain, raised himself on his elbows and replied: "Yes, General Lee, do full justice to this division for its work today."

¹⁹Harrison, Pickett's Men, 100.

²⁰Ibid., 102-04; S. H. S. P., XXXII (1904), 37; Edward C. Barnes to _____, 1863, Barnes MSS.

"I will," Lee solemnly promised.²¹

The casualty figures for Pickett's Division were appalling. The unit lost 232 men killed, 1,157 wounded and 1,499 captured or missing. This represented over half the entire command. Kemper's brigade lost 731 men, of which the 7th Virginia suffered 15 men killed and 79 wounded. The regiment also lost its battle flag. This was no cause for shame among the troops--most could readily see how it had been lost.²²

On July 4, the retreat back to Virginia began. Pickett's Division had charge of the nearly 4,000 Federal soldiers captured during the battle. Many men considered it a disgrace to be given a non-combat assignment, but such were the orders. By July 9, the troops had arrived at the Potomac at Williamsport and turned the prisoners over to Gen. Imboden's cavalry.²³

The next day, the 1st, 3rd and 24th Virginia crossed to the Virginia side of the river. The 7th and 11th

²¹S. H. S. P., XXXI (1903), 234. This conversation was overheard by Capt. Roy Bright of Pickett's staff.

²²Official Records, XXVII, Pt. 2, 329-34; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 215.

²³Loehr, First Virginia, 39; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 106.

Virginia remained on the Maryland side of the river as a rearguard and crossed over the pontoons the following day.

On July 14, the brigade, now under Col. Joseph Mayo, Jr., of the 3rd Virginia, marched through Martinsburg in a soaking rain. The men halted in a field which offered no wood for fires by which the men could dry themselves. After a time an officer discerned this situation and shifted the troops to a nearby clump of timber. Soon the men had large roaring fires burning.²⁴

On July 20, the brigade passed through Berryville and spent that night near Millwood. However, a good night's sleep eluded the weary soldiers. Shortly after supper, the whole brigade went out to do picket duty at Berry's Ferry. The next day the men marched through the rolling countryside until they came to Front Royal, where the soldiers waded across the Shenandoah River. The stream had a strong current because of the recent rains and the men had "hard work to get across." That night the soldiers of the brigade bivouacked at Chester's Gap.

On July 22, the Confederates had a chance to capture some much needed artillery from the Federals. The men rose before dawn and set off on a round-about march to surprise

²⁴Loehr, First Virginia, 39. See also S. H. S. P., XXXII (1904), 38; Official Records, XXIX, Pt. 2, 682.

an enemy battery. Before the Confederates could spring the trap, the Federals moved out of danger. Seemingly as a reward, the troops then marched the rest of the day and all night in "knee deep mud" and arrived at Gaine's Cross Roads at daylight the next day. On July 25, the brigade arrived at Culpeper and camped there for about a week. There were undoubtedly several happy reunions with families because several companies of the 7th Virginia were from Culpeper and the surrounding counties. Just as undoubtedly, also, was there news of fallen comrades to be relayed to unknowing homefolk.²⁵

On August 3, the brigade marched to a camp on the Rapidan River near Mountain Run. This pleasant summer campsite was to be the soldiers' residence for over a month. Here the men rested, recruits filled the shattered ranks, and all paused to reflect on the war. Colonel Mayo staged regular company, regimental and brigade drills to work the new men into army discipline.

On September 9, the division marched to the vicinity of Richmond, where its component brigades each left for a different station in the city's defenses. Kemper's brigade was at Chaffin's Farm for several days and camped in the old

²⁵Loehr, First Virginia, 40; Morgan, Reminiscences, 169-70; Official Records, XXVII, Pt. 2, 357-63, 1090-91.

winter quarters of Gen. Henry Wise's brigade. Thanks to Gettysburg, the 7th Virginia did not need all the huts that were available.²⁶

On September 25, the brigade marched to Richmond and boarded rail cars for their old camp at Taylorsville. Here the men settled into winter quarters--"dog houses," as some called them. As soldiers will do, the men at once set about replacing their tattered rags with respectable outfits. Ned Barnes wrote his mother to send him a new pair of boots by "the first safe conveyance," as his old ones had "busted all to pieces." The men of the 1st Virginia received a gift of overcoats and other outer clothing from the Richmond officials. The soldiers of the 1st Virginia were always glad to be near their home city. Private Loehr noted that he and his fellow Richmonders "spent a very pleasant time" at Taylorsville. Except for a later alert, the men passed the time recruiting, guarding railroad bridges over the North and South Anna Rivers and doing picket duty.²⁷

While at Taylorsville, the men of the 7th Virginia engaged in serious discussions about the war. Many felt

²⁶Loehr, First Virginia, 40.

²⁷Edward C. Barnes to mother, Sept. 25, 1863, Barnes MSS; Loehr, First Virginia, 40.

that things were grimmer now than when the year began. They wanted to know how long the war would last, the Confederacy's prospects for success, and if the fight would continue until the last man fell. These and many other questions arose in the minds of soldiers who had seen First Manassas, Frazier's Farm and Gettysburg. To some men, the South was visibly failing, but most had not yet seen the "handwriting on the wall." Many soldiers felt that their thin tattered ranks would never again be the same. General Lee had written to President Davis that "Pickett's Division wants many officers owing to the number wounded and captured, who cannot now be replaced." This was an apt commentary on the condition of the brigade. However, most men in the 7th Virginia arrived at the conclusion that "we will have to fight it out."²⁸

Rations got smaller and smaller during the winter-- "one pint of unsieved meal and a quarter pound of bacon per day." Sometimes a few lucky soldiers managed to obtain some turnips or potatoes, but not often. The Confederacy's ersatz coffee came from parched wheat or rye. Most of the time the bacon ration was so small the

²⁸Johnston, Confederate Boy, 233-34; Official Records, XXIX, Pt. 2, 706; Loehr, First Virginia, 40.

men could not afford to cook it so they ate it raw with an ash cake made from the meal.

J. Tyler Frazier was now the regimental chaplain. Because of bad weather, the troops did not often attend open-air services. When they were held, it was usually in Frazier's hut or in the mess building.

In the closing days of November, the brigade went on an alert to be ready to march at a moment's notice. The opposing armies along the Rapidan were engaged in the Mine Run Campaign at this time, but Terry's brigade was not needed. It was lucky the men were not summoned, because the brigade had not yet fully recovered from the Gettysburg losses. The field return for December 31 put the brigade at 1,256 men. Its optimum strength was 6,000 men.²⁹

Hungry, ill-clothed and few in number, the men of the 7th Virginia entered the third winter of war. Gettysburg had been a crushing blow. There the regiment lost many brave, irreplaceable men, among them gallant Col. Patton. In return, the regiment had received few recruits--and many of these were conscripts of doubtful quality.

²⁹Ibid., 234-36; Official Records, XXIX, Pt. 2, 904-05. By Oct. 10, Col. W. R. Terry had been given command of the brigade. Col. Mayo returned to command of the 3rd Virginia, and the unit soon came to be called Terry's brigade.

The regiment's desire to fight on to ultimate victory had not dimmed, but now some men realized that the odds against the Confederacy were increasing. Starvation, possible mutilation and death--these were the rewards of the veterans of the 7th Virginia as they were the rewards of all Southern soldiers. The men contemplated their situation and looked to the coming year with grim determination, if not pessimism.

CHAPTER IV

STEADFAST HEARTS AND HUNGRY STOMACHS

Soldiers did not like to campaign in the middle of the winter--unless it was a "campaign" into Richmond to see the sights and to court pretty girls. Early in January, 1864, the 7th Virginia, along with its brigade, embarked on a trip that ultimately took the men far from their warm huts.

On January 8, the troops boarded railroad cars for a ride to Richmond. They were on their way to North Carolina. The Confederate high command hoped to recapture several important towns in that state and to thwart Federal plans of further invasion. They arrived in Richmond during the early morning hours and marched through the near-deserted streets to another depot where they boarded another train for the ride to Petersburg. In this city the hungry troops halted near the reservoir and cooked slim rations. Shortly after quenching what appetite they could, the men marched to the depot and took cars again, this time for Weldon, N. C. By January 13, the brigade had reached Goldsboro and gone into camp two

miles west of the town. The Virginians had been here before, and no doubt some wondered what they had come here to do. Yet, their spirits were good. Ned Barnes noted that "every unit was in the highest glee." That night the troops ate their small rations of crackers and fat meat and reminisced about the earlier days of the war.¹

Early on the morning of January 30, the troops began the march to Kinston. For two days men plodded through the winter countryside that was as well relatively deserted. The march on January 31 did not end until early on the morning of the next day. After a very few hours' sleep, the men were again on the march. Soon the tired troops were within five miles of New Berne. Yet no rest existed for the weary. Up came the ordnance and supply wagons, and the soldiers formed line of battle on the south side of the Trent River.

The Federals met the Virginians in force and began to advance toward the waiting Confederates. The Southerners could see the Federals' heads bobbing up and down in the corn. With them rode a lone cavalryman. Minutes later, a shot rang out and the cavalryman fell from the saddle.

¹Loehr, First Virginia, 40-41; Edward C. Barnes to mother, Feb. 9, 1864, Barnes MSS.

Shortly thereafter, Capt. Popham of the 7th Virginia and another soldier rode into the lines on an old plow horse and a mule. One of the two men had shot the Yankee.²

The rest of February 2 passed without incident. The troops went to sleep but were roused at 3:00 a. m. and told to be ready to attack the Federal lines at daybreak. Dawn came slowly, or so the soldiers felt. The morning passed into afternoon; still no order came for an attack. Many men wondered what was causing the delay, and some concluded that New Berne must have been too well defended for an attack to succeed.³

Shortly after midnight on February 3, the brigade stole silently away from its lines around New Berne. The men marched all night "over roads badly cut up and very swampy." Once, as the troops passed through a turpentine orchard, they set fire to the trees and by this light avoided many sloughs. On the retreat the Confederates came upon a block-house fort defended by a small Federal garrison. These Federals soon surrendered to the 18th and 30th Virginia. Not only genuine Federals, but several members of a unit composed of Confederate deserters, fell

²Ibid.

³Ibid., Johnston, Confederate Boy, 237.

into the Southerners' hands. These captured deserters, forming the 2nd Loyal North Carolina regiment, were tried, convicted and hanged.⁴

This raid was not a total loss. Pickett failed to capture New Berne, but the troops did capture great quantities of much-needed supplies. A great furor arose over the execution by Pickett of the Confederate deserters, but this had no permanent effect on the treatment of prisoners of either side. General Pickett blamed the failure to capture New Berne on Brig. Gen. Seth M. Barton, who was to have attacked the town from the rear. Barton failed to launch his attack because of strong forts and a deep creek on his front that he felt would have made the effort too costly. In any event, New Berne remained in Union hands. Even more ominously, the brigade suffered several desertions while at New Berne. Union Brig. Gen. I. N. Palmer listed men from the 11th and 24th Virginia

⁴Ibid.; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 114-15; Loehr, First Virginia, 41. W. P. Derby mentioned the horror felt by the Union troops when these ex-Confederates were executed, but stated that the Federals knew that the executions were justified by the rules of war. W. P. Derby, Bearing Arms in the 27th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteer Infantry During the Civil War 1861-65. (Boston, 1883), 235. Hereafter cited as Derby, Bearing Arms.

regiments who, he stated, "appear to be too well satisfied to get in here [the Union lines]." ⁵

On February 7, the brigade bivouacked near Goldsboro. Here, eight days later, the brigade formed in an open square to witness the execution of another deserter. Private Peyton, Company B of the 7th Virginia, was under death sentence for desertion. On the morning of February 15 a wagon with a coffin in it pulled up to the guardhouse. Peyton had not believed he would actually be shot, but at this sight his jaunty spirit fled him. The soldier mounted the wagon and sat on his coffin for the ride to the place of execution. Here the brigade formed in the prescribed manner and the firing squad took its place. The band played a "dead march" and Pvt. Peyton was tied to a wooden stake. The regimental ordnance sergeant issued the firing squad's rifles. Only half of the guns had bullets in them. In this way, no man could tell if he had fired a fatal shot. A ragged volley rang out, and Pvt. William Peyton of Rappahanock County fell dead. ⁶

⁵Harrison, Pickett's Men, 113-15; Edward C. Barnes to mother, Feb. 9, 1864, Barnes MSS; Official Records, XXXIII, 54-56, 92.

⁶Johnston, Confederate Boy, 239-40; Loehr, First Virginia, 41; Service Records, Roll 460.

By February 22, the brigade had marched back to Kinston. Six days later, the troops moved to the south side of the Neuse River and made camp. On March 4, the brigade boarded cars for a ride to Wilmington on the North Carolina coast and arrived there on the evening of the next day. On March 6, the brigade marched through Wilmington to the wharf, where they boarded ships for a ride to some unknown place. Later in the day, the troops were surprised to find their ship at Smithfield at the mouth of the Cape Fear River. The men made a comfortable camp one mile below the town and settled down for a long stay. Troops accustomed to hardtack and fat bacon now feasted on crabs and oysters. If a soldier was completely without something to do, he could go to the sand dunes and watch the blockade runners elude their adversaries. Life was so pleasant that the soldiers "would have been satisfied to remain at this point for the rest of the war."

The 24th Virginia was sent to garrison Forts Caswell and Campbell because the soldiers of this unit had become "too fond of the farmer's pigs." The men did not remain long at this "seaside resort." On March 24, the brigade embarked for Wilmington and thence by rail to Goldsboro. Ned Barnes did not know where the troops were to go when

the move started, but he feared they would return to "that miserable delapidated god-forsaken hole Kinston."⁷

On April 1, Terry's (formerly Kemper's) brigade left Goldsboro and advanced to Tarboro. The unit crossed the Tar River and marched several miles south of their crossing point before making camp. On April 15, Terry's, Hoke's and Ransom's brigades, along with cavalry and artillery, set out for Plymouth. This force of about 6,000 men arrived in front of the town two days later. The Virginians quickly dispersed the Federal pickets and halted. Desultory picket firing and artillery exchanges lasted throughout the rest of the day, but the Confederates under Gen. Hoke initiated no further offensive action.⁸

On April 18, the brigade went into position in front of Fort Williams on Warren's Neck. Here Companies G and C of the 11th Virginia formed out as skirmishers. These men crossed a swamp and then got pinned down in an open

⁷Edward C. Barnes to mother, Mar. 24, 1864, Barnes MSS; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 240-41; Loehr, First Virginia, 42.

⁸Edward C. Barnes to Charlie, Apr. 30, 1864, Barnes MSS; Loehr, First Virginia, 42. On May 7, Kemper was detached from his brigade and given command of Virginia's reserve forces. On May 31, Col. Terry received promotion to brigadier general and commanded the brigade for the remainder of the war. Official Records, XXVI, Pt. 2, 972.

field by musket and artillery fire. The men stood this galling barrage as long as possible and then made a dash for the Southern lines. Many soldiers were killed or wounded in this foray.

The next day, Terry's brigade (minus the 11th Virginia) along with Hoke's and Ransom's brigades, attacked Plymouth from the east. This assault ended in a bloody repulse. On April 20, this same force attacked again and the Federal defenders gave way. With the fall of the forts, Plymouth quickly surrendered. Terry's brigade moved out to cover the Washington road, down which some Federals were attempting to escape. The brigade soon sealed off this route of escape but came under a severe artillery fire while doing so. All of a sudden, a big burly Negro soldier came dashing down the road, "the first of his kind we had seen." The soldier fairly leaped into the Confederate line before he realized his error. Private Johnston noted the Negro was so scared "that had it been possible he would have changed his color."⁹

The fruits of the capture of Plymouth soon became as apparent to the private in the ranks as to higher placed Southern strategists. General Hoke turned over the Federal warehouses to the troops to take what they needed.

⁹Ibid.; See also Johnston, Confederate Boy, 242.

Ragged Confederates suddenly appeared as if attended by the best clothier in town. Corn dodgers and bacon gave way to cakes, preserves and pies. Large mirrors were broken to provide many smaller shaving mirrors. Professional equipment was not neglected as many soldiers exchanged their worn muskets for newer Federal models. In short, the Confederates turned the Federal depot inside out before they departed.¹⁰

That evening, April 20, the Southern columns started for the little settlement of Washington at the head of Pamlico Sound. By April 25, the brigade had passed through Jamesville. On the next day, the Southerners halted in front of Washington. The Confederates made ready to storm the defenses when they discovered that the Yankees had fled--looting and burning the town before they retreated. General Hoke quickly about-faced and marched to Greenville, where he remained until the second attempt began to capture New Berne.¹¹

On May 2, that attempt began. The Confederates crossed the Neuse River twelve miles below Kinston and pushed rapidly toward New Berne. On May 4, the brigade

¹⁰Ibid., 242-43; Loehr, First Virginia, 44.

¹¹Ibid.

crossed the Tar River and arrived before their objective. The men halted, threw out pickets and bivouacked for the night.

The next day the men were up early. By dawn the brigade had formed line of battle, with the 1st Virginia out as skirmishers. The Confederates advanced and quickly forced the surrender of one small fort, when orders arrived calling Hoke's troops back to Petersburg. Late that evening, the brigade started away from New Berne on what turned out to be an all-night march through mud and water.¹² Once again the Confederates had abandoned an attempt to capture New Berne without coming to grips with the enemy.

With a speed born of desperation, the Virginians marched and rode northward. On May 8, the brigade reached Kinston, where the 1st and 11th Regiments took the train to Jarrett's Station, Va. The 7th and 24th Virginia could not get on the crowded train and quickly began a very rapid march to Virginia. The men marched "night and day." Occasionally the troops halted in order to bridge small creeks. The men cut logs and tied them together with vines in order to make a passable bridge.

¹²Loehr, First Virginia, 45; Morgan, Reminiscences, 191.

Soldiers not involved in this activity fell asleep where they stood. Finally the troops arrived at Jarrett's Station, only to find the bridge over the Nottoway River in smoking ruins. The two regiments hurriedly marched eleven more miles to Stony Creek Depot, where they finally boarded a train for Petersburg.¹³

The pace had been extremely rapid. Private Johnston noted that "never before had we done such marching." The ladies of Petersburg welcomed the Virginians like conquering heroes. They laid out the best food they had for the troops, and no doubt men who had lived on hardtack and fat meat were grateful for what there was.¹⁴

On the evening of May 12, Terry's brigade (now reunited) moved forward to Swift Creek on the Richmond-Petersburg Turnpike. Here the troops encountered Federal skirmishers. All night the men prepared for a Federal attack. Early the next morning, the Southerners found that the enemy had withdrawn from their front. Quickly the brigade marched toward Richmond. The line of march lay between the Union and Confederate lines; and as the Virginians passed the "Halfway House," the Federals fired

¹³ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 244-45.

¹⁴ Loehr, First Virginia, 45

upon the column. However, this fire did not develop into a general attack and the brigade proceeded to Drewry's Bluff. After a few hours at the Bluff, the men marched over to the Brock Race Course near Manchester. Here they filed into a line of earthworks to repulse an expected Federal attack. The "attack" turned out to be the result of jittery nerves on the part of some of Richmond's mounted militia.¹⁵

Late on May 15, Terry's brigade marched to a low hill overlooking Kingsland Creek. Here each man in the 7th Virginia received sixty rounds of ammunition and was told to be up at 2:00 the next morning. Promptly at the appointed time, the men fell into line. They discarded everything that might make a noise and then marched down the old stage road. The column went through a field and crossed Kingsland Creek, where the men formed line of battle behind Hoke's North Carolina brigade and Gen. Archibald Gracie's Alabamians.¹⁶

Shortly after Terry's men arrived, Gracie's voice rang out: "Forward!" The men from the Deep South stepped out

¹⁵Ibid., 46; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 246; Morgan, Reminiscences, 194-95.

¹⁶Johnston, Confederate Boy, 250-51; Morgan, Reminiscences, 196; Loehr, First Virginia, 46; Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 2, 212.

smartly to attack the Federal earthworks. A thick fog that morning cut visibility to only several yards. The Federal skirmishers heard the Southern officers' commands and fired random shots into the impenetrable white mass. During the advance, Terry's Virginians kept within forty to fifty yards of Gracie's line. As the brigade gained the summit of a small hill, Terry halted his men. Quickly the enemy fire became heavy although it was still not very effective because of the fog. As the bullets whined around their position, the veterans in the 7th Virginia began to lie down. Colonel Flowerree noticed this and commanded the men to rise. The bullets were hitting at the men's feet, and it therefore was more dangerous to lie down.¹⁷

Ahead, the attack had stalled. Some of Gracie's men broke for the rear. Gracie galloped back to the line of waiting Virginians and pleaded for assistance. Without hesitation, Terry's men screamed the "Rebel Yell" and surged forward. The 7th Virginia held the extreme left of the brigade line and went forward "through fog, smoke, and leaden hail." Fortunately, the regiment overlapped the Federal right flank. Quickly the 7th and 1st Regiments curled around this exposed flank and got in the Federal rear. The 1st Virginia met a volley that killed

¹⁷Johnston, Confederate Boy, 252; Morgan, Reminiscences, 198.

and wounded many men. The 7th Virginia extended the 1st Regiment's line and curled even farther in the enemy's rear. General C. A. Heckman saw this line of approaching Confederates and mistook them to be his reinforcements. Heckman rushed up to the 7th Virginia and cried: "Come on, boys; we are driving them back!" Colonel Flowerree quickly corrected Heckman as to the allegiance of the troops he had just greeted and demanded the surprised general's sword. Adjutant Parr of the regiment captured Col. Lee of the 27th Massachusetts, along with that unit's colors.¹⁸

A short lull followed the surrender of Gen. Heckman and a large portion of his Massachusetts brigade. Private Johnston obtained a new black felt hat that a Federal officer had lost.

Suddenly, fresh Federal troops appeared on the 7th Virginia's right flank. The enemy fired a quick volley; but because the Southerners were lying flat on the ground, no one was hurt. Quickly the regiment made a left wheel and faced its assailants. In this turning movement, however, several men were killed and wounded. Other

¹⁸Johnston, Confederate Boy, 253-54; Loehr, First Virginia, 47; E. F. Compton, "Drury's Bluff," Confederate Veteran, XII (1904), 123. Hereafter cited as C. V.; Derby, Bearing Arms, 250. General Heckman stated in his report of the battle that "five times, encouraged and rallied by their officers, that magnificent rebel infantry advanced to the attack." Ibid.

Confederate troops finally took the attacking Federals in a flank attack and the enemy retreated in confusion. This brief assault ended the day's action for the 7th Virginia.¹⁹

The northern Virginia regiment suffered few casualties compared to the other units in the brigade. Only 2 men were killed and 37 wounded in the battle of Drewry's Bluff. The relatively light casualties in the 7th and 1st Virginia regiments can be attributed to the fact that they were able to outflank the Federal line. Thus these two units did not have to make the frontal attack that cost the 11th and 24th Regiments so heavily. Terry's brigade captured four regimental colors and 400 prisoners at Drewry's Bluff. General Robert Ransom, commanding the division, gave special notice to Terry's and Gracie's men for their tenacious attacks during the battle.²⁰ The men who made Pickett's Charge had not lost their nerve or efficiency. Despite the shattering blow the brigade received in 1863, the Virginians rushed into this 1864 battle with the vigor of men who still had hope for their cause.

¹⁹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 255.

²⁰Ibid., 256; Loehr, First Virginia, 47-48; Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 2, 213.

The troops remained on the battlefield that night and busied themselves collecting the dead and wounded. Early on May 17, Terry's brigade started in pursuit of the retreating Federals. All that day and the next, the Confederates pushed after their enemy. On May 18, the brigade halted near Howlett's House on the James River, where the Confederates had some unfinished works. Here a severe test awaited the men of the 7th and 1st Regiments.²¹

The brigade drew up in the woods and just on the edge of an open field where the earthworks were located. Private Johnston went forward to see if the works were occupied by the enemy. They were not, and the 7th and 1st Virginia dashed across the open field. Immediately after leaving the cover of the woods, the Virginians came under heavy artillery fire from eleven Federal gunboats on the James. Heavy cannon flashed and screamed as the troops ran toward the protection of the works. Amazingly, no one was hurt during those few minutes (which seemed like an eternity to some of the troops). Upon reaching the unfinished trenches, the Confederates had to remain there and complete the works. This they did through eleven

²¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 257.

punishing hours of naval bombardment. As Sgt. Loehr remembered, "it was a very trying time,"²²

Several men in both regiments were killed and wounded. In the 7th Virginia, Lt. John W. Mullins, a brave and promising officer, was mortally wounded. Major Howard also received a serious injury. Besides these officers, several other men were wounded. In numbers, the regiment came through with light casualties, but leaders like Lt. Mullins were hard to replace. On May 19, the troops withdrew from the earthworks and bivouacked near the Clay House.²³

That evening, Terry's brigade marched toward Richmond. The next day the men paraded through the city streets with each regiment bearing one of the captured flags from Heckman's brigade. The people roared out a welcome to these veteran troops as they bore these trophies of war. The 1st Virginia was from Richmond, and doubtless many a man from this unit slipped away to steal a few minutes with loved ones. That evening a portion of the brigade composed of men from the 1st, 7th, and 11th Regiments, under Maj. George F. Norton, crossed Mayo's Bridge and marched to

²²Loehr, First Virginia, 49.

²³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 257; Loehr, First Virginia, 49.

Broad Street. These men boarded the train for Milford Station on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. That evening the men arrived at the station and made camp. No one suspected that on the morrow this small contingent of Terry's brigade would confront the advance of Grant's whole army.²⁴

Early on May 21, Federal cavalry appeared in force about the station and across the Mattaponi River. The Confederates, posted in and about the station and houses in the village, repulsed several small charges made by mounted troopers. Major Norton then ordered some seventy of the 11th Virginia under Capt. Robert M. Mitchell to cross the bridge and hold a small hill several hundred yards up from the river. After about an hour's fighting, these gallant soldiers were surrounded and captured by Federal cavalry under Gen. A. T. A. Torbert. Private Tom Yowell of the 7th Virginia was one of those taken. Brought before Union Gen. Winfield Hancock, Yowell spun an amazing story. He told his captors that Terry's brigade was the advance of Lee's whole army, and he further pointed out that Lee's headquarters was only a mile away. Yowell was

²⁴Morgan, Reminiscences, 206; Loehr, First Virginia, 49; S. H. S. P., XXVI (1898), 110.

certainly not one to give up the fight, even though he had only his ready wit with which to defend himself.²⁵

On seeing the Confederates on the hill surrounded, Adj. Parr and Pvt. Johnston threw the center planks of the bridge into the river, "thus preventing immediate pursuit by the Federal cavalry." These two men, along with the rest of the 7th Virginia, continued to act as the rear guard as the brigade fell back toward Spotsylvania Court House. Although the brigade lost many men captured and had to retreat, the men felt that their duty had been performed as well as anyone could expect. Their brave stand possibly allowed Gen. Lee more time to concentrate for the battles around Cold Harbor.²⁶

All during the night of May 21, the exhausted troops rested and waited for Lee's rear guard to pass. The next morning, Terry's men joined the rear guard and marched to Hanover Junction, where they rejoined the rest of the brigade. On May 23, the brigade marched to Andersonville

²⁵Morgan, Reminiscences, 209-12. Captain Morgan was captured on the hill with most of the other men from the 11th Va. Therefore, his memoirs are of no further value to this study. Johnston, Confederate Boy, 261-63; William Morgan "Milford Station," C. V., XVII (1909), 319; S. H. S. P., XXVI (1898), 110-13; "Roster Book 1a", 333. See Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 3, 48-50, for Hancock's and Torbert's reports.

²⁶Johnston, Confederate Boy, 261-62; Loehr, First Virginia, 50; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 127.

and dug trenches behind Gen. A. P. Hill's Corps. The men were under artillery fire while they dug their trenches, but the regiment reported no casualties. For five days the troops watched, waited and ducked artillery rounds. The men stayed in reserve positions and did no fighting at the North Anna River.²⁷

On May 27, the brigade took up a line of march toward Atlee's Station. It was an all-day march made in rain and on deeply rutted roads. That night the men camped near the station and tried to dry their clothes. In the evening of the next day, the brigade moved to Mechanicsville and camped three miles north of the village. On May 29, Terry's brigade remained in position between Hundley's Corners and Walnut Grove Church while other troops of Longstreet's Corps (temporarily under Lt. Gen. R. H. Anderson) skirmished with the enemy.

On the next day (May 30), the brigade reached its position on the left of Gen. Evander Law's Alabama brigade in the Cold Harbor trenches.²⁸ The Confederates launched

²⁷Loehr, First Virginia, 50. General Pickett took command of his division at Hanover. This unit rejoined Lee's army after an absence of eight months.

²⁸Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1058-60. This is the Diary of the 1st Army Corps for May 7-June 15, 1864, and is most useful. See also Johnston, Confederate Boy, 263.

some local attacks with which Pickett's men tried to cooperate, but the attempt failed. The brigade then moved, along with Longstreet's Corps, to relieve Jubal Early's Corps. Pickett's Division covered the extreme right of the Confederate line. When the men of Terry's brigade arrived at their new line, they found that the Federal works curved away from their trenches. June 1 passed in relative inactivity. The men strengthened their lines, but did little else except duck sniper fire. On June 2, the Union attacks began with a furious assault on units to the right of the 7th Virginia that lasted until nightfall. The men learned by an "improvised telegraphy" of passing the word from man to man that the Federal attacks had been repulsed. On June 3, a general assault by Grant's army hit the Southern trenches. The 7th Virginia engaged in severe skirmishing but did not receive a massive attack. As the battle progressed, Pickett's men received orders to be ready to assault the Federals on their front. However, the soldiers knew what usually happened when infantry attacked an entrenched foe and were "very well satisfied when the order was revoked."²⁹

²⁹ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 263-64; Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1058-69. Sergeant Loehr received a black eye from splinters thrown out by a sniper's bullet while on picket duty. He stated that there was "a very lively time on the picket line." Loehr, First Virginia, 51.

During the Cold Harbor battles, the 7th Virginia did not take part in any major action. Of course the men had to contend with sniper and artillery fire which constantly showered the lines. However, the regiment suffered no casualties. Yet life in the trenches was very hard on the men. The weather was terribly hot, and Pvt. Johnston noted that "the blood, burnt powder and dead bodies produced a stench which cannot be described."³⁰

Terry's brigade remained in the Cold Harbor lines for ten days after the battle. On June 13, the Confederates discovered that Grant's army had secretly left its trenches during the previous night. The Virginians immediately started in pursuit. They crossed the Chickahominy River at McClellan's bridge and halted near Frazier's Farm. The men of the 7th Virginia must have looked back to that bloody day two years before when they fought at this farm during the Peninsular Campaign. The brigade camped here for three days. On June 16, at 3:00 a. m., the men were on the march toward Port Walthall Junction. They filed

³⁰ Johnston, Confederate Boy, 264-65.

across a pontoon bridge over the James River and turned toward the junction.³¹

Pickett's Division made steady progress down the Petersburg Turnpike. As the head of the column approached the junction, Federal rifle fire ripped into the troops. Immediately the division formed line of battle and drove the Federals from a line of entrenchments, thus beginning the Battle of Clay's House. These works were ones the Confederates had abandoned that morning in order to get additional troops to the defense of Petersburg. The next day opened with heavy skirmishing. Company D of the 7th Virginia went out as skirmishers and soon captured several prisoners. One of these was an Englishman who claimed to have been forced into the Union army. While awaiting the order to charge, Pvt. Nobles of the 1st Virginia went to the rear loaded with empty canteens. On his way back to his company with much needed water, a bullet passed through several of the canteens. Nobles felt the water running down his side and thought it was blood. Quickly he shouted

³¹Official Records, XXXVI, Pt. 1, 1058-60; S. H. S. P., VII (1879), 504. This article is the official diary of the 1st Corps for June 1-Oct. 18. The period June 1-13 is quite useful. After this date, Pickett's Division was detached and served in the Bermuda Hundred lines. See also Loehr, First Virginia, 51-52.

for an ambulance. A minute later, he discovered his mistake and sheepishly returned to his company.³²

Soon orders to attack came to the various regiments. Colonel Flowerree ordered Sgt. Maj. Johnston to pass along the line and inform the captains of the orders. Before many minutes passed, the Virginians charged and captured the last Union-occupied works. The Federals on Bermuda Hundred had again been shoved back into their "corked bottle."

The battle at Clay's House was not overly costly for the 7th Virginia. Pickett's men received special commendation for their gallant conduct in a letter Gen. Lee wrote just after the battle. Shortly after this action, Pickett's Division occupied the whole complex of the Bermuda Hundred lines. On May 19, Terry's brigade moved to the right and halted at Swift Creek. Late that afternoon, the brigade marched back to its original position near Howlett's House. The 7th Virginia shifted to several different positions between June 19 and the middle of July. Finally the regiment settled "on a piece of high

³²Johnston, Confederate Boy, 269. See also Loehr, First Virginia, 52, for the hilarious episode concerning Pvt. Nobles.

ground" about midway between Howlett's House and Swift Creek and started work to strengthen their position.³³

Pickett's Division held the Bermuda Hundred lines from July, 1864, until the final campaign began. The troops shifted to various places from Howlett's House on the James River to the confluence of the Appomattox River and Swift Creek, but they remained in the Bermuda Hundred trenches. The men performed picket duty, strengthened their trenches and built winter huts. Occasionally the firing squad went to work. This sad duty became more necessary as the campaign lengthened.³⁴

The long, hard summer's campaign showed on the men in the trenches. The ranks were thin, and hungry most of the time; and still Grant's army maintained a vise-like grip. Lieutenant J. E. Wyant of the 7th Virginia wrote to a lady friend that he hoped the Federals would not stay near Richmond for very long, for "we are almost broken down by such a long and arduous campaign."³⁵

³³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 272; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 129-31; S. H. S. P., VII (1879), 504; Loehr, First Virginia, 53.

³⁴Johnston, Confederate Boy, 272; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 131; Official Records, XL, Pt. 1, 749, 755.

³⁵J. E. Wyant to Sallie Bowles, June 27, 1864, Bowles Family Papers, University of Virginia Library. Hereafter cited as Bowles MSS. Wyant was a lieutenant in Co. I.

The men grew despondent sometimes because they could see the growing might of the enemy while they watched their own regiments shrink to battalion or company size. Men wrote home to their wives and sweethearts and declared how much they missed them. They also asked for the news of their little villages or hollows. In this manner, they could decide for themselves how the war effort fared in other parts of the beleaguered Confederacy.³⁶

Desertions began to plague the army in ever-increasing numbers. Once the regiment lost a man, it rarely obtained a replacement. Ned Barnes of the 11th Virginia wrote home that it was very difficult to get recruits for the army. Soldiers used various ruses to slip away or go over to the Union lines. John E. East volunteered to go into the Union picket line to capture a prisoner. He left at dark and never returned. The Federals called over to the Southerners the next day to say that East had deserted. By degrees the Army of Northern Virginia faded away in this the fourth winter of war. On October 18, a young soldier, "a mere boy," was executed for desertion. He had gone home

³⁶Alexander Bolton to Ann, July 17, 1864, Bolton Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society. Hereafter cited as Bolton MSS.

and been caught. A firing squad put six balls through his chest, cutting in half the stake to which he had been tied.³⁷

The spirit of some men showed clearly in the remarks of A. L. Sumner of the 7th Virginia. He overheard someone read a newspaper article describing how Lincoln had called for 1,000,000 men to enter the Union army. Sumner's head bowed in obvious consternation. A comrade asked him what was the trouble. Sumner's answer was poignant: "Don't you know that Abe Lincoln is re-elected and has called for a million men, and that Jeff Davis says war to the knife? What shall we do?"³⁸

Other men lost hope, but not the will to fight. Perhaps they just tried to make it seem that way. Ned Barnes reassured his mother by citing Lee's ability to detach nearly one half of the army to operate in the Shenandoah Valley. Barnes also felt that Grant's army had lost so heavily in dead and wounded "as to obliterate any supposed gain." The soldiers in the 7th Virginia

³⁷Johnston, Confederate Boy, 278-80; Edward C. Barnes to Eva, undated letter, Barnes MSS; Loehr, First Virginia, 54. See Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 2, 299, 581; Pt. 3, 1332, for figures and statements that are quite valuable in looking at the problem of desertion in the later stages of the war.

³⁸Johnston, Confederate Boy, 280.

formed the Young Men's Christian Association of Kemper's (Terry's) Brigade. In the by-laws, the members pledged to discourage desertion and insubordination and to expel any member who engaged in these activities.³⁹

The trenches on Bermuda Hundred were close enough to allow a great amount of fraternization between the blue and the gray. On the 7th Virginia's front was a small strip of woods where men of the opposing sides met to exchange coffee, tobacco and newspapers, "now and then playing cards." When such activities occurred, the soldiers gave strict guarantees of safety to their opposing number. From time to time an officer would discover a mixed group of soldiers playing cards or trading various articles. This would be enough to cancel the meetings for awhile. Often genuine kindness existed between the two sides. One day, just after dark, a Union picket called to his Southern counterpart and asked if he would like to come and fill up his haversack. The hungry rebel asked for a guarantee of safety, which was given. The gray clad

³⁹Edward C. Barnes to mother, Aug. 27, 1864, Barnes MSS; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 291-92. J. Tyler Frazier, the regimental chaplain, was the prime organizer of this association.

trooper quickly bounded over no-man's land, filled his sack and returned safely to the Confederate lines.⁴⁰

Fraternization was not always the order of the day. On November 28, Negro troops appeared in the Federal trenches. Sergeant Loehr noted that this "put a stop to peace and harmony." Loehr and about a dozen other soldiers angrily jumped from their trenches and with a yell, started for the enemy picket line. The Negroes did not hesitate but threw down their "guns, blankets, canteens and almost everything that was not on their backs." The Confederates picked up all the useful articles they could find and returned to their lines "without a scratch."⁴¹

Christmas, 1864, came and brought with it an atmosphere of optimism. Promises of a great Christmas feast were in the air, and many Confederates had visions of turkeys and ham being set before them. Appeals had gone out across the South for the people to do their best for the soldiers this Christmas.

The result was disappointing--at least in the camp of the 7th Virginia. In a letter home, Lt. Wyant stated: "Everything is quite dull in camp. Not much Christmas

⁴⁰ Ibid., 276.

⁴¹ Loehr, First Virginia, 54.

here." The meager showing of the much-vaunted Christmas dinner indicated to many soldiers how desperate the situation had become. The Commissary-General of Subsistence, Lucius B. Northrop, wrote that "the Army of Northern Virginia has for several months . . . been living literally 'from hand to mouth'."⁴²

The ability of the Southerners to destroy their adversary was now becoming but a dream. The soldiers in the ranks were hungry, ragged and sustained by less and less hope. These war-wise veterans in the ranks knew also that the war could not last much longer.

⁴²J. E. Wyant to "esteemed friend" (probably Sallie Bowles), Dec. 26, 1864, Bowles MSS. See Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 2, 1211-14, for an L. B. Northrop letter which considerably illuminates the problem of supply in the last days of the Confederacy. David Johnston, in Confederate Boy, 280-81, implied that the Christmas dinner was a success. However, it should be remembered that Johnston wrote many years after the war. It would seem that time had emotionalized the results of his Christmas dinner. "Ned" Barnes stated that the dinner was "very slim and disappointing," Edward C. Barnes to mother, Jan, 12, 1865, Barnes MSS.

CHAPTER V

HOPE FADES

The opening days of 1865 were no different than the closing days of the year just concluded--much to the ragged Confederate soldier's chagrin. There was no more food than there had been before, or clothing or hope. Soldiers who had fought and starved for months, if not years, prepared to do so a little while longer.

On January 8, the brigade moved from Swift Creek to a position near Howlett's House, where wood for fires was more plentiful. Here the troops of the 7th Virginia built "rude shacks of timber and earth" which served to give shelter from pelting rain and wind. The winter weather was at its worst. Ned Barnes wrote home that it rained and sleeted continually and that the soldiers were "up to our tails in mud."¹

Rations for the Southern troops were hardly worthy of the name. The standard daily issue per man was four

¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 299; Loehr, First Virginia, 54; Edward C. Barnes to Charlie, Jan. 21, 1865, Barnes MSS. At the time of this move, Col. Flowerree was in temporary command of Terry's brigade. Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 2, 1020.

ounces of bacon and one pint of coarse corn meal--an amount which scarcely made more than a snack twice a day. The soldiers remained just this side of starvation by the occasional issue of "a little sugar, rice, beans or peas." Many men tried to engage in games to give them exercise and good appetites. The latter was hardly needed as "ordinarily we were ready to eat anything we could get." Sergeant Major Johnston went into Richmond late in January and found bread selling for \$2.00 per small loaf, soda for \$12.00 a pound and a gold dollar worth \$60.00 in Confederate money.²

In early February, peace talks between Northern and Southern commissioners at Hampton Roads failed to achieve any results. This was a great disappointment to the soldiers, who saw nothing left "short of a bitter fight to the end." Members of the 1st Virginia passed several resolutions to fight the war to the finish. Among these proposals were pleas to enroll Negro troops and a motion hailing Robert E. Lee as the new general-in-chief of the Confederate armies.³ Some soldiers had no confidence in

²Johnston, Confederate Boy, 299, 301. Ned Barnes wrote that "nothing abounds abundantly here in the lines"--no doubt an accurate appraisal of the ration situation in the Confederate army. Edward C. Barnes to mother, Jan. 21, 1865, Barnes MSS.

³Loehr, First Virginia, 55; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 301.

peace talks. Alexander Bolton stated to his sister that most of the men felt the talks would not "come to anything."⁴

While on the line near Howlett's House, an unfortunate incident occurred in the 7th Virginia. Three men, A. J. Thompson, Harry Snidow and J. C. Hughes, were convicted of insubordination and encouraging a mutiny. Sergeant Major Johnston felt that the whole affair had been caused by misinformation and misunderstanding--all three had served throughout the war with considerable distinction. Nevertheless, the men were sentenced to be shot.⁵

On February 24, Terry's brigade moved back to Swift Creek on the right on the Bermuda Hundred lines. Corse's brigade relieved Terry's men and then Terry relieved Cox's brigade at Swift Creek. Now Pickett's Division alone held the Bermuda Hundred trenches. The soldier's routine did not change with this change of camp. Drill, standing guard and picket duty occupied the men's days at Swift Creek. General W. N. Pendleton, chief of artillery, spoke to the

⁴Alexander Bolton to his sister, Jan. 26, 1865, Bolton MSS; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 201; Loehr, First Virginia, 55. Ned Barnes was not so sure the South needed to draft Negroes into the army, and he further stated that most of the soldiers shared his view. Edward C. Barnes to mother, Jan. 12, 1865, Barnes MSS.

⁵Johnston, Confederate Boy, 303-04. The approval from Lee never came and the men escaped from prison when Richmond fell in April.

brigade at this camp and urged them to prepare themselves mentally and physically for the spring campaign.⁶

On March 5, Gen. William Mahone's division relieved Pickett's men at Bermuda Hundred. The tattered gray legions prepared for active service at the field one last time. Terry's brigade marched to Chester Station, where, for two days, the men bivouacked in a cold rain. The next day, March 8, Gen. Pickett staged a grand review of his whole division. Musket barrels gleamed in the sunlight and the buttons on ragged uniforms shone defiantly, but pitifully few men stood inspection that day. During the winter, the division had been recruited to 5,000 effectives; but because of sickness, desertions and losses in skirmishes, the unit numbered barely 4,000 men on the day of the review. During March 9-18, Pickett's Division lost 512 soldiers through desertion. Of this astounding number, Terry's brigade contributed but forty.⁷

By March 10, the brigade had marched through Richmond from Chester Station and had taken a position in the city's outer defenses near Brock Road. In the next two days, the

⁶Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 2, 722; Loehr, First Virginia, 57; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 304.

⁷Harrison, Pickett's Men, 131; Loehr, First Virginia, 57; Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 3, 1332.

soldiers marched and counter-marched between this point and Nine Mile Road. During March 14-23, the brigade tried to intercept Gen. Philip H. Sheridan's Federal cavalry raid on Richmond. On March 19, Longstreet ordered Pickett to place his division in the outer works between the Charles City Road and Nine Mile Road. While in this position, the soldiers took time out from chasing Sheridan to vote for county delegates to the state legislature. Colonel Flowerree duly certified the voting returns for the 7th Virginia and the regiment returned to the deadly business of war. It was the greatest folly to send infantry out to chase mounted raiders, but to such narrow margins of men and time had the Confederacy been reduced. On March 25, weary soldiers stumbled into Dunlop's Station, where they made camp for the next four days.⁸

On March 29, the brigades of Steuart, Corse, and Terry marched to the Appomattox River and crossed on pontoons about five miles above Petersburg. Here most of the troops boarded railroad cars for a ride to Sutherland's Tavern. Unfortunately, the cars filled before the 1st and 7th Regiments could find a place to ride. The disappointed men ended up walking, "as was our usual luck," all the way

⁸Loehr, First Virginia, 57-58; Service Records, Roll 456. See also Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 3, 1325, for Longstreet's orders to Pickett.

to the Tavern. That night the tired soldiers halted near a tavern on Cox Road in a cold drizzling rain.⁹

The next morning the troops marched toward Five Forks. When the brigade approached Hatcher's Run, the 24th and 11th Virginia moved forward to force the Federals back from the creek. This was done and the troops started across the run. As Terry's brigade advanced on Five Forks, the 1st and 7th Virginia advanced to clear Yankee cavalry skirmishers from the crossroads. The Virginians moved out "in handsome style" and, in a swift sharp attack, drove the Federals from their position. The men then fell back to the Forks and lay down "under a pelting rain" to try to get a good night's rest.¹⁰

On the morning of March 31, Pickett's men moved aggressively and attacked the Federal lines. To do this, the Confederates first had to cross Chamberlayne's Creek. As the brigade forced a passage over this small creek, the 3rd Virginia lost heavily in killed and wounded. All day the Virginians steadily pushed back the dismounted

⁹Loehr, First Virginia, 58; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 135.

¹⁰Loehr, First Virginia, 58; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 309-10; Armistead C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe, (Richmond, 1925), I, 163; S. H. S. P., XXXV (1907), 358.

cavalry of Sheridan's forces. The Southerners advanced until one last charge near dark brought them to within a mile of Dinwiddie Court House. Here the Confederates took prisoners belonging to Gen. G. K. Warren's Fifth Corps. Pickett quickly decided to fall back; and, about 1:00 a. m. on April 1, he retreated to Five Forks. During the day's action, Gen. Terry's horse was killed and fell on the general's leg. As a result of this injury, Terry relinquished command temporarily to Col. Joseph Mayo of the 3rd Virginia.¹¹

Terry's men retired to Five Forks and immediately began to throw up earthworks along White Oak Road and perpendicular to Ford Road. The soldiers cut down pine trees, dug trenches and threw out pickets. The brigade held the extreme right of the Confederate infantry line. Off to the men's right, Gen. W. H. F. Lee's cavalry watched for flank attacks. Terry's brigade had been heavily engaged on the previous day and by now numbered no more than 800 muskets.¹²

¹¹Harrison, Pickett's Men, 137-38; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 310-11; Loehr, First Virginia, 58. During the day's fighting, J. P. Perrin, who did not see any fun in soldiering back in 1861 and did not propose to re-enlist, was mortally wounded. Ibid.; Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1298-1305.

¹²Harrison, Pickett's Men, 138-39.

April 1 dawned with the threat of a heavy attack in the air. Before the day was much older, Pickett rode off to attend a shad bake and left his infantry line unattended. The signs of an impending attack multiplied rapidly as the day progressed. Sporadic picket firing and the rumble of approaching masses of men alarmed some regimental officers. Yet Pickett was not to be found.

Suddenly, individual soldiers rushed into the main lines and yelled that most of the pickets had been captured. Volleys of musketry quickly crashed along the line as surprised Southerners repulsed the first Federal charge. The Yankees had attacked the weak brigades on the Confederate left but had been repulsed. Shortly thereafter, another wave of Federals rolled in on the left flank of Brig. Gen. Matt Ransom's men. These Confederates fell back in confusion. Terry's brigade, farther to the right, pulled out of line and counterattacked the Federals with savage determination. The 7th Virginia charged over Ransom's prone troops and momentarily forced the enemy back. Yet its ammunition was soon expended, and the 7th fought the Federals in hand-to-hand combat. Men rolled on the ground and pounded each other with their fists. The unequal struggle could have but one outcome. Finally the

Confederate survivors of the gallant brigade fell back on Corse's relatively fresh troops. There were just not enough of them to stop the Yankees.¹³

The Confederates kept the Federals from overrunning this last line until darkness fell. Colonel Flowerree pulled the regiment back to the forks of the road, where the very confused Confederate line was taking shape. The Federals tried one last attack to capture this Southern remnant. The Southerners sent a destructive volley into the enemy's ranks which sent the Federals recoiling. As quickly as possible after this, the exhausted Southerners withdrew from Five Forks. Colonel Flowerree, being unfamiliar with the country, told his regiment: "Now, boys, in marching away follow that moon."¹⁴

The casualties in Terry's brigade at Five Forks were heavy. Most of the 11th and 24th Regiments were captured

¹³Ibid., 145; Loehr, First Virginia, 59-60; Johnston, Confederate Boy, 312-13.

¹⁴Johnston, Confederate Boy, 313-16; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 147; Loehr, First Virginia, 61. Loehr was captured at Five Forks. See also Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 1, 1298-1305, for the report of Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee.

during the battle. The 1st, 3rd and 7th Virginia all had heavy casualties, but escaped large-scale captures.¹⁵

The Federals had driven the remnant of Pickett's division "back on the White Oak Road" and separated him from the right flank of the main army. Late in the night of April 1, Gen. Pickett collected the remnants of his shattered division and started for Exeter Mills on the Appomattox River. Here he learned that the Petersburg lines had been abandoned. Pickett then joined Longstreet's retreating command and began the march to Amelia Court House.¹⁶

Early on the morning of April 2, the 7th Virginia marched away from its camp near the South Side Railroad and started for Amelia Court House. While on the march, the men of the regiment heard with much sorrow that A. P. Hill, their old brigade commander, had been killed at Petersburg. Later that afternoon, the regiment's rear guard skirmished with some Federal cavalry; but otherwise,

¹⁵Johnston, Confederate Boy, 316. Johnston stated that Co. D lost only six men in the fighting, but that the overall regimental loss was "severe." These are the only casualty figures available for the regiment. Ibid., 318. See also Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 3, 1371, for R. E. Lee's initial report on the battle at Five Forks.

¹⁶Harrison, Pickett's Men, 148-50. Ibid., 142-51, contains Pickett's official report of the battle of Five Forks. See also Official Records, XLVI, Pt. 3, 1371.

it was a day of hard marching and extreme hunger. The brigade passed through Deep Creek and camped a short distance from the village. Here the men received a very "scanty supply of rations"--the first food issued to the regiment in four days. During the night, Adjutant Harrison joined the division with about 250 other survivors of Five Forks.¹⁷

The troops took up the line of retreat early the next morning. Before the men had gone far, word passed down the column that Richmond had been surrendered and partially burned. Many soldiers were disheartened by this news, but most of the men "continued to press on in sullen determination."¹⁸

All along the route, Federals stung the retreating Confederates unmercifully. General Grant did not intend that the wounded Army of Northern Virginia would be allowed to rest and strike back. Federal cavalrymen were "on the flank, and everywhere," forcing the exhausted fugitives to form line of battle time and again to drive off their tormentors. The starving troops lived on parched corn if they had time to parch it; otherwise, they shelled it from the cob and ate it raw. The brigade reached

¹⁷Johnston, Confederate Boy, 323; Harrison, Pickett's Men, 153.

¹⁸Harrison, Pickett's Men, 153.

Amelia Court House on April 4 and continued westward that afternoon. Between this time and April 6, the men rested only for about an hour.¹⁹

At daylight on April 6, the ragged soldiers arrived at Sayler's Creek after an exhausting all-night tramp. Federal cavalry increased their attacks on the slow-moving Confederate column and forced Pickett's and Ewell's troops to form line of battle to guard the rear. General William Mahone's division kept moving and created a gap of about a mile between the rear of his column and the remnants of the Pickett-Ewell forces. Quickly Federal cavalymen thrust into this gap and captured Huger's artillery battalion. The 7th Virginia hurried across Sayler's Creek to re-capture the guns but only succeeded in re-taking several disabled pieces. The final action of the 7th Virginia was at hand.²⁰

Terry's brigade formed line of battle and advanced against the retreating Federal cavalymen. The soldiers moved through an open field to the top of a small hill. Here the brigade halted and the men tore down a rail fence to make breastworks. Suddenly the Virginians observed a

¹⁹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 324-25.

²⁰Ibid., 326. See also Harrison, Pickett's Men, 155.

squadron of Federal cavalry in hot pursuit of Gen. Pickett and some members of his staff. The Union troopers imprudently passed too near to the regiment's line; a volley from the Southerners "emptied every saddle." Shortly after this incident, the Federals began to advance up the hill to attack the waiting Confederates.

General Terry ordered the men to hold their fire until they could see the whites of Yankee eyes. As the Federals steadily came up the hill, they filled the air with a hail of lead from their repeating rifles. Suddenly the Southerners heard a scuffle behind them. Turning their heads, the Virginians found Federal cavalry galloping toward them. One blue-clad trooper grabbed the regimental colors and demanded that Color Bearer Torbett surrender. Just at this moment, someone on the infantry line screamed out a command to fire. Part of the 7th Regiment sent a volley into the Federal infantrymen on their front and the fighting immediately became hand-to-hand. Clubbed muskets, bayonets and sabers dealt death in every direction. The preponderance of Federal numbers dictated but one outcome. Within ten minutes the struggle ended. Nearly all of

the gallant 7th Virginia marched out under cavalry guard as prisoners of war.²¹

The Confederates marched into a clearing surrounded by their captors. Some men cried--others cursed, but most of the exhausted soldiers fell to the ground and went soundly to sleep. These troops had not had a full meal in four days and, except for a very brief halt on April 5, not one hour of sleep. Victorious Federals took as souvenirs hats and boots from those Southerners who had any to relinquish. Colonel Flowerree lost a new hat and pair of boots to these prize hunters. On the other hand, many generous Federals shared their rations with the half-starved Confederates.²²

On the next day, the march into captivity began. About noon on April 7, the Virginians took up the line of

²¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 326-29. Company D took two officers and sixteen enlisted men into this final struggle. Taking this as an average strength per company, and multiplying it by the nine companies in the regiment, the 7th Va. had approximately 162 men present. Johnston also estimated Terry's brigade at not over 500 men. Ibid., 330. See also Service Records, Roll 456.

²²Johnston, Confederate Boy, 332-33. The history of the 7th Va. as a military unit did not end with its capture in battle. The enlisted men went as a unit to Point Lookout, Md., and entered the Federal prisoner of war stockade there. All commissioned officers were imprisoned at Johnson's Island, Ohio. Colonel Flowerree arrived at Johnson's Island on April 17, and remained there for over three months. Service Records, Roll. 456.

march that all knew would take them to a Federal prison. Since their surrender on the previous day, the men had not eaten a full meal. Near dark the column of prisoners passed a herd of cattle being driven up for use by the Federal army. Several of these cattle were slaughtered, and the Southerners received meat which they ate "blood raw, without salt." On April 13, the captive regiment reached Petersburg. Here the Federals issued "a bountiful supply of food," but many of the men had become too sick to eat. The prisoners were feeble because of the long march. Moreover, dysentery was much in evidence. That night the men marched to City Point, where they stood all night in the rain. There was no dry place in the stockade for even the sick to take shelter.

On April 14, the prisoners embarked on steamers for Maryland. The next morning, as the ships anchored off Point Lookout, the men first heard of President Lincoln's assassination. The Southerners greatly regretted this act and "spoke of him in the tenderest terms."

As the prisoners entered the stockade walls, the Federals searched every man and relieved him of any valuables he might possess. The Southerners were divided into mess groups of eight to ten men, with each group under the

command of a regimental sergeant. Each of these mess groups occupied a tent designed to house only five men. At Point Lookout, the soldiers taken at Sayler's Creek found other comrades who had been captured earlier. Such additions raised the number of prisoners from Company D to twenty men.

Rations in the prison were scanty at best. The daily issue was eight ounces of loaf bread, a very thin piece of salt pork or bacon, and a pint cup of bean soup lacking beans. On this diet, Pvt. Johnston lost thirty-eight pounds before his release at the end of June. Many Confederates, already weakened by a winter of near starvation, died during the relatively short stay in prison. Josephus Suthern of Company D was one such soldier who perished because of a lack of adequate care.

Near the second week in June, the Federals began the discharge of Confederate prisoners. When authorities announced that the paroles would be handled in alphabetical order, "it seemed to all appearances that half the prisoners had names beginning with the letter A." The paroles proceeded slowly, and many soldiers assumed names beginning with earlier letters in the alphabet in order to get out sooner. Thus, by the end of June, the

men in the regiment had received their paroles and started on the long walk home.²³ The 7th Virginia Infantry lived now only in memory.

²³Johnston, Confederate Boy, 337-42.

CHAPTER VI.

EPILOGUE

When the writer began the history of this Confederate infantry regiment, the subject was totally unknown.

Research into available historical data has brought the 7th Virginia as vividly to life as is possible. The overall picture that results leads to several conclusions.

The 7th Virginia was a solid, dependable, combat regiment. This fact says something about the men who composed the unit. They did not fight specifically for slavery; witness the 1865 resolutions calling for the enlistment of Negro soldiers into the Confederate ranks.¹ The Southern soldier fought this war to preserve that small corner of the South that he called home. They fought in defense of a way of life that they felt was literally threatened with extinction by Northern fanatics.

This very feeling of fighting for home and family was vital in maintaining the spirit of the Confederate soldiers. This explains in part the fanatical resistance of half-starved and ragged men who followed "Marse Robert"

¹Johnston, Confederate Boy, 283. Johnston stated that the troops would see slavery abolished if it would help bring independence to the Confederacy. See also Loehr, First Virginia, 55.

even when hope was gone. The 7th Virginia's soldiers came largely from rural backgrounds. They were individuals in a lonely universe and accustomed to taking care of themselves. Many were already proficient in the use of firearms when the war began.

The men in the 7th Virginia were by no means all heroes. The regiment had its share of skulkers, deadbeats and deserters. The soldiers got drunk if liquor was available and cursed their officers for throwing them into the guardhouse. Men straggled during a march to see what pleasures the countryside had to offer. Despite their weaknesses in discipline, the regiment amassed an enviable record as a combat unit. It did not lack for men of courage and intelligence who were dedicated to the Confederate cause. For an example of sheer raw courage in non-veteran troops, the conduct of the unit at Frazier's Farm must stand unsurpassed. In 1863, as a veteran regiment whose men recognized a position of strength, the 7th Virginia charged unflinchingly Cemetery Hill at Gettysburg. When the regiment broke and fled in disorder, as at Antietam, it was because of the weight of overwhelming numbers of the enemy.

The officers of the regiment were brave and diligent soldiers. All three of the men who commanded the unit were

cited several times for gallantry on the field of battle. Colonels Patton and Flowerree and Brig. Gen. Kemper, a former colonel of the regiment, all served the Confederate cause with distinction.

In conclusion, the 7th Virginia's war record is one that can stand with the best. This writer has discovered no overt or covert criticism of the unit in any of the materials consulted for this study. The soldiers were average men who took up arms in defense of their homeland. They fought, starved, laughed and cried their way through four years of war. They did so with honor "and the consciousness of duty faithfully performed."²

²Battles and Leaders, IV, 747. This gives the original text of Lee's farewell address to the Army of Northern Virginia.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

In any bibliographical essay on a Civil War regiment, several points must be kept in mind. First, no one writer can claim to produce a definitive history of a regiment. Important new sources of information are discovered yearly. Diaries, letters and other such material still lie unseen in old trunks around the country. Only time and good fortune can bring this treasure to the attention of later researchers. This writer can only claim that he investigated all logical sources that pertain to the 7th Virginia Infantry Regiment.

Secondly, the writer attempted to focus attention on the common soldiers, individually and collectively. The Civil War is presented as the man in the ranks saw it. Therefore, the writer made use of only those volumes which in some way touched on the 7th Virginia. Manifestly, these volumes constitute only a small fraction of the more than 60,000 volumes written on the Civil War.

Thirdly, the writer at times lacked any 7th Virginia source with which to document the history of the regiment.

When this situation arose, he used extant material on the other units in Kemper's brigade. The obvious danger in doing this is that in a 2,000-man brigade, several completely separate battle actions might be fought over an extended front. In several instances, two or three regiments were detached from the brigade and fought together. In these instances the description of the various units' parts in the action can be more certain. The writer has attempted to insure that the action described did affect the 7th Virginia.

MANUSCRIPTS

A vital manuscript collection for the 7th Virginia is the Confederate Service Records and the Records of the 7th Regiment of Virginia Volunteers. Both are in the Virginia State Archives in Richmond and contain muster rolls, comments on individuals in the ranks and occasional reports on regimental movements. An extract from the diary of a Pvt. _____ Clark found in the records of the 7th Regiment threw light on the movements of the regiment prior to First Manassas. These two sources are complemented and enlarged upon by the Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers Who Served in Organizations From the State of Virginia, in the Newman Library of Virginia

Polytechnic Institute and State University. These micro-film records contain all the available information on each individual soldier's Confederate service. These films were indispensable in compiling the age brackets and occupations of the men in the 7th Virginia.

The Smith-Pickett Diary gives a day-by-day account of regimental events in the first half of the war. William Randolph Smith kept the diary from 1861 until his death at Frazier's Farm. George S. Pickett, a comrade of Smith's, then maintained the diary to the battle of Fredericksburg. Smith and Pickett were members of Company F of the 17th Virginia, which was brigaded with the 7th Virginia until just before Fredericksburg. The entries were very informative as to weather conditions and battle actions. The Smith-Pickett Diary is in the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia.

"Wilbur Davis, Recollections of My Life--Especially During the War, 1861-65--For My Children" gives nuggets of information about the early formation of Company I in Albemarle County. This unpublished work is also at the University of Virginia.

The Robert F. Nelson letters, in the Perkins Library at Duke University, contain one fragmentary letter relative

to the regiment during its stay at Centreville during the first winter of the war.

The Virginia Historical Society in Richmond proved to be a valuable depository for data on the 7th Virginia. Several letters from Alexander Bolton of Company D were of interest, especially one written in January, 1865, which described conditions in the Petersburg trenches. Bolton also had a skeptical word for the Hampton Roads Peace talks near the end of the war. These letters are in the Bolton Family Papers collection.

Quartermaster William Cave saved many requisition slips from the war's first winter. These are in the Cave Family Papers at the University of Virginia and give an insight into the winter-time needs of the private in the ranks.

The John Perrin Papers, in the Virginia State Archives at Richmond, provide an intimate glimpse of what the private soldier thought of war after the novelty of soldiering vanished. Camp life and Civil War prices are discussed in these letters by a private in the 1st Virginia.

Edward C. Barnes, a member of the 11th Virginia, wrote many letters between 1862 and the end of the war. His observations are especially good for the 1864 North Carolina

expedition. He also described a private's reaction to Pickett's Charge, Grant's summer campaign of 1864, and the enlistment of Negro soldiers. The original letters are at the University of Virginia.

Lieutenant J. E. Wyant of Company I wrote two letters that were very useful in describing the Christmas dinner of 1864 and the results of the summer campaign of the same year. These letters are in the Bowles Family Papers at the University of Virginia.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The basic published source for all Civil War research is the U. S. War Dept. (comp.), War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1880-1901, 128 vols.) The Official Records contain the correspondence and reports of the leading military personnel of both armies. At times, these reports are subject to exaggeration and downright prevarication, and the information on Confederate activities in 1864 and 1865 is understandably skimpy. Nevertheless, the Official Records are indispensable to any study of a Civil War regiment.

Another basic source for this particular study was the postwar writings of Pvt. David E. Johnston. His Four

Years a Soldier (Beckley, W. Va., 1884) and The Story of a Confederate Boy in the Civil War (Portland, Ore., 1914) are reminiscences of his experiences as a member of Company D of the 7th Virginia. Johnston emotionalized a few incidents, but on the whole his volumes are a credible and intimate picture of the regiment. These two studies are especially valuable because, except for one short absence, Johnston served from the regiment's organization in 1861 until its capture at Saylor's Creek.

A typewritten copy of a letter in the Pearisburg Gazette on June 29, 1861, gives a vivid picture of Company D's exploits while on its way to Camp Wigfall. This copy is in the possession of Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr., of Blacksburg, Va.

In the absence of primary material from within the 7th Virginia, the writer turned to materials from men in sister regiments. Charles T. Loehr wrote a slim but outstanding work: War History of the Old First Virginia Infantry Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia (Richmond, 1884), which is quite factual and fresh. The 1st and 7th Regiments were thrown together in several instances that Loehr described very well. George Wise, History of the Seventeenth Virginia Infantry, CSA (Baltimore, 1870), was another excellent source

of material concerning the period from 1861 until just prior to Fredericksburg.

Alexander Hunter, Johnny Reb and Billy Yank (New York, 1905), is an excellent source for events of the 7th Virginia. The humour and misery of being a soldier in the ranks comes through in Hunter's vivid prose. Another valuable work is John Dooley, John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal (Washington, 1945), edited by Joseph T. Durkin. Dooley's eyes missed little in the marches and campaigns of which he was a part. He served with the 1st Virginia from Antietam until his capture at Gettysburg. William H. Morgan, Personal Reminiscences of the War of 1861-5 (Lynchburg, 1911), gives a good account of the men and events of the 11th Virginia and in doing so mentions the 7th Virginia several times. However, Morgan at times emotionalized events, and he missed the Second Manassas, Antietam and Gettysburg campaigns because of sickness. This necessarily limits the value of his memoirs.

Beyond the 7th Virginia's sister regiments, several books proved to be of considerable value. Walter Harrison, Pickett's Men: A Fragment of War History (New York, 1870), contains reliable accounts of many of the brigade's movements and battles. The battle of Five Forks is especially

well described. Jubal A. Early's War Memoirs (Bloomington, 1960), edited by Frank E. Vandiver, compliments and confirms other works concerning the 7th Virginia's movements at First Manassas. Early commanded the regiment's brigade at the time. W. P. Derby, Bearing Arms in the 27th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War 1861-1865 (Boston, 1883), provides a solid account of the battle of Drewry's Bluff. Derby also gives an excellent view of the Confederate soldier as seen by his counterpart, Billy Yank.

Several more volumes made passing reference to the 7th Virginia. James Longstreet, From Manassas to Appomattox (Bloomington, Ind., 1960), edited by James I. Robertson, Jr., was of some value. J. William Jones, Christ in the Camp (Atlanta, 1904), specifically mentions two incidences of religious fervor in the 7th Virginia. Armistead C. Gordon, Memories and Memorials of William Gordon McCabe (Richmond, 1925), vividly describes parts of the action at Five Forks and mentions the regiment's part in clearing the crossroads of the enemy. Robert U. Johnson and C. C. Buel (eds.), Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (New York, 1884-1887, 4 vols.) gives insights into the retreat to Appomattox and the Regiment's capture at Saylor's Creek.

The Southern Historical Society Papers (Richmond, 1876-1952, 52 vols.) contain excellent accounts of various actions, written by the men who were involved. Eight articles had direct bearing on the history of the 7th Virginia.

The Confederate Veteran Magazine (Nashville, 1893-1932, 40 vols.) also proved to be quite helpful for descriptions of the fights at Drewry's Bluff and Milford Station.

SECONDARY MATERIAL

Douglas S. Freeman's Lee's Lieutenants; A Study in Command (New York, 1942-44, 3 vols.) is by far the finest work of its kind. Freeman gives an overview of the army of which the 7th Virginia was a part. Freeman's excellent footnotes were quite useful in pointing to unknown sources on a regiment, and the bibliographic material at the end of Volume III is most valuable. Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Gray; Lives of Confederate Commanders (Baton Rouge, 1959), gives excellent biographical sketches of all 425 Confederates who attained the rank of general. Lew A. Wallace, Jr., A Guide to Virginia Military Organizations (Richmond, 1964), serves to corroborate company nicknames, commanders and muster dates for Virginia units.

Mrs. Berkeley G. Calfee, Confederate History of Culpeper County (Culpeper, Va.), gives a roster of Culpeper's Confederate soldiers and some other pertinent information. Paul E. Steiner, Disease in the Civil War; Natural Biological Warfare in 1861-1865 (Springfield, Ill., 1968), contains an excellent medical view of the Civil War soldier's life. George R. Stewart, Pickett's Charge; A Microhistory of the Final Attack at Gettysburg, July 3, 1863 (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), helps to put this great event in perspective. Bell I. Wiley, The Common Soldier in the Civil War, Book Two (New York, 1952), serves to give an excellent picture of various aspects of a Civil War soldier's life.

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THE 7TH VIRGINIA INFANTRY REGIMENT, C.S.A.

by

Louis Ford Hitt

(ABSTRACT)

This thesis is a socio-military history of the 7th Infantry Regiment, Virginia Volunteers. Its soldiers came principally from Madison, Rappahanock, Culpeper, Orange, Albemarle, Greene and Giles counties. The regiment fought in the Civil War as part of Kemper's Brigade, Pickett's Division, Longstreet's Corps, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

Through the various sources quoted in this work, the writer has traced the regiment's history from its beginning at Camp Wigfall to its capture at Sayler's Creek. This work focuses entirely on the men and officers of the regiment. The broader issues of grand strategy and Confederate politics are little discussed in this thesis. The writer has also attempted to make the work valuable as a small research aid to later readers who might be interested in other units in Kemper's brigade.

On the battlefield and in camp, the emphasis is on the life of the Confederate in the ranks and how he coped with the war on a day-to-day basis. These Southern soldiers ultimately suffered through four years of war and crushing defeat. Yet these men never lost the spirit of dedication to their cause. They came back to a prostrate South and re-built it--often from no substantial base. This thesis treats of the Southern soldier who fought heroically for his homeland against an enemy that he felt was bent on destroying him. In doing so, these Southerners furnished us with an example of the finest in character and manhood that America had to offer.