

## **Battle of Chancellorsville - Report of Major-General Stuart**

Headquarters Second Corps  
Army of Northern Virginia  
May 6, 1863

Brig.-Gen. R.H. Chilton, A.A. & I.G.,  
*Hd. Qrs. A.N.V.*

General: I have the honor to submit, in advance of a detailed report, the following narrative of events connected with the battle of the Wilderness, May second, and of Chancellorsville, May third, and events following:

This corps, under its immortal leader, Lieut.-Gen. Jackson, attacked the enemy on his right, turning his right flank by the turnpike road, at Melzie Chancellor's, two miles above Chancellorsville, making the attack late in the evening, after an arduous and necessarily circuitous march from the plank road, two miles below Chancellorsville. The enemy had a fine position, and if time had been given him to recover from his first surprise and mass troops on that front, it would have been a difficult task to dislodge them; but Jackson's entire corps, both when marching and when in position, had been purposely screened from view by the cavalry of Fitz. Lee's brigade – an important duty, which he performed with great skill and address. The attack was thus, in a measure, a surprise. The enemy's line of entrenchments was carried, and his legions driven in confusion from the field. It was already dark when I sought Gen. Jackson, and proposed, as there appeared nothing else for me to do, to take some cavalry and infantry over and hold the Ely's ford. He approved the proposition, and I had already gained the heights overlooking the ford, where was a large number of camp fires, when Capt. Adams, of Gen. A.P. Hill's staff, reached me post haste, and informed me of the sad calamities which for the time, deprived the troops of the leadership of both Jackson and Hill, and the urgent demand for me to come and take command as quickly as possible. I rode with rapidity back five miles, determined to press the pursuit already so gloriously begun. Gen. Jackson had gone to the rear, but Gen. A.P. Hill was still on the ground, and formally turned over the command to me. I sent also a staff officer to Gen. Jackson to inform him that I would cheerfully carry out any instructions he would give, and proceeded immediately to the front, which I reached at 10 P.M. I found, upon reaching it, A.P. Hill's division in front, under Heth, with Lane's, McGowan's, Archer's and Heth's brigades on the right of the road, within half a mile of Chancellorsville, near the apex of the ridge, and Pender's and Thomas' on the left. I found that the enemy had made an attack on our right flank, but were repulsed. The fact, however, that the attack was made, and at night, made me apprehensive of a repetition of it, and necessitated throwing back the right wing to so as to meet it. I was also informed that there was much confusion on the right, owing to the fact that some troops mistook friends for the enemy, and fired upon them. Knowing that an advance under such circumstances would be extremely hazardous, much against my inclination I felt bound to wait for daylight. Gen. Jackson had also sent me word to use my own discretion. The Commanding-General was with the right wing of the army, with which I had no communication, except by a very circuitous and uncertain route. I nevertheless sent a dispatch to inform him of the state of affairs, and rode around the lines, restoring order, imposing silence and making arrangements for the attack early next day. I sent Col. E.P. Alexander, senior officer of artillery, to select and occupy with artillery, positions along the line bearing upon the enemy's position, with which duty he was engaged all night. At early dawn Trimble's division composed the second line and Rodes' division the third. The latter had his rations on the spot, and as his men were entirely without food, was extremely anxious to issue. I was disposed to wait a short time for this purpose; but when, as preliminary to an attack, I ordered the right of the first line to swing around and come perpendicular to the road, the order was misunderstood for an order to attack, and that part of the line became engaged. I ordered the whole line to advance and the second and third lines to follow. As the sun lifted the mist that shrouded the field, it was discovered that the ridge on the extreme right was a fine position for concentrating artillery. I immediately ordered thirty

pieces to that point, and under the happy effects of the battalion system, it was done quickly. The effect of this fire upon the enemy's batteries was superb. In the mean time the enemy was pressing our left with infantry, and all the reinforcements I could obtain were sent there. Colquitt's brigade, of Trimble's division, ordered first to the right, was directed to the left to support Pender. Iverson's brigade, of the second line, was also engaged there, and the three lines were more or less merged into one line of battle, and reported hard pressed. Urgent requests were sent for reinforcements, and notices that the troops were out of ammunition, &c. I ordered that the ground must be held at all hazards; if necessary, with the bayonet. About this time, also, our right connected with Anderson's left, relieving all anxiety on that subject. I was now anxious to mass infantry on the left, to push the enemy there, and sent every available regiment to that point. About 8 o'clock A.M., the works of the enemy directly in front of our right were stormed; but the enemy's forces retiring from the line facing Anderson, which our batteries enfiladed, caused our troops to abandon these works, the enemy coming in their rear. It was stormed a second time, when I discovered the enemy making a flank movement to the left of the road for the purpose of dislodging our forces, and hastened to change the front of a portion of our lines to meet this attack; but the shortness of the time and the deafening roar of artillery prevented the execution of this movement, and our lines again retired. The third time it was taken I made disposition of a portion of Ramseur's brigade to protect the left flank. Artillery was pushed forward to the crest, sharpshooters were posted in a house in advance, and in a few moments, Chancellorsville was ours, (10 o'clock, A.M.) The enemy retired towards Ely's ford, the road to United States' ford, branching one half mile west of Chancellorsville.

In this hotly contested battle the enemy had strong works on each side of the road, those on the commanding ride being heavily defended by artillery. The night, also, had given him time to mass his troops to meet this attack; but the desperate valor of Jackson's corps overcame every obstacle, and drove the enemy to his new line of defence, which his engineers had constructed in his rear, ready for occupation, at the intersection of the Ely's ford and United States ford roads. Gen. Anderson's division, of the right wing, arrived upon the field comparatively fresh. I set about reforming my command, with a view to a renewal of the attack, when the Commanding-General received intelligence that the enemy had crossed at Fredericksburg, and taken Marye's hill. An aide-de-camp of Gen. Sedgwick, captured by Col. Wickham's regiment on the right near Banks' ford, reported two corps under command of Sedgwick. The Commanding-General decided to hold Hooker, beaten as he was, in his works, with Jackson's corps, and detach enough of other forces to turn on Sedgwick. The success of this strategy enabled him again to concentrate to force Hooker's position; and arrangements were made for attack with this corps on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday); but before it was begun our skirmishers found the enemy's works abandoned, and, pressing forward to the river, captured many prisoners. The enemy had another work, two miles in rear of the other, which was also abandoned. This region of country is known as "The Wilderness". Rapid pursuit in such a country is an impossibility, where the enemy takes care to leave his trains beyond the Rappahannock, and avails himself, as he does, of the appliances of art, labor and natural obstacles, to delay his pursuers. In this battle, in which the enemy's main force was attacked in chosen positions, he was driven entirely from the field, and finally fled across the river. Our troops behaved with the greatest heroism.

I desire to call the attention of the Commanding-General to the fact that I was called to the command at 10 o'clock at night, on the battlefield, of the *corps d'armee* led so long by the immortal Jackson, in the midst of a night attack made by the enemy, without any knowledge of the ground, the position of our forces, or the plans thus far pursued, and without an officer left in the corps above the rank of Brigadier-General. Under these disadvantages the attack was renewed the next morning and prosecuted to a successful issue. Major-General A.P. Hill, who had the misfortune to be wounded soon after the command devolved upon him, remained near the field next day, notwithstanding his wound, for which I was very grateful, for circumstances might have arisen making his presence necessary.

To the generals of divisions and brigades I feel greatly indebted for the hearty co-operation, zeal and support accorded to me by all to the fullest extent of their ability. The field officers and others I hope to particularize hereafter in a detailed report, when the data is collected, as well as mention specially the various officers serving on my staff with marked distinction during the day.

I labored under great disadvantages in having none of Gen. Jackson's staff with me until after the action began, and then only Major A.S. Pendleton, who, however, behaved with great heroism and efficiency when he did join me.

Our losses were heavy; the enemy's heavier. In Sunday's battle, Brigadier-Generals Ramseur, Heth and McGowan were wounded, and Paxton killed. Heth and Ramseur, though painfully wounded, persisted in retaining command to the close of the fight. Their heroic conduct will be specially mentioned in the report proper. The casualties of the corps I have not the means of knowing, as, before the returns were completed, I relinquished the command to Major-General A.P. Hill, in pursuance to the orders of the Commanding-General; but the division and brigade commanders were ordered to submit, through me, their reports of the battle of Chancellorsville.

The cavalry was well managed by Brigadier-General Fitz. Lee, who seized Ely's ford and held the road to within two miles of Chancellorsville, driving the enemy's cavalry from the former place. His men, without rations or forage, displayed a heroism rarely met with under any circumstances; and, guarding the two flanks, accomplished an indispensable part of the great success which God vouchsafed to us.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

J.E.B. Stuart,

*Maj.-Gen. Comd'g.*

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