

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

5/17/63: 079

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Cyrus Hardaway's letter home dated May 17, 1863 indicated that the entire Army of the Potomac had successfully retreated across the Rappahannock after the *Battle of Chancellorsville* and was once again encamped at their "old" Sharpshooter camp. The Confederacy had won their greatest victory. With less than half of the Federal force, Lee had brilliantly out maneuvered Hooker and everyone else in the Union command.

Many Northerner's shared Hardaway's opinion as stated in his prior letter of May 11, 1863. Commenting upon the probability that the Army of the Potomac including himself, would soon have to march to protect Washington from "Stonewall" Jackson, Hardaway stated, "It is rumored that he has started that way. The best thing that they can do is to let him take it and then they can go on and do up the business in a short time."

Combined with General U.S. Grant's continued lack of success at Vicksburg, morale in the North descended even deeper than after December's *Battle of Fredericksburg*. Northerners who were "soft" on the Confederacy, "Peace Democrats," and Southern sympathizers called "Copperheads" considered *Chancellorsville* proof the Confederacy would never be defeated. It appeared as Hardaway observed, "Ol Virginia never tires and never gives up."

During *Chancellorsville* Berdan's Sharpshooters Regiments were in the middle of the battle as it raged around the "Wilderness." Although no members of Hardaway's own Company D were listed as casualties, the casualty list for both of the Sharpshooter regiments totaled 90 killed and wounded.

It soon became evident that the Army of the Potomac would not remain long in camp after *Chancellorsville*. Lee and the reinforced Confederate army were already on a northerly march up the Shenandoah River valley and menaced Washington, D.C. In a telegram to Hooker, President Lincoln advised him not to cross the Rappahannock and attempt to capture Richmond but instead, "I think Lee's army, and not Richmond, is your sure objective point. If he comes toward the Upper Potomac, follow on his flank and on his inside track, shortening your lines while he lengthens his. Fight him, too, when opportunity offers. . ."