

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

5/24/63: 081

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Cyrus Hardaway's letter home to Pittsfield/New Berlin dated May 24, 1863 was written as the Army of the Potomac rested at their Stoneman's Switch camp across the river from Fredericksburg, Virginia. The army, still under the command of General Hooker, continued to wait for another battle with the Army of Northern Virginia. Since their defeat at *Chancellorsville*, the Army of the Potomac had remained virtually stationary in their camps.

In a mid May speech reminiscent of Burnside's after the *Battle of Fredericksburg*, Hooker congratulated his army for their efforts at *Chancellorsville*, "The men are to be commended on the achievements of the past seven days." In a response to Hooker's statement, the *New York Word* stated, "Whoever knows the facts of the last two weeks will shudder as he reads this order. Whoever does not, let him credit it and believe that his ignorance is bliss."

While Hooker waited for the Confederate army to do something, Robert E. Lee was shifting troops across the Rappahannock and into the Shenandoah Valley. Once in the Shenandoah, the Confederate army would head north and invade the North for a second time. For the first time, Lee did not have his most trusted general with him on a campaign. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson had been accidentally wounded by his own soldiers at the *Battle of Chancellorsville* and died on May 10, 1863. His death deeply upset his soldiers, the public, and most of all, Robert E. Lee. Jackson's death caused Lee to state, "I have lost my right arm." Without risk of any historical criticism, the Army of Northern Virginia would never be as well commanded as it had been at *Chancellorsville*.

Meanwhile, the blood feud between Colonel Berdan and his second in command, Lt. Col. Caspar Trepp continued. Berdan's chronic absence from the *Battle of Chancellorsville* front line combat positions caused his officers and enlisted men to despise him. Throughout May, Lt. Col. Trepp gathered evidence of Berdan's cowardice, conduct unbecoming an officer, and his unfitness for command. On June 1, 1863, Trepp wrote a letter directly to the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Berdan's long coveted promotion to Brigadier General would eventually be denied as a result of this most unusual report.