



DISTANT VIEW OF THE BATTLE OF SPOTTSYLVANIA COURT HOUSE, MAY 12, 1864.—FROM A SKETCH BY EDWIN FORBES.

The battle of Spottsylvania immediately followed that of the Wilderness, and was a part of General Grant's policy of continuous hammering at Lee—"fighting it out on this line" all summer. The night of May 11, 1864, was dark, cold and rainy, and under protection of its gloom Hancock's Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac prepared to assault a second time Lee's fortified position at Spottsylvania Court House, Burnside and Wright supporting his attack. The point of assault was a salient, consisting of an earthen wall, protruding from the line of intrenchments into the woods at a sharp angle. Along the top of the wall at this salient were laid heavy head-logs, and the work was defended by an abatis of tangled trees and a deep ditch. This salient was held by Johnston's division of Ewell's Confederate corps. On the 10th an assault had been made, the works carried, 3000 prisoners and many cannon captured, and the Union troops had pressed on to the second line of intrenchments, but the rebels withstood them there, drove them back and recovered their salient. The Sixth Corps was now hurried to Hancock's support, and both were soon deeply engaged. The fire was terrific and the loss almost unparalleled, but the men held on, although Lee filled with fresh troops the whole space in the rear of his resisting front. As the day (May 12) advanced he wall alone separated the Union from the rebel hordes, and some men fired 300 to 400 rounds of ammunition. Advance on either side was out of the question, but no man could show himself and survive, and the carnage on both sides was awful. At this juncture a battery of Union artillery literally charged the works—the only instance of the kind on record—and, wheeling their guns so that their muzzles almost protruded over the works, poured in canister as long as a gunner was left to serve it. Only two men of the whole battery came out alive. The headlogs of the breastwork were gnawed to pieces by bullets, and several large trees nearby were literally cut down and fell. At midnight Lee's men withdrew, and when, in the early morning, the Union troops took possession of the "bloody angle," they found great heaps of dead men lying on top of one another and choking the ditches. More men were killed and disabled in the single twenty-four hours of hand-to-hand fighting at Spottsylvania than in the several days' battles of "The Wilderness."