

and Grant and Meade made an early attempt to seize it. On the 21st and 22d Birney's corps was pushed to the left, extending south of the city, while Wright's was sent further south to strike directly at the railroad. Wright came into a position nearly at right angles with Birney, facing west toward the railroad, while Birney faced north toward the city. They were not in connection, and a heavy Confederate force under General A. P. Hill drove straight into the gap, turned the left flank of the Second Corps, threw it into confusion, and captured 1700 men and four guns. The fighting was not severe; but the movement against the railroad was arrested. Hill withdrew to his intrenchments in the evening, the Second Corps re-established its line, and the Sixth intrenched itself in a position facing the railroad and about a mile and a half from it. On this flank, affairs remained substantially in this condition till the middle of August.

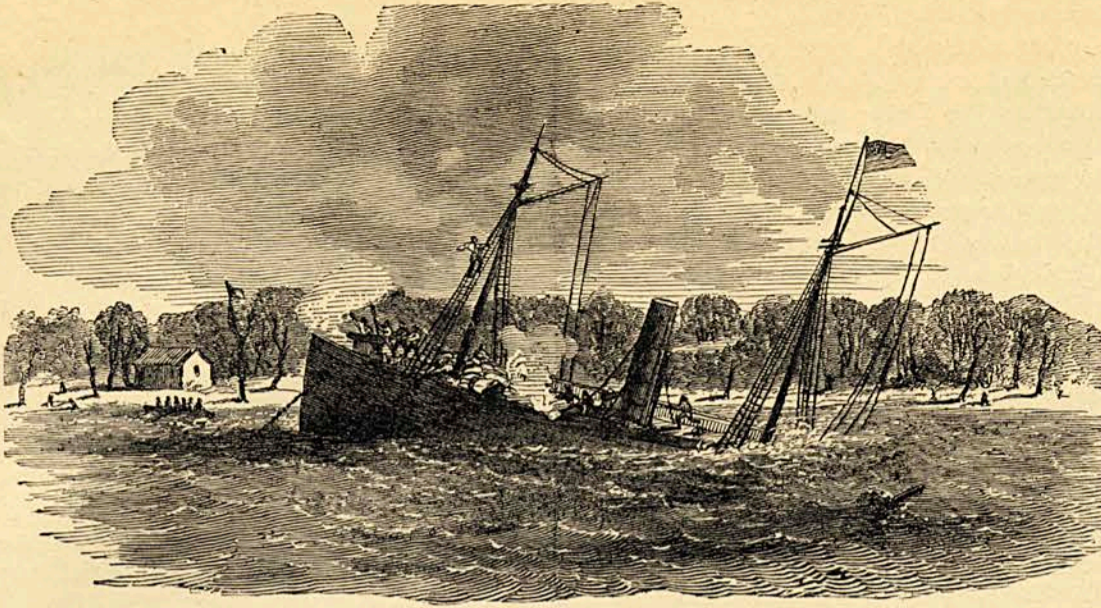
But meanwhile something that promised great results was going on near the centre of the line, in front of Burnside's corps. A regiment composed largely of Pennsylvania miners dug a tunnel under the nearest point of the Confederate works. The digging was begun in a ravine, to be out of sight of the enemy, and the earth was carried out in barrows made of cracker-boxes, and hidden under brushwood. The work occupied nearly a month, and when finished it consisted of a straight tunnel 500 feet long, ending in a cross gallery 70 feet long. In this gallery was placed 8000 pounds of powder, with slow matches. The day fixed for the explosion was the 30th of July. The choice of a division to lead the assault following the explosion, being determined by lot, fell upon General James H. Ledlie's, which was probably the worst, and certainly the worst commanded.

A few minutes before five o'clock in the morning, the mine was exploded. A vast mass of earth, surrounded by smoke, with the flames of burning powder playing through it, rose 200 feet into the air, seemed to poise there for a moment,

and then fell. The fort with its guns and garrison—about 300 men of a South Carolina regiment—was completely destroyed, and in place of it was a crater about 30 feet deep and nearly 200 feet long. At the same moment the heavy batteries in the National line opened upon the enemy, to protect the assaulting column from artillery fire. Ledlie's division pushed forward into the crater, and there stopped. Ledlie himself did not accompany the men, and there seemed to be no one to direct them. Thirty golden minutes passed, during which the Confederates, who had run away in terror from the neighboring intrenchments, made no effort to drive out the assailants. At the end of that time they began to rally to their guns, and presently directed a heavy fire upon the men in the crater. Burnside tried to remedy the difficulty by pushing out more troops, and at length sent his black division, which charged through the crater and up the slope beyond, but was there met by a fire before which it recoiled; for the Confederates had constructed an inner line of breastworks commanding the front along which the explosion had been expected. Finally, both musketry and artillery were concentrated upon the disorganized mass of troops huddled in the crater, while shells were lighted and rolled down its sloping sides, till those who were left alive scrambled out and got away as best they could. This affair cost the National army about 4000 men—many of them prisoners

Railroad. Warren's corps was moved out to the road on the 18th, took a position across it four miles from Petersburg, and intrenched.

On the 19th, and again on the 21st, Lee made determined attacks on this position, but was repelled with heavy loss. Warren clung to his line, and made such dispositions as at length enabled him to meet any assault with but little loss to himself. A day or two later, Hancock returned from the north side of the James, and was rapidly marched to the extreme left, to pass beyond Warren and destroy some miles of the Weldon Railroad. He tore up the track and completely disabled it to a point three miles south of Reams Station, and on the 25th sent out Gibbon's division to continue the work some miles farther. But the approach of a heavy Confederate force under A. P. Hill caused it to fall back to Reams Station, where, with Miles' division (6000 men in all) and 2000 cavalry, it held a line of intrenchments. Three assaults upon this line were repelled, with bloody loss to the Confederates. General Hill then ordered Heth's division to make another assault and carry the works at all hazards. Heth found a place from which a part of the National line could be enfiladed by artillery, and after a brisk bombardment assaulted, carried the works, and captured three batteries. Miles' men were rallied, retook a part of the line and one of the batteries, and formed a new line, which they held, assisted by the dismounted cavalry,

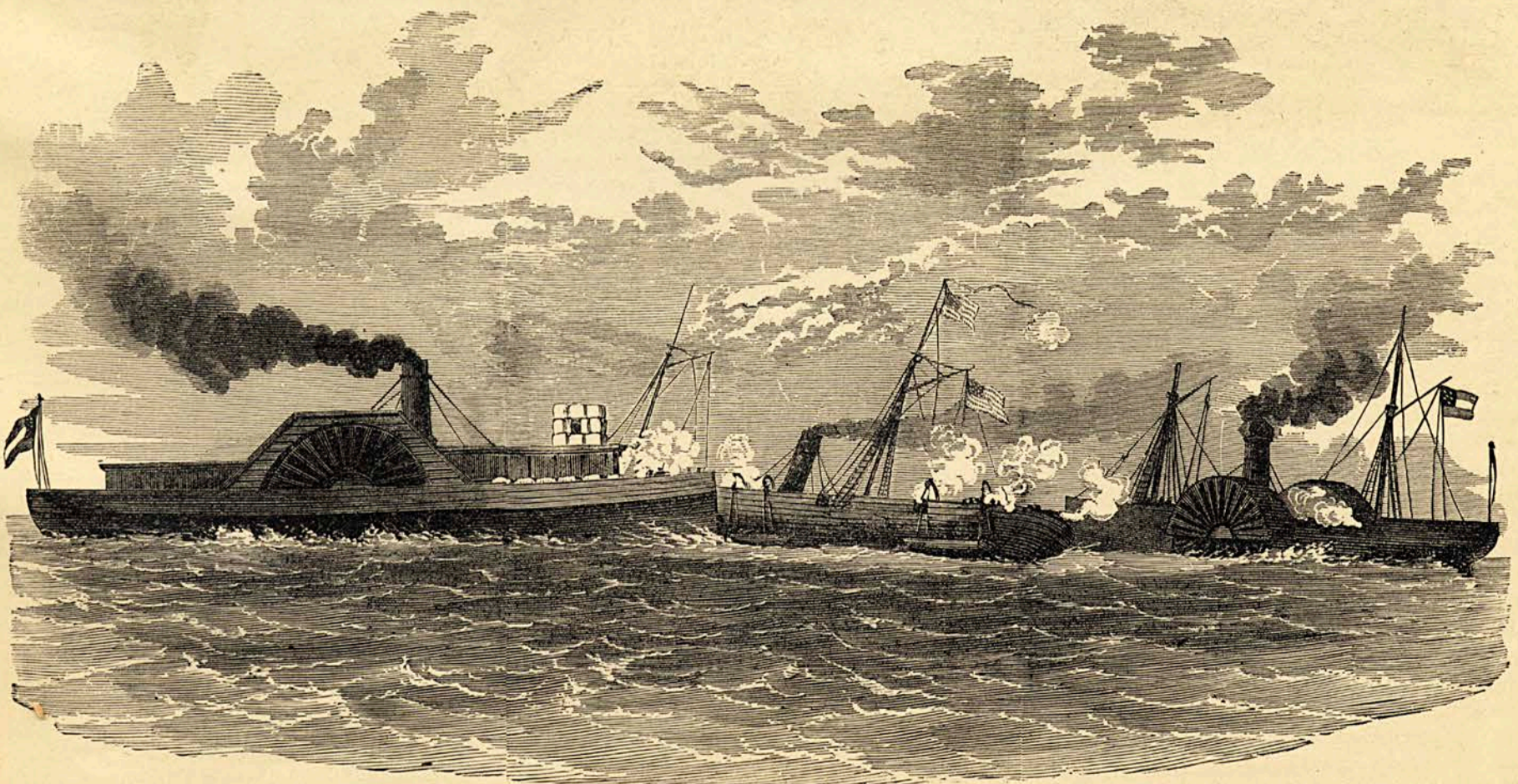


LAST BROADSIDE OF THE "VARUNA."—COMMANDER BOGGS FIRES THREE GUNS OF THE FEDERAL GUNBOAT BEFORE SHE SINKS.

FROM A SKETCH BY W. WAUD.

—while the Confederate loss was hardly 1000. Soon after this Burnside was relieved, at his own request, and the command of his corps was given to General John G. Parke.

On the 13th of August, Hancock made a demonstration from Deep Bottom toward Richmond. He assaulted the defences of the city, and fighting was kept up for several days. He gained nothing, for Lee threw a strong force into the intrenchments and repelled his attacks. But there was great gain at the other end of the line; for Grant took advantage of the weakening of Lee's right to seize the Weldon



ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE U. S. GUNBOAT "VARUNA" AND THE CONFEDERATE RAM "BRECKINRIDGE" AND GUNBOAT "GOVERNOR MOORE."

FROM A SKETCH BY WM. WAUD.