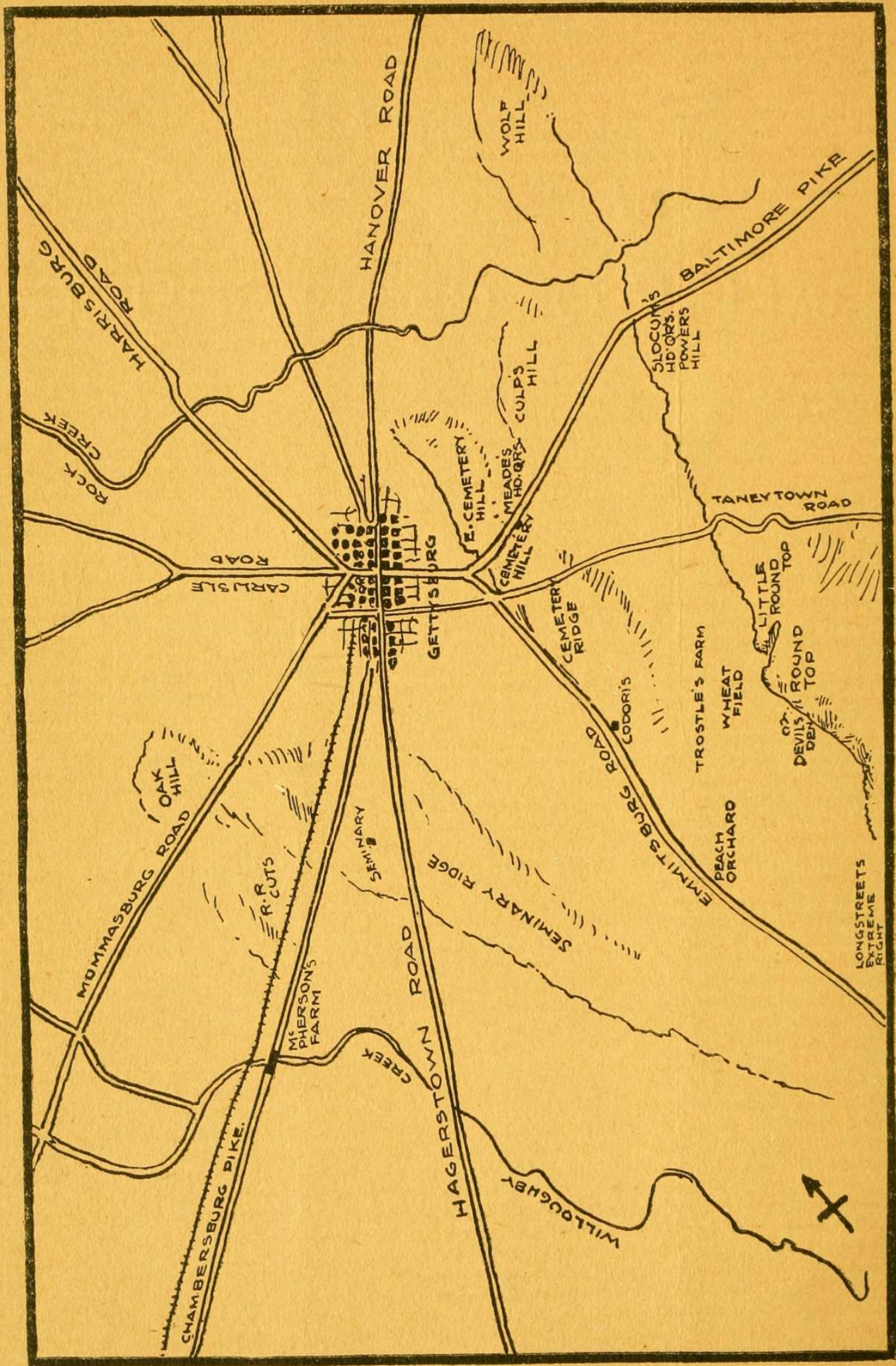




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THE  
BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

*By*

*GEORGE W. HOSMER, M D.*

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# THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

By George W. Hosmer, M.D.

ON this day fifty years ago a hostile army of 70,000 veteran soldiers, commanded by a great General, was in Pennsylvania—near to the capital of that State—50 miles northwest of Baltimore; and there was a sudden fear in many great cities and consternation in all the country. All men knew that this invasion represented the confidence of the Confederate commander in his power to conquer peace by winning in the North a great battle, the price of which would be the dissolution of the Union and the recognition of the independence of the Confederacy. That was the meaning of his presence in Pennsylvania.

Only the Army of the Potomac could come between the country and that bad consequence. Between these two armies there was to be hard fighting therefore, and it began in the forenoon of July 1 out on the pretty country roads to the northwest of the town of Gettysburg. Gen. Lee, assuming that he was nearly alone in Pennsylvania, and knowing that he was in a land full of fat cattle and good horses, had his forces much scattered for the most practical reasons; but when he heard that the Army of the Potomac was near he sent urgent orders to all his divisions to concentrate at Gettysburg—for some were to the east, some to the north and some to the west of that town. On that day the Army of the Potomac was moving to the northward—the First Corps in advance and near to Gettysburg, the cavalry in front. Gen. Buford of the First Cavalry Division had been sent forward “to find the enemy,” and he had done it. It was not very difficult. He found them coming down the roads from Cashtown, Mummasburg and several other places, and there were plenty of them. He was well supplied with cannon and the noise of his welcome was heard far and wide in all that part of Pennsylvania, and he stood in the way.

## *Marching Toward the Sound of the Firing.*

On the same day, in the bright and pleasant summer weather—not very hot—the Twelfth Corps, far to the south of Gettysburg, was making its easy way toward some uncertain destination which could not be named, as there was no prophet in the party, but which proved to be the heights just south of Gettysburg—a piece of ground that was to be dedi-

cated to history as one more of the notable spots where men have killed one another on a grand scale. Gen. Slocum was the commander. Other Generals were Alpheus Williams, Thomas H. Ruger, George S. Greene, John W. Geary, afterward Governor of Pennsylvania—all splendid fellows; and I was in that very good company.

Marshal Foix was so sure of himself and his comrades on the way to Waterloo that they marched “without fear and without hope”—without fear of the enemy, without hope as to the future of France. In this little company they were equally without fear, but not without hope—yet the hope was not so dazzling as to bewilder any one. Hope had fooled them so many times that they were weary, and just now one more commander of the army had been sacrificed to the infernal gods, and they were to try a new man, and to do it with the assistance of the enemy. They had every sort of courage except the sort that can make men sanguine in such circumstances. So it was on nearly all the roads coming up from the South on that summer day. For on other roads, all with their faces the same way, came the Second Corps, the Third, Fifth and Sixth Corps; and the Sixth was to make a great march to get there in time.

### *How They Talked.*

They talked much about the change of commanders. Nobody there cared much for Hooker. Some hated him. Two things against him seemed to rankle—the sudden collapse after Chancellorsville of a campaign beautifully begun, and that collapse produced only by the failure of a corps that was not thought to be the most precious part of the army. The other thought seemed to involve disgrace—that Stonewall Jackson had made a flank march half way around our army and never a finger lifted to stop him till he reached the end of his march.

But there was a sentiment in favor of Hooker when any one thought of Halleck. How would you like to command an army while tied to the apron strings of your querulous grandmother, who understands that she has been born to find fault if fault can be imagined on any occasion? There was much wonder whether the telegraph connecting the military part of the war with Administrative functionaries was not necessarily a detriment to the army.

For Meade everybody had a good word and nobody an enthusiastic word. Yet that modest soldier was to win the greatest open battle of the war against the enemy's greatest commander. But nobody made him ridiculous, as they had made McClellan, by calling him a Little Napoleon.

And presently as we went on we came to a place where the air



vibrated in response to the voice of perpetual artillery, and I left the company and went forward to see what was up. So I came to Gettysburg and met that queer procession that one always meets on the safe side of a populous place when there is a battle on the other side—the frightened people, men, women and children, seeking safety and carrying all that queer junk and broken ends of utility which they regard as household treasures.

### ***Reynolds, Buford, Doubleday and Others.***

All the noise we had heard was the reverberation in the hills of the dispute between our fellows and the other fellows out on the country roads where Buford was. Heth's and Pender's divisions of Lee's army were there. They had been over in the Chambersburg region and were coming in and Buford was making it difficult. Gen. Reynolds with the First Corps was coming on and he had told Buford to hold the enemy till the infantry could get up, and Buford with cavalry and artillery was doing it like a gallant gentleman.

Reynolds came up in a hurry with the First Corps, and then there was a battle. Reynolds had the command of our left wing with two corps of infantry, the First and the Eleventh. The Eleventh was behind and he did what he could with the First, and used very badly several of the enemy's brigades. He had on his hands at first only Heth's division. Then came in Pender's division, and then began to come in far to his right Ewell's corps, which had been to the north and east. Reynolds held the enemy until the Eleventh Corps was near and he sent orders for it to come in on his right. And now came a calamity. Reynolds was shot in the head and killed instantly by one of the enemy's sharpshooters. This was at 11 o'clock.

### ***Howard Becomes Commander on the Field.***

Howard with the Eleventh Corps, coming through Gettysburg, had halted his command there and gone to the top of a high house and surveyed the field, not knowing what had happened. But he studied the ground and he had the coup d'oeil. He saw that for such a battle as was on the cards the region in which the First Corps was fighting would be ultimately untenable and saw the advantage of the ground behind Gettysburg—the Cemetery Ridge. Descending, he formed on that ground the Second Division of his corps, commanded by Gen. Von Steinwehr, with three batteries. He was then informed of the loss of Reynolds. This made him Commander on the Field and he made his headquarters on Cemetery Ridge, but sent to the assistance of the First Corps, now com-

manded by Doubleday, the First and Third Divisions of the Eleventh Corps, commanded by Gen. Schurz. The Third Division was Barlow's. All this put our battle out of joint.

Gen. Schurz's command was formed with its left toward Doubleday on the Mummasburg road, but not connecting, and his right near Rock Creek, and when Ewell put in all his force he sent a brigade between Doubleday and Schurz, and as Gordon came in on Ewell's extreme left he caught Schurz's line on the flank, and the case looked hopeless for us. Barlow went down. Many men were killed and wounded, and the whole line was in very bad shape.

### *How a Supremely Important Choice Was Made.*

Schurz sent peremptory orders for Von Steinwehr to reinforce him with his division, but Von Steinwehr, who was a professional soldier, could see from his standpoint more than could be seen on the field, and could see that for him to advance would only sacrifice one more division in a hopeless fight, and perhaps sacrifice the position he held—the key of the whole scheme of the battle. He went to Howard, who was nearby, and asked what he should do. I happened to be there when he came. It was not necessary to argue the case. He was ordered to stay where he was. If another order had been given Gordon's division of the enemy would have had that height in half an hour and the First Corps would have been isolated and destroyed that day. And our corps as they came up would have been concentrated on some less favorable ground; and it would have been altogether another battle.

Schurz's men became mere fugitives, but the splendid fellows of the First Corps and the cavalry, skilfully handled by Doubleday, Wadsworth and Buford, fought their way through the afternoon to Cemetery Ridge, and there a strong defensive line was formed with Von Steinwehr in the centre and the First Corps on the right and left; batteries in position and the cavalry out on the plain to the left. And thus the forces already up on both sides had been fought to a standstill, and we waited for the others.

### *Hancock Approves the Choice Made by Howard and Von Steinwehr.*

Hancock came on the ground about 6 o'clock, for Meade had heard all that had happened and had sent him forward to command on the field. Howard, who was his senior, did not receive him with open arms, but they

were both too big to permit a question of etiquette to interfere with duty and they agreed on all that should be done.

I had witnessed the circumstance in which Howard had fixed the fact that we should hold for the impending battle the ground on which we finally fought it and on which he had fixed his headquarters during the hours in which he commanded the army, and it was pleasant to hear the exuberant Hancock about three hours later deliver an enthusiastic opinion on the same point. His judgment assumed the practical form of a declaration that the position "had no flanks." And certainly at the first view it did look that way. Yet it had flanks, and the enemy found them, but they were flanks that proved very discouraging for him and very good for us, and the magnificent soldier may have intended to say that.

It was interesting to find the opinions of our two generals confirmed by the enemy's anxiety on this subject. Ewell came and looked us over and wisely left us alone. He in the afternoon had had Gordon's, Hay's and Dole's brigades ready to seize the ground then held only by Von Steinwehr, and his heart was broken when he was stopped by Lee's peremptory order. It was a ghastly mockery to him when some hours later Lee, having seen the ground, ordered him to "advance and occupy the heights if practicable." At that time it was impracticable.

Finally our position was developed from that nucleus, and the line trailed away to the left, keeping the dominating ground, the Second Corps as it came up forming on the left of the First, the Third on the Second, the Fifth in reserve behind the Third, toward Round Top, and with the Twelfth Corps on Culp's Hill, our extreme right, itself "a looming bastion" which the enemy was to find "fringed with fire." Altogether we occupied an extemporized Gibraltar, and the open field before our left front, giving a vast field of fire to all our batteries, was its crowning advantage. One historian has written to our disadvantage about the victory on the first day, but in a great battle there is only one victory. Many great battles appear to stretch over several days, but always the last of the several days is the real day of battle. All the others are only preliminary. Commanders manoeuvre and fight for position, to present their forces to the enemy with "the best foot foremost," to get a good field for all your fire, to hold ground with the flanks well covered, to hold the road by which the men behind may come up, and so on. To get all that is the concern of the earlier days, and that was what we were doing on the first day; and we gained a position the importance of which was equivalent to 20,000 more men. To say that in doing that we were beaten on the first day is to ignore all the essential facts in the case.

### *Lights Out.*

Orders in camp that night were "No fires and no lights," and they were not obeyed very strictly. All the open parts on the ridge south of the cemetery were traversed in various directions by stone walls, stone walls of the usual height and very solidly built. In the angles of these stone walls fellows made fires discreetly. That is, they chose angles in which the walls running either way were between the fires and the enemy, for the enemy's line of fire was over all that space from three directions—from the east, the north and the west—and they kept up a random firing all night. Perhaps they saw some flickering of these fires. But the temptation to make fires was very great, for in a piece of fried bacon and a cup of coffee made at such a time there is such a comfort that no man who dines at Delmonico's has imagination enough to understand. And, besides, everybody knew that the Provost Marshal was far away in the rear. Finally there was a feeling that we were pretty well tucked in, and nearly everybody went to sleep, for everybody was tired to death. But some fellows with a passion for making entrenchments were making them all night. But there were thousands of gallant fellows lying out on the open region for whom it was an awful night; splendid boys "looking proudly to heaven from the deathbed of fame."

## II.

### *Lee's Plan for the Second Day.*

ON the morning of July 2 at daylight Gen. Lee and Gen. Ewell rode together around our extreme right and studied the ground there, and Gen. Lee's plan for the second day was probably gone over on that ride, for it contemplated as one part of it an attack by Ewell at that place. The other part was the battle intended on our left. These were two parts of one conception, for Lee saw that when Meade's left was assailed, as he intended to assail it, Meade would be compelled to reinforce it from the divisions on his right. Ewell was to have the advantage of the opportunity this would give him. If the attack on the left should be made before Meade had moved any part of his force from the right Ewell's attack would prevent his moving them, and this would help Longstreet. If when Ewell should make his attack Meade had already stripped his right to defend the left, then it would be easy for Ewell to capture and hold the strong positions on our right—Culp's Hill and the eastern face of the Cemetery Ridge.

It was a well imagined plan, but left out of consideration two important factors. One was the impossibility of precise co-operation on the

part of Lee's own army; the other was the resistance involved in the fighting quality of the Army of the Potomac. But for these two things it would have been a beautiful scheme. Did Gen. Lee count these as parts of the game? Probably not; certainly not the second part, for all Lee's strategy and tactics together show that he regarded with contempt the army that was to beat him in the grandest game of his life.

Gen. Lee never learned that in all his previous collisions with this army he had had the benefit of the incapacity with which the army was handled. He imagined that all his successes were the fruits of his own genius and the superior prowess of his army, and could not conceive that while he had whipped several unsatisfactory commanders he had never whipped the Army of the Potomac. He had smashed it always; what was easier than to smash it once more? He was to see!

### *How Doth the Little Busy Bee.*

From daylight until the middle of the afternoon it might have been thought by a farmer five miles away that we were all standing still, but this does not mean that any one was idle. Battles are not "continuous performances." On the contrary, they are fought in paroxysms. And all the time between the paroxysms is filled with the hard labor and strain of preparation. Our fellows had been working all night with axe and spade, and so now they worked all day. And the enemy gave us plenty of time. In these hours of golden opportunity were made miles of field works all around our front—very significant parts of the case. They were not grand engineering fabrications, only some rails or trunks of trees stretched lengthwise along the line and covered to a height of two or three feet with earth. If the enemy's infantry ever reached these lines they could easily get over them, but the fellows behind the lines had a chance to operate on the visitor with rifle or bayonet. These works proved of great moment at Culp's Hill. And in all these hours the enemy was occupied in the same labor and also getting all things ready for the visits he intended to make us. And also all the day there were notable episodes and incidents in the operations of the sharpshooters, and the loss of Reynolds the day before showed the great possibilities of that part of the game.

### *How a Sharpshooter Missed a Great Shot.*

In that forenoon one incident of that nature just missed becoming of historical importance.

In the town of Gettysburg there was an old church with a tall

belfry, and as the enemy held that part of the town they had sharpshooters up in that safe place. Perhaps, indeed, the very man who had killed Reynolds was there, with an eye to other generals—one of the fellows who always want big game. Cemetery Hill or Ridge was so high that the top of it was very nearly on a level with that belfry, and everybody going from one end of our line to the other came and went that way. It was the grand thoroughfare, and many men who happened to have no pressing duty lounged about there. To a man in that belfry everybody on Cemetery Ridge was in plain view. It was just as if you should look out of your window and see a man on the house top over yonder; and as to distance, it was only a fair rifle shot.

Toward noon there met and conferred on the Ridge for several minutes two well mounted officers of the Union army, behind each of whom were several officers and orderlies. They were so placed that one had his right side toward the man in the belfry, the other his left side, and their faces were about three feet apart, and they talked in low tones. One of these was Gen. Meade, the commander of the army; the other Gen. John Newton, commander of the First Corps. And then between these two faces there passed the sharp "zip" of a rifle bullet. They heard it, but they thought it was a chance shot, and went on with their conference.

But this scribe, about three yards away and in line with Newton, had seen the shot fired and saw the man who fired it, and the bullet zipped also not far from his face. He knew that the man in the belfry would fire again. Therefore he rode forward and told the generals how it was, and pointed out the man in the belfry—and they continued their conference at another place. There was no place on that field where you could be sure you might not be hit, but it was not worth while to take foolish chances and perhaps change the command of the army once again.

One of the good consequences of the enemy's dilatory tactics was that it helped our concentration, as it gave time for the coming up of one of our strongest corps—the Sixth—which arrived on this day. If there was in the Army of the Potomac any "old guard," that body was the Sixth Corps. And there was not a man in the army who did not feel a sense of comfort in battle when he saw nearby fellows with Greek crosses on their hats.

### ***Forces in Position.***

By the afternoon it became apparent that the marching and counter-marching of the enemy all day had ended in the concentration of a very heavy force on our left, a heavy force that was supposed to be hidden

from our sight, but a great part of which was in plain view from Little Round Top. What was not so well seen, and was indeed very little known, was that behind Ewell's lines on our right another force of 8,000 men were waiting for the word. Attention was the more fixed on the left because the position there was known to be tempting to the enemy.

Our left on or near the famous Peach Orchard was held by the Third Corps, commanded by Gen. Sickles, and the right of that corps should have connected with the left of the Second Corps, the next in line; while the left of the Third Corps should have reached as far as possible toward Round Top. But the line of the Third Corps, because of an untimely advance, was so placed that both its flanks were out in the air. As the enemy saw this case, one corps of our army was practically isolated, and that corps held a supremely important post. If it could be swept from its position Lee saw the easy possibility of doubling up our line on the left and fighting his way all along the slope from Round Top to the Cemetery on the north end of the Ridge, and for this he planned the fight at

### *The Peach Orchard.*

At 3 o'clock the Confederate artillery broke out on our left, every battery in that part of the field concentrating its fire on our line, and the greater part of it on the hill where the Peach Orchard was, and upon the line on either flank of that position. It was an effective fire, and the Peach Orchard was full of our infantry, and in and near it and beyond it toward the Wheat Field our batteries responded to the enemy's fire.

At 5 o'clock Hood's division, the enemy's extreme right, advanced against the extreme left of the Third Corps line. His orders were to attack our line in his front—that is, a line that ran nearly at a right angle with the Emmitsburg road from the Peach Orchard to the Wheat Field, and turn its left. As he went ahead he saw that our line was far stronger than it had been thought, and he perceived that if he turned the position of the line at the Wheat Field he would have on his rear whatever force we had on Round Top. He sent some scouts to take a look at our force there and found we had none; that he could occupy Round Top save for his orders. He sent word to Longstreet to report this, and the answer was to act upon the original orders.

At this time Hood was wounded and left the field and was succeeded by Gen. Laws, who then went ahead. But he changed his direction, either by intention or by the pressure of the fighting, and reached Round Top and went forward to Little Round Top. He now saw that his left was uncovered; that MacLaws with another division, who should have been there, was not in sight. He rode to find him, discovered that he had

not moved and had had no orders to move. MacLaws now received orders and went ahead. He was opposite the Peach Orchard, and his advance immediately forced all that terrific fighting that followed for the Peach Orchard, the Wheat Field behind it and all the ground up to the foot of Round Top.

Here began Longstreet's part of the battle—for Hill's and Ewell's men had done all that preceded this. Longstreet was not happy that day. He was a great fighter, but he was a long-headed man also, and he saw that his men were fought at a disadvantage, and that the awful cost of assailing men in strong positions—men as good as his own in every possible aspect—threatened to put in peril the success of this enormous operation of invading the North. But he did the utmost that man could do. He was a giant—and so were Hood and MacLaws and the rest of them—but there were other giants in those days and on that spot. The Third was a splendid corps, and every cannon and every rifle in it was fought for all it was worth despite the early loss of the commander. There was great fighting face to face and every foot of ground was fought over to and fro for more than three hours. But the Third Corps did not have to do it all alone. Meade had provided timely reinforcements, and the force on the right—the Second Corps—and the force in reserve behind and the force from the extreme right all came in. On the extreme right of Longstreet's line there was a critical hour near Round Top.

### ***Gen. Warren Saves Round Top.***

Gen. Warren at the signal station on Little Round Top had seen the operation of the right of the Hood division; had seen that it could occupy Round Top, and perceiving how disastrous that would be for us had acted promptly to prevent it. Help was near, for there was in that immediate region all the Fifth Corps, all the Sixth Corps, a part of the Second Corps and all the Twelfth Corps save one division. Warren borrowed two brigades of the Fifth Corps—Vincent's and Weed's—and put them in on the flank of Hood's division, which was doubled up and driven down the hill. But for over an hour more the fighting was fierce all along from the foot of Little Round Top to the Emmitsburg road, and all the force Meade had sent forward was in it, and the Third Corps of course, for Anderson's division of Hill's corps going in on the left of MacLaws extended the attack beyond the right of the Third Corps to the line of the Second. On all that front there was a titanic battle for three hours.

As night came on the enemy fell back, but did not retire. He had



conquered the position at the Peach Orchard and counted that as a victory. In fact his conquering that position corrected our line—made it just as it would have been if Meade's orders had been carried out—for the orders intended that that should be outside of our line. Our losses were very heavy; those of the enemy apparently far greater. Hood's division lost there 2,000 men. Small incidents will sometimes give a measure of losses. Kershaw reports that one company of the Second South Carolina went into the battle with forty men and at night only four were left to bury the others.

### *The Struggle On Our Right.*

Finally as everything was over on our left in came Ewell's men on the right—the other part of the plan. This was about 8 o'clock. Was this a want of co-operation on the part of Lee's army? In part, perhaps, it was. But there was another reason for this delay. Ewell's men, keeping a sharp lookout, had seen how one command after another had been sent away from our right to reinforce our left. They had seen the division of Alpheus Williams marched away, then Ruger's division and all of Geary's that was there; all from Culp's Hill; and had seen other commands marched away from Cemetery Ridge. They played to let that go on, and may have thought that at last they could march in and occupy undefended ground. And it nearly came to that.

At 8 o'clock they came in force. Against Cemetery Ridge were sent the five Louisiana regiments of Hayes's brigade and four North Carolina regiments of Hoke's brigade. They rushed the thin line in front, but were much torn up by the fire of the Fifth Maine Battery at the head of the gulch between the hills. It enfiladed their line. They reached the batteries behind our line, Stevens's, Wiedrick's and Rickett's. They were well riddled before they reached the batteries, and at the batteries there was a savage hand-to-hand fight. Help was near. From Hancock's corps came Carroll's brigade, which went into the melee with the bayonet, and the enemy was driven out, leaving on the field about two-thirds of his men.

On Culp's Hill things were worse. It was charged by three brigades of Johnson's division—Jones, Williams and Stewart—fourteen regiments. And how was it defended? By one small brigade—six New York regiments that had been killed down in many battles till they were mere skeletons of regiments—the Sixtieth, Seventy-sixth, Ninety-fifth, One Hundred and Second, One Hundred and Forty-ninth and One Hundred and Seventy-eighth. But the man in command was a hero. This was Gen. George S. Greene, a modest, capable, ever ready soldier, a hard

fighter, the best type you could find of the men whose heads and hearts had made the Army of the Potomac.

### *The Enemy Captures and Holds All Night a Part of Our Lines.*

Culp's Hill was a strong position, but sixteen of the regiments posted for its defense had been sent over to the left, and only Greene was there, and the enemy came at him hammer and tongs, and it looked for a moment as if this part of Lee's plan was to be an amazing success. But Greene held his lines and kept the enemy off for two hours. Finally some of the enemy, creeping around to the extreme right of our line, discovered that part of our works there were unoccupied. That was the part of the line that had been held by the troops sent away. When they went Greene had had traverses made at the end of his line. As soon as the enemy got his men into the unoccupied line they made a rush for Greene's line, but the fire of Greene's men from behind the traverses cooled their ardor and they sat down to wait for reinforcements.

Greene also had sent for reinforcements, but they did not come; and it was a time when every moment was fraught with imminent peril for our position. If sufficiently reinforced the enemy already lodged within our lines would certainly endeavor to rush our feebly held defenses, and might carry them, and he would then have an open way to turn our whole line. Reinforcements had been sent to Greene, but they did not reach him. Riding myself to join him, I happened to learn why and to help unravel one of the complications that may always arise in a night battle. Col. Kane with a Pennsylvania regiment and some other force marching to join Gen. Greene had suddenly found himself under fire from the front, and the fire had come, as he thought, from Greene's men, for he did not know that the enemy held part of that line, and he believed Greene's men fired upon him supposing him the enemy. If he returned the fire he would, as he thought, be firing upon our men. If he did not go ahead he could not perform his duty. If he went ahead how many men would he lose? In that state of mind I found him, and as I knew the way in, I agreed to go ahead and tell our fellows who he was, supposing always, as he did, that the firing was from our line. I easily found Gen. Greene, told him the story, and he sent an officer to guide in Col. Kane's force. So the old General had a good reinforcement and they held the lines that night, for the enemy knew that supports had come in and they became wary.

During the night the enemy's men holding that part of our line were heavily reinforced. There came to them Walker's brigade from John-

son's division (the old Stonewall Brigade) and Daniel's and O'Neal's brigades from Rode's division.

So there were seven strong brigades of the enemy on that hill. Across a level region in front of them half a mile away was the Baltimore turnpike. On that turnpike they would be in rear of all our forces formed with the front the other way and could take the end of Cemetery Ridge in reverse, and if they had known it they could have brought 20,000 in the way they came that night. When our regiments, returning from the other side, found their position in the hands of the enemy they formed a line there and slept on their arms waiting for daylight.

These were all the absent divisions of the Twelfth Corps. There came also Shaler's brigade of the Sixth Corps.

That night the report from the different corps made our effective force 58,000. If we had 80,000 in the beginning, as some histories make it, these two days had cost us 22,000 men. But we never had so many as 80,000.

### III.

#### *Lee's Opportunity.*

ON the third day we had this bad case to begin with: Seven brigades of the Confederate army—that is to say, all the division of Edward Johnson, one brigade from Early's division and two from Rode's were in possession of part of our lines on Culp's Hill, the part they had captured the night before. This force was equal in numbers and in every respect to the Confederate force that had done all the fighting on our left the day before. There were twenty-six regiments of veteran infantry. This was more than half of what was left of Ewell's corps, and his five other brigades were near to reinforce those on the hill. Our line was not safe for one minute till they should be driven out. This was Slocum's battle.

At daylight that force of the enemy was in line to advance and occupy the Baltimore road only a little ways in front of them. And there were no entrenchments here—no obstacle but the line of boys in blue. If they reached the Baltimore road they would be in the rear of all our force on the main front, from Cemetery Ridge to Round Top, and it does not need much imagination to see how enormously this would favor the other operations that Lee intended against that front. Lee had in the night changed his plan for the day, obviously with regard to this possibility. His first plan had been to push and fully develop the oblique attack on our left, co-operating with Ewell on the right. But when in the night he learned how great his losses had been on our left and that he

had really gained nothing, and saw the immense possibility of Ewell's advance, he gave up the first plan and determined upon the grand attack on our main front.

With our army in safe possession of all the ground it had held, an attack on its main front would be a vain waste of force, but with Ewell and all his corps on the Baltimore road much of our army would be compelled to change front and face him, and in that critical time an attack in great force on our front would be a master stroke. It was in the spirit of that purpose that he said to somebody he "was going to send every man he had upon that hill." Suppose he should do that while these men of Ewell's corps had already a lodgment within our lines!

Before we reject what Gordon said and others have said since about Lee's intention that Longstreet's grand operation should be done earlier in the day it is well to consider this possible relation of the two parts of that day's work.

### *The Opportunity Passes.*

But the parts of our army that had been sent from Culp's Hill the day before were now all in line between Ewell and the Baltimore road, and before Ewell's men were ready to advance all the artillery of Williams's division of the Twelfth Corps opened on them and punished them tremendously, though they had some cover by getting on the other side of our works out there. As soon as the fire ceased our fellows went ahead—Williams's men, Ruger's and Geary's—and Ewell's men advanced to meet them. Ewell's men were driven, but they rallied and came again. There were savage hand-to-hand conflicts.

All our men in that part of the field were in this fierce, critical, desperate fight—Greene's men, Candy's, Colgrove's, Kane's, Shaler's brigade of the Sixth Corps and Meredith's famous "Iron Brigade" of the First Corps, which had killed or captured more than all its own numbers in the first day's fight. New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan and Connecticut were all in that awful little battle, and by 11 o'clock, or about that time, every man of Ewell's corps was driven out of the position, and in such a state that they were not likely to come again. No fighting on all that field was of greater moment than this. But up to this time there was no sign of the grand attack on our front, which was comprehensible tactically only if intended as coincident with this fight. The spectacular event was to come, but the battle was won on Culp's Hill. Beautiful fighting which, like some other notable bits of history, seems to have slipped between the fingers of the fellows who work the hurrah machines!

### ***Preparing for Great Things in Front.***

At the council of war on the night of the 2d it had been agreed that some corrections should be made in our line; and a very important one of these was made on our left front, by which all that part of the line that had been on the Emmitsburg road was withdrawn from that road and formed on a line about half way between it and the Taneytown road. This closed up the gap between the left of our line and Little Round Top, and considerably enlarged our field of fire on the open region toward the enemy, which proved of great importance.

For two or three hours now there was a quiet like that of Sunday; and there was within our lines the common wonder, "What next?" Gen. Meade was at least one man who knew exactly what was to come, for he had shown that singular quality of superior generalship—the capacity to understand his opponent, to read the mind he had to deal with. At the council of war, at night on the 2d, he said to Gibbon: "Lee has attacked and failed on both our flanks. If he attacks to-morrow it will be on our centre; on your front." Gibbon said: "If he comes we will take care of him."

And he was coming!

### ***Getting Ready.***

For the grand attack intended Gen. Lee was now getting his men in position. All this went on very slowly, fortunately for us. The forces assigned for making this grand stroke were Pickett's division of Longstreet's corps, that only came up that morning, and Heth's and Pender's, of Hill's corps, which had done a great part of the hard fighting of the first day. It was not an overwhelming force. Only one division was fresh. Longstreet said: "The three divisions will give me 15,000 men. But there never was a body of 15,000 men that could make that charge successfully."

For this small piece of common sense he was held to be disloyal to Lee. But such as they were, the three divisions were drawn up and held ready in the woods out on Seminary Ridge, well out of sight.

### ***Two Hundred and Fifty Cannon Firing for an Hour.***

At 1 o'clock 138 pieces of Confederate artillery, posted all along the line of Seminary Ridge, opened fire on our front. All that fire was tremendous for noise and very destructive for effect. But everybody was used to such things. That fire had particular purposes. It might cripple many of our batteries that commanded the open ground in front, and it did cripple a number; and as it would certainly draw our fire, and our

ammunition might be running low, it might exhaust what we had, and thus make things easier for the fellows that were to come across that open ground. Our fellows, however, had cut their eye teeth as to ammunition.

Our batteries responded with not less vigor, and we had better batteries and better ammunition; and all the way from Cemetery Ridge to Round Top, and from the crest of the hill behind, sloping down to the road in front, the mountainside was like a volcano—a volcano with twenty craters. People only record their impressions when they say that such a cannonade makes the earth tremble; for the effect upon the atmosphere of this noise, this constantly recurring yet practically continuous concussion, touches one's perceptions as if the earth were reeling.

There was more than an hour of that; and then, while the enemy was still firing with all his force, the order was given on our side to "cease firing." This was to save our ammunition, but it was to the enemy the sign they had looked for as an evidence that our ammunition was used up. They rejoiced over it.

### ***Who Will Launch This Bolt of Battle?***

So the moment seemed to have come. There had been some hesitation about giving the final order for the Confederate charge. Longstreet, in the words reported above, had protested against it. Lee did not repeat the order. He merely did not withdraw it; so it stood upon his silence. Longstreet repeated it to Pickett, but told him not to move yet, but wait till Alexander, the chief of artillery, should give the word after the cannonading. Alexander was instructed to open with all his guns and give the word to Pickett when our batteries should be silenced. Longstreet further qualified this, and said: "If it is not pretty certain that your fire demoralizes the enemy I should prefer that you would not advise Gen. Pickett to make the charge."

So it was up to Alexander. He was to advise or not advise the making of the charge, and to overrule or confirm Gen. Lee. Thus, the order when it did reach Pickett came in a roundabout way, and was the result of an erroneous opinion that our batteries were silenced and our army demoralized. But when Alexander had reached that opinion he gave the order, and the infantry swept forward down the ridge and into the field of fire of all our guns.

### ***Who the Fellows Were.***

These were the regiments that were to strike the last blow of the Confederacy in Pennsylvania:

Pickett's Division, three brigades—Garnett's Virginia Eighth, Eighteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-eighth, Fifty-sixth; Armistead's Virginia Fourteenth, Thirty-eighth, Fifty-seventh, Fifty-eighth; Kemper's Virginia First, Third, Seventh, Eleventh, Twenty-fourth.

Heth's, commanded by Pettigrew, four brigades—Pettigrew's North Carolina Eleventh, Twenty-sixth, Forty-seventh, Fifty-second; Brockenbough's Virginia Fortieth, Forty-seventh, Fifty-fifth; Archer's, commanded by Fry, Alabama Fifth, Thirteenth, Tennessee First, Seventh, Fourteenth; Davis's Mississippi Second, Eleventh, Forty-second, North Carolina Fifty-fifth.

Pender's, commanded by Trimble, four brigades—Perrin's South Carolina First, Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth; Lane's North Carolina Seventh, Eighteenth, Twenty-eighth, Thirty-third, Thirty-seventh; Scale's North Carolina Sixteenth, Twenty-second, Thirty-fourth, Thirty-eighth; Thomas's Georgia Fourteenth, Thirty-fifth, Forty-fifth, Forty-ninth.

For Gen. Lee this was the charge of "Pickett's Virginia regiments." There were forty-eight regiments, and eighteen of these were Virginia regiments.

### *Marching Into Immortality.*

And all these fine fellows stepped forward into immortality as if each one felt all the glory of the occasion. Every battery on our side opened again, and the Confederate batteries, beyond Pickett, firing over his head, did what they might to cripple our batteries and drive our men to cover; and the thunder and roar and hum and murmur and swing of the air came again, and with it a sound like the thin, far-away ghost of the rebel yell.

As this force, indulging a little in that vague vocal satisfaction, came under the fire of our guns its formation suggested that it might have been planned for the advantage of our artillery. On the left it was in three lines, say six files deep. Behind Pettigrew came Garnett and Frye, and behind them Brockenbough. On the right it was in six lines. No gun could fail to hit one or the other, and if a shell went over one line it exploded in the next.

And the air over them was full of the queer little pictures made by the exploding shells. For a shell as it explodes up there looks as if it bursts into bloom. You see, as if coming from nowhere, but originating there, a sudden, small mass of dense white vapor, like a bunch of cotton, unfolding itself in circular volumes that grow larger and larger, as if a flower expanded its parts and gave place to the others; and over a hundred guns firing five times a minute were supplying those blooms—

grand blooms in the air, with deadly consequences down below—for it rained scrap iron on the heads of those heroic fellows. And there were nearly twenty minutes of that before them; and in the noise of our guns and of their guns and the exploding of the shells the rebel yell dwindled to a poor little plaintive sound—rather like an appeal than a defiance.

### *The Awful Roar and the Iron Rain.*

On the enemy's front was a line of skirmishers, and as these fellows fired at our skirmishers out on the field the little jet of vapor from the muzzles of the pieces was a quaint, small detail of the picture, and gave it military formality. And all came on with a splendid swing, marching grandly, freely, nonchalantly, as if there was no such thing as artillery in the world and as if the notion of twenty batteries, each gun firing five times a minute, was a vague fancy of the philosophers with which they had no concern. And the grand roar went on—the great thunder of the guns themselves, the fearful shriek-scream whizz or whirr of the shells as they tore through the air—the smaller detonation of exploding shells as each one at the end of its trajectory scattered its scraps of "iron indignation" on the heads below. And who could hear what man might have to say?

And all that was not merely noise. It was a very destructive fire; for as our fellows held the side of the long slope—say a mile and a half long by three or four hundred yards wide—there was not a spot on which the deadly missiles did not fall. Fortunately, the enemy appeared to make one blunder. They did not concentrate their fire on the point where the attacking column would strike, but fired a great deal over us and over the ridge, many shells exploding in our rear. Perhaps they thought our fellows were massed over there.

Alexander, of the Confederate artillery, with eighteen guns, came on in the rear of Pickett's right to support him against any advance on our part if he should suddenly fail to go ahead.

Our fire was wonderfully effective, and no such body in any battle in the world had ever made such an advance against so many batteries of such artillery. Longstreet, who looked on, saw the gaps in the lines made by our fire, and saw that one of our batteries on Round Top (Rittenhouse's), enfiladed the lines, and that one shell would sometimes knock down five or six men.

### *How They Looked.*

But they came on—down the little slope of Seminary Ridge toward the Emmitsburg road. As that line was in its glory it made a picture that



appealed to the pride of every one that saw them, but apparently not to any sense of pity. That was a thought not in the case. They had a front of about 500 yards, and they had no advantage from those things that sometimes make "the pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war." There was no color, no gold lace, no plumes; but only their not particularly fine battle flags; and there was a dignity beyond imagination in the simplicity of it all. In that gray line—so called, but not even a real gray, rather a dingy something between real gray and dirty white—it seemed as if everything had been excluded that might distract thought for a minute from the men themselves; from the grim splendor of line upon line of magnificent manhood, marching defiantly, proudly, gloriously to certain death, without even the chance that what they were doing could add an ounce to the scale of victory for their army. For the scheme was that the main column was to seize and pierce our line, and the supports were to come in and do the rest; yet supports and all were all under the same fire, and all going down together, so that the theory was a "barren ideality."

### *The Canopy and Haze of Glory.*

Perhaps they showed more grandly now for the fact that as they came out of the depression they were partly in a haze, for the smoke of all the guns and the vapor of the thousands of shells that exploded over their heads and within their lines and the volume of dust that the feet of such a column always raises made a canopy over them and an uncertain screen about them. So they came on, and reached near the Emmitsburg road the lowest part of the depression between the two ridges, a point partly protected from our fire by the inequalities of the ground between. At this point they halted a little, not so much to breathe, perhaps, as to close up their lines. By this time their skirmishers were lost in the line. Codori's house broke their front as they reached it, and that was another element of disorder.

### *They Are Half Way.*

At this point they had made more than half their distance. They were about 500 yards away and near to the bottom of the sudden slope at the top of which was the line of the Second Corps. All our batteries that confronted them save those in the Second Corps now fired shrapnel and case, and this tore frightful gaps into what was no longer a line. But the mass came on, and in the twinkling of an eye the rifles opened—some at 200 yards, others at 100—and the force wilted and failed and

melted away. Others behind them took their places and were slaughtered in their turn, and yet the amazing fellows came on.

### ***Some Are Still Alive at Our Line.***

In spite of all the firing a body of the enemy's men did reach our line. But this was due to a fault on our side. At the time when the order to cease firing had been given to save our ammunition that order had not been obeyed by the batteries of the Second Corps. They had continued to fire, and had, in fact, used up their ammunition; so that when the enemy were within 400 yards and all the other batteries were tearing the line with case shot the batteries of that command were silent, and the enemy escaped a fire that must have destroyed them entirely.

These fellows having reached our line alive, almost by a miracle, behaved as if the position were theirs by some sort of divine right, and they had only to take possession; and a hundred came over the stone fence in front firing in the faces of our fellows. They were two or three thousand to a whole corps, with two other corps behind it. This was a fight of a few minutes hand to hand with our fellows, the enemy at last fighting only to get away. One brigade of ours—Webb's—captured a thousand men in this little melee. But how different it would all have been if Ewell had then had his corps on the Baltimore road!

### ***So Dies a Wave Along the Shore.***

There was no more in front that day. But in rear of our right there was a tough cavalry fight with Jeb Stuart. He had been put there by Lee in order to harass our retreat when the grand operation in front should drive us from our position. Fate will always have its little irony.

And so the fierce fighting of three days ended in a towering, overwhelming debauchery of battle; a grand paroxysm of insane tactics which, like an operation of the same character on a smaller scale in the Crimean war, was, if you like, magnificent, but was not war. For this was a charge that could not affect the issue. It could not retrieve the defeat of Longstreet on our left the day before nor Ewell on our right this day. It could only determine against Lee the result of those fights. It was simply an amazing military pageant—a grand human sacrifice on the altar of the gods of glory. It was the most wasteful thing ever done on a field of battle—a waste not merely of human life, but of 10,000 trained, tried veteran soldiers—fellows that can be counted upon in the stress of battle.

As some Confederate officers had talked about that march to our lines, the Confederate General Wright had said: "It is not so hard to go there as it looks. The trouble is to stay there. The whole Yankee army

is there in a bunch." There was the practical point. If when that column had gone through all the firing it should reach our lines with four or five thousand men still on foot, what then? Why, that four or five thousand would be face to face with all the Second Corps, supported on the right by the First Corps, on the left by the Third, with the Fifth and Sixth Corps behind these.

### ***What Might Have Been—"If."***

Much has been said with an "if" about what might have been done; and with a sufficient number of "ifs" you could change the result of every battle that ever was fought in all the ages. Gen. Lee apparently did say, long after: "If I had had Stonewall Jackson at Gettysburg I would have won that fight." Gen. Lee was never a "spendthrift with his tongue;" yet even reticent men may be tempted into making phrases by an adequate pressure of fool friends, and a phrase in glorification of Jackson was apt enough upon the lips of the man who had so much reason to admire him. Certainly between Jackson and Pickett there was a notable difference. Yet why reproach Pickett because he was not Jackson? He was a very gallant soldier. But in playing a speculative game with "ifs" it may fairly be said that if Lee had won at Gettysburg he would not have won by that charge, for Jackson would probably not have made it. Yet if he had made it, it would have been all the same.

Lee had put 15,000 men as a target in front of our army on open ground exposed to the fire of twenty batteries of good artillery for twenty minutes and to the fire of 20,000 rifles for ten minutes. Every battery and every rifle was "good for" a given number of men every minute. And this simple operation of the mechanism of battle destroyed that column, and would have destroyed it though there had been in it every dashing soldier known to military history from Julius Caesar to Phil Sheridan.

### ***Gen. Lee as He Looked That Day and Felt That Night.***

Gen. Alexander, of Confederate artillery, saw Gen. Lee out in the field on the ground the charge had gone over immediately after the repulse, and he said: "It was a momentous thing to him to see that bloody repulse, but whatever his emotions there was no trace of them in his calm and self-possessed bearing." Several have borne witness to the moral grandeur with which Lee assumed all the responsibility and to the intellectual stamina with which he faced it.

But night came, and it was different. Gen. Imboden saw him after midnight, and has described in a few words his awful depression. Imboden

had been instructed to come for orders, and when he was in Lee's presence it was several minutes before the General spoke; and Imboden, perceiving his state, "was unwilling to intrude upon his reflections" and waited in silence. When Lee spoke he said "in a voice tremulous with emotion:" "I never saw troops behave more magnificently than Pickett's division of Virginians did to-day in that grand charge upon the enemy. And if they had been supported—as they were to have been, but for some reason not yet fully explained to me were not—we would have held the position and the day would have been ours." And he added, in a tone almost of agony: "Too bad! Too bad! Oh, too bad!" And Imboden adds: "I shall never forget his language, his manner and his appearance of mental suffering."

Imboden was at that conference instructed by Lee in certain duties relating to the retreat, which began that night.

### *Fate Sometimes Takes a Man at His Word.*

But the end of this battle was finally in full accordance with Lee's own proposition. At Seminary Ridge, on July 1, he had talked with Longstreet, and Longstreet had argued against attacking our lines; had urged operations of manoeuvre that might change the parts and make ours the assailing force. Lee had answered: "No. The enemy is there and I am going to attack them. They are there in position, and I am going to whip them or they are going to whip me."

That was the bold and resolute declaration of a great soldier, and things came out that way. Only the alternative had taken the place of the main proposition—"they" had whipped him.

He had contemplated a possibility that the steady courage and determined spirit of our well commanded army had made a reality, and the Army of the Potomac, while not vainglorious about it, did feel all the grandeur of the result, and felt that it had conquered a foe worthy of its valor and had saved the Union. It was satisfied to feel this, and never bragged about it.





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