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THE BATTLE OF

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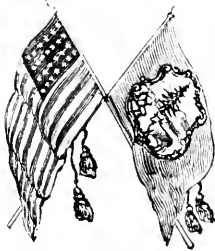
THE PART TAKEN THEREIN

BY

VERMONT TROOPS.

BY G. G. BENEDICT,

LIEUT. AND A. D. C.



BURLINGTON :

FREE PRESS PRINT.

1867.

THE PAPER, the substance of which is contained in the following pages, was prepared at the request of Officers of the Vermont Historical Society, and was read at the special meeting of that Society, in Brandon, Vt., January 26th, 1864. The position of its author, on Gen. Stannard's staff, gave him fair opportunities for observation of the matters related. He was the first man of his Brigade on the field, having been sent in advance to announce to the Division Commander the approach of the Brigade, and reaching Cemetery Hill before the close of the firing on Wednesday. His post on Thursday afternoon was by the side of his general, on the brow of Cemetery Hill, till it was exchanged for the extreme front on the left centre. The moonlit night of Thursday he spent in a search for a missing ammunition train, which took him over the whole ground occupied by our army. His duties called him to and fro upon various portions of the field during Thursday and Friday. He rode on Saturday over our lines from left to right, and over a portion of the enemy's position; and on a subsequent visit to Gettysburgh in November, 1863, he was enabled to verify his impressions by further study of the ground, and conference with many brave men who stood on those bloody hillsides during the great fight. His account of the part taken by the 2d Vermont Brigade, is that of an actor in or eyewitness of almost everything related; and of one who has been desirous to know and to set down only the simple truth.

So much may properly be said to the circle of friends for whose reading the paper is printed in this form. The writer is only sorry that the pressing demands on his time have not allowed him to give it studied revision in the light of all the information gained since the close of the war. Such revision, however, would not particularly affect the narration of the part taken by the Vermont troops, but only some of the surroundings with which it is grouped, and which are given only to show its importance and relation to the whole. The importance of that part is more and more fully recognized in the later histories of the battles, and there need be little fear that posterity will not fully perceive it.

For the illustrations I am indebted to Col. Jno. B. Bachelder, of New York, for whose forthcoming History of the Battle, which will doubtless be the fullest and best one for all time, they were engraved, and who has kindly, and as a special favor, permitted this use of them.

BURLINGTON, Vt., December, 1866.

G. G. B.

VERMONT AT GETTYSBURGH.

The battle of Gettysburgh was a notable battle. In respect to numbers engaged, loss of life involved, and importance of results, it ranks, by universal consent, among the great battles of the world. It was the culmination of the rebellion, the turning point of the great war for the Union; and it was the only great battle of the war fought on the soil of a Northern State. Its claim on the interest of every American, from such characteristics, is enhanced for Vermonters by the fact that at three important points on the field Vermont troops held the front, and at the two chief crises of the battle were largely instrumental, under God, in changing a doubtful fight into victory.

It is no part of the purpose of this paper to sketch in any detail the movements preceding the battle. It will be enough if we remember that Gen. Lee took across the Potomac, on his northern march, the *best* rebel army at the height of its strength, numbering 100,000 men of all arms; that the Army of the Potomac, 85,000 to 90,000 strong, had followed, covering Washington, till Baltimore was also threatened, and then moving so as to intercept him, should he march upon either city; and that the rebel commander, having collected his army in the Cumberland Valley, in Pennsylvania, turned southward on the 1st of July, 1863, through the mountains, to anticipate the Army of the Potomac in securing the point—the village of Gettysburgh, Pa.—at which the main roads cross and diverge to Baltimore, Frederick City, Harrisburgh and Washington. I pass over all details of the hard and toilsome march, accomplished at the rate of nearly 20 miles a day, for ten consecutive days, by which our army moved from the Rappahanock to the

Pennsylvania border. I must omit, too, any detailed description of the battle of Wednesday, July 1st, begun in the morning by Gen. Buford with the Cavalry, two miles north of Gettysburgh, opened in earnest by the brave and capable Gen. Reynolds, (who was one of its first victims,) with the 1st Army Corps; sustained through nearly two hours of stubborn and at times aggressive fighting by Gen. Doubleday, who succeeded to the command of the 1st Corps; continued under General Howard with the 10th and 11th Army Corps, till, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, outnumbered and outflanked, our forces abandoned the hard and hopeless fight for the ridge northwest of Gettysburgh, and retreated to Cemetery Hill, on the southern outskirts of the village. That first day's fight has been rightly called the *Ligny* of the great battle. It was pronounced by the intelligent correspondent of the London Times with the rebel army, "the best contested field that the Army of the Potomac had yet known." Its cost to us was *ten thousand men* killed, wounded and prisoners—nearly one-eighth of the effective force of the Army of the Potomac. Its results were the holding in check the rebel army during eight hours of incessant fighting; the possession of the important position of Cemetery Hill on Wednesday night, and the lull of Thursday forenoon, which gave rest and respite to the shattered remnants of the 1st and 11th Army Corps, now reduced to half their former strength, and enabled the remainder of Gen. Meade's army, and its commander, to join them before the fighting was renewed. By dark of Wednesday, the 3d Corps, Gen. Sickles, and the 12th Corps, Gen. Slocum, had arrived upon the field; at midnight Gen. Meade reached the ground, and by 7 o'clock the next morning the 2d and 5th Corps had arrived, and with the rest were posted in the celebrated "horseshoe" line of battle, of which Cemetery Hill was the centre and key.

Thursday, July 2d—a pleasant summer day—passed on without strife till 3 o'clock, P. M., when its quiet was broken by a movement on the part of our army. At the hour named, the 3d Corps, Gen. Sickles, swung out from its position on the left of Cemetery Hill and advanced to occupy a low rounded ridge half a mile

to the west. It was an unfortunate movement. Longstreet, as Gen. Lee states in his official report, had been ordered to occupy the same ridge, and had already deployed his forces, of Hood's and McLaws' divisions, for the purpose. His line extended beyond the left flank of the 3d Corps, and he met its advance with a sweeping artillery fire on front and flank, while Hood and McLaws pressed forward to seize the crest. The 3d Corps stood up well to its work. Gen. Sickles fell with a shattered leg, but his command held its own and even drove back the enemy for a time. Gen. Hood lost an arm and was taken from the field. His successor, Gen. Robertson, was also wounded, and it was not till Longstreet headed a charge in person that the line of the 3d Corps became broken. It fell back, leaving the ground strewn with its dead. Longstreet now followed up his advantage sharply, and made a determined effort at once to turn Gen. Meade's left and break through on the left centre. The attack on the extreme left was repulsed with hard and bloody fighting by the 5th Corps, Gen. Sykes, which as the assault on the 3d Corps opened had just formed its line in the rear and to the left of the 3d Corps. The broken lines of the 3d were enabled to form afresh in the rear of the 5th, while the latter stubbornly held its ground, with the support of a portion of the 6th Corps, now just arrived upon the field. The left of the 5th Corps extended to Little Round Top Hill, and desperate fighting took place for the possession of that hill. The enemy were repulsed at its foot by a brigade of the 5th Corps, consisting of the 16th Michigan, 44th New York, 83d Pennsylvania, and 20th Maine, which not only maintained its position, with a loss of the brigade commander, Col. Vincent, and fifty per cent. of its numbers killed and wounded, but captured some 300 prisoners. The hill was finally occupied by the 20th Maine, Col. Chamberlain, and a battery of 30 lb. Parrot guns was placed on its summit, which made a fortress of it and assured the safety of Gen. Meade's extreme left.

The attempt on the left centre came nearer to succeeding when success for it would have been bitter disaster for our army. The rout of the 3d Corps left open large intervals in our lines to the

left of Cemetery Hill. A portion of the troops brought down by Gen. Hancock, commanding that wing, to fill the largest gap, had broken for the rear under the pressure of Longstreet's advancing columns. The federal batteries to the south of the hill were left without support. One of them had actually fallen into the hands of the enemy, when the Vermont 2d Brigade, of the 3d (Doubleday's) Division of the 1st Corps, then lying behind Cemetery Hill, was put into the gap and re-established the line.

This service was important enough to be described a little more in detail.

To go back a little,—the 2d Vermont Brigade, consisting of the 12th Regiment, Col. A. P. Blunt, 13th, Col. F. V. Randall, 14th, Col. W. T. Nichols, 15th, Col. Redfield Proctor, and 16th, Col. W. G. Veazey, Vermont Regiments, under command of Brigadier General GEORGE J. STANNARD, had been assigned to the 3d division of the 1st Corps, when the army passed the line of the Ocoquan; but leaving that line a day behind the Corps, it had not been able, though marching hard and gaining gradually on the Corps, to make an actual junction with it before the battle. The 12th and 15th Regiments were detached at Emmetsburgh, by order of Major Gen. Reynolds, to guard the Corps trains. On the afternoon of Wednesday, July 1st, in compliance with an order of Gen. Sickles, the 15th Regiment rejoined the brigade on Cemetery Hill, and remained there through the night, and until noon of the 2d, when it was sent back by Gen. Doubleday to guard the ammunition train, then parked at Rock Creek Church, about two and a half miles from the field. The 12th and 15th Regiments were sent back to Westminster from there; and thus, while doing important duty and going where they were ordered, had no opportunity to share in the glory and dangers of the actual conflict.

The Brigade, thus for the time being reduced to three Regiments, did its utmost, on Wednesday, hurried forward by the sound of cannon and by couriers from Gen. Doubleday, to reach the field in time to take part in the first day's fight. It succeeded only in reaching the ground as the last guns were fired from Ceme-

tery Hill. It marched in on the left, over ground which was occupied by the enemy next morning, and after some marching and counter-marching, under contradictory orders from different corps commanders, three of whom assumed immediate command of the Brigade, was allowed to halt and drop to rest on the left of Cemetery Hill. Gen. Stannard was appointed general field officer of the day, or of the night rather, for that portion of the field, and a picket detail of 200 men of the 16th Regiment was posted in front, relieving cavalry who had been doing that service. Thursday morning the Brigade was moved to the rear of Cemetery Hill, and five companies of the 13th, under command of Lieut. Col. Munson, were detached as a support to one of the batteries on the Hill. Co. B, of the 16th, was also detached to strengthen the skirmish line on the left front of Cemetery Hill, and did not rejoin the regiment till the close of the battle. While stationing these skirmishers, Capt. A. G. Foster, Acting Inspector General on Gen. Stannard's staff, was shot through both legs, the first officer of the Brigade that was hurt by a rebel bullet. The shells burst thickly over the Brigade during the severe shelling of Cemetery Hill, which accompanied the assault on our left on Thursday afternoon, and a few men were wounded by the pieces. Gen. Stannard was placed for a while in charge of the position occupied by the batteries on the top of the hill, and took his post where the Taneytown road crosses the brow of the Hill,—a convenient spot for observation of the enemy, but sufficiently dangerous from the attention paid to it by both the rebel artillery and sharpshooters. The regiments of his command, however, lay below the crest, and had nothing to do till late in the afternoon, when orders came which hurried them to the left and front, into the fight of which they had thus far heard much but seen little. They were sent by Gen. Doubleday to the rescue and support of the batteries on the left centre, which the enemy, following up the retreat of the 3d Corps, were now assaulting with infantry. The 14th Regiment, Col. Nichols, led the way, and forming in line of battle, moved forward under a sharp fire to the rear of a battery from which the supporting infantry had just retired in confusion. The enemy fell back as they advanced, and the firing soon ceased at that

point. The 16th Regiment, Col. Veazey, which followed the 14th, also found in front of it a battery without support, and supported it till dark—losing a few men by cannon shots. The right wing of the 13th—the left wing of the regiment, it will be remembered, was supporting a battery on Cemetery Hill, and had not yet come up—was brought forward in the rear of the position of a battery which had just fallen into the hands of the enemy. The gunners had fled from their guns or fallen under them. The rebels had laid hold of the pieces. In another minute they would have been turned upon us. At this moment Col. Randall, whose horse had just been shot under him, and who was marching on foot at the head of his regiment, was addressed by Gen. Hancock, who had been endeavoring to rally the panic-struck supports of the battery, with the question, if he could retake that battery? “We can! forward, boys!” was the reply; and in they went. The battery was saved, and the guns were passed to the rear; but the 13th did not stop there. Pushing on with his men Col. Randall advanced to the Emmetsburgh road, half a mile to the front, and captured there two 12 lb. brass guns, brought down by the enemy while following up the 3d Corps. These were the only guns taken by our forces from the hands of the enemy during the battle, though another piece, abandoned by the rebels in their retreat, fell into our hands subsequently. A company of about forty rebels, with their Captain, were taken prisoners in and about Rogers’ house, on the Emmetsburgh road, by Co. A of the 13th at this time. Col. Randall remained with his regiment in this advanced position till dark, when he was ordered back by Gen. Stannard to the main line. At the close of the day the Brigade thus occupied the front line on the left centre, and held it thenceforward to the end of the battle.

While these events were in progress, on the left wing, General Meade’s centre and right had been subjected to a shelling, which was only eclipsed by that on the left centre the day following. At five o’clock the enemy, probably surmising (which was the fact) that our right had been weakened to reinforce the left, made a determined attack on our extreme right. The ground here is high and broken, rising into a rocky eminence, known as Culp’s Hill, with

two summits, whose steepest inclines faced the enemy to the northeast, separated by a ravine strewn with large granite blocks. Hill and valley were wooded with a fine growth of oak. The whole position here had been made very strong by substantial breastworks of felled trees and piled stones. Culp's Hill was held by Gen. Wadsworth, with the remnant of his division of the 1st Corps, and by Gen. Geary's division of the 12th, until the latter part of the afternoon, when Geary was ordered with two brigades of his division across to the right of the field to reinforce Sickles. Gen. Greene's brigade of Geary's division remained and manned the breastworks through the ravine. About 7 o'clock the famous Stonewall Brigade, of Early's Division, of Ewell's Corps, formed column in mass, and marched boldly up the steepest part of Culp's Hill, against what they supposed to be our extreme right. They met the 7th Wisconsin and 95th New York Volunteers, who received them with a fire of musketry which piled the ground in front of the entrenchments with rebel dead. Foiled in his attack in column, the enemy deployed to his left in line and furiously attacked Gen. Greene's Brigade. They met again a welcome of rolling volleys, and, foiled at every point, fell back to the foot of the hill, and, covered by the trees and rocks, kept up, till 9 o'clock, a close but comparatively ineffective fire on our whole position.

The assault on the right was a terribly expensive operation for the enemy, and fruitless with one important exception. At the point where the removal of Geary's troops left the breastworks undefended the rebels gained an entrance. Fortunately, the darkness made it impossible to distinguish friend from foe, and prevented them from taking advantage of their success that night; and in the morning they found a different situation of affairs.

The night passed quietly on our lines, and our Generals doubtless took courage as they looked the situation over. We still held our own. We had suffered terribly on the left, but had balanced the account by the slaughter of rebels on the right, and our army was now *all upon the ground*.

The 2d Vermont Brigade slept upon its arms, with the exception of the 16th Regiment, which, under direction of Col. Veazey, who was general field officer of the day, was posted on the picket line,—three companies deployed on the line, and the remainder of the regiment in reserve. During the night word was brought

by a prisoner to Col. Nichols that the rebel Gen. Barksdale lay mortally wounded on the field in front of his line. Col. Nichols at once sent out a detail of eight men under Sergeant Vaughan, (a brave soldier who fell next day,) who brought him in on a stretcher and took him to a small temporary hospital in the rear. His last message, "Tell my wife I fought like a man, and will die like one," was delivered to Sergeant Vaughan, and his hat and gloves, which he gave to one of the men who brought him in, are now in Colonel Nichols' possession. His body, with a ball hole through the breast, and legs bandaged and bloody from gun shots through both of them, lay in the rear of the position of the Vermont Brigade during the forenoon, and was then temporarily interred upon the spot.

Friday, the last great day of the battle, opened with a simultaneous cannonade at daylight on right and left,—on the left from Longstreet's batteries along the low ridge he gained the afternoon before. This was to attract attention to that part of the field, while Ewell should make good his foot-hold on the right. It received but small response from our batteries, and died away in an hour or so. On the right our own guns opened the day. Several batteries had been collected there to shell the enemy out of the woods near the Baltimore road, where he had gained entrance the evening before, but, owing to the nature of the ground, which prevented a very effective artillery fire, the cannonade here too mainly ceased, and a terrific infantry fight succeeded. Gen. Geary had returned during the night, charged with the duty of re-occupying the breastworks at the head of the ravine. He found himself at first the attacked rather than the attacking party. Early, supported by Rhode's Division, pressed forward to secure the advantage he had partially gained the night before. It is said he had sworn he would break through on our right if it cost him his last man. If so, he was forsworn. For *six hours*—from 5 till 11 o'clock—the musketry rolled on those hillsides in one incessant crash. For six hours, from other portions of our lines, we watched the white smoke-clouds curling up through the tree-tops, and wondered what the issue would be. At 11 Geary had driven the enemy back over the breastworks into the valley below. Gen. Greene, after repulsing another desperate assault on his line, made a sally and drove the rebels from his front, capturing three colors and some prisoners. Early retired terribly broken, and the battle

was over for good on the right. The rebel dead at its close covered the ground from the front of our breastworks to the foot of the ravine. Our own loss on the right was quite small.

To return to the left centre: The 2d Vermont Brigade took its share of the opening cannonade in the morning and lost a few men by it. The 14th Regiment, in particular, had several non-commissioned officers and men killed at the same instant, by the explosion of a caisson of the battery close to which they were lying. Just after the enemy's batteries opened in the morning, Col. Nichols received permission to move his regiment forward about ten rods to a position where some scattered trees and bushes afforded a partial shelter for his men. The 14th took up the position during the cannonade, and remained substantially in that position thenceforward through the battle. The 13th Regiment lay to the right and a little to the rear of the 14th. On the right and a few rods to the rear of the 13th, extended the lines of the 2d Corps. About half of the 16th Regiment was upon the skirmish line in front, disposed for the most part in picket posts, rather than strictly as skirmishers, and the other half of the regiment was held in reserve in their rear.

The troops of Gen. Doubleday's Division were disposed in three parallel lines of battle. There were two reasons for this show of strength. In the first place the comparatively level and open nature of the ground at that point invited assault. In the second place our Division and Corps Generals doubtless distrusted the ability of the Vermont nine-months troops to withstand a charge. It was owned that they did well the night before, when their prompt and eager presence apparently saved the day in that part of the field; but it was known—and it was about all that *was* known about them in the Army of the Potomac—that they were *nine-months men*, their term of service just expiring, and that they had had no previous experience under fire. They were therefore expected to break at the first earnest onset of the enemy, and a double line of battle was placed behind them,—quite a needless precaution, as it proved.

With the exception of some scattered firing on the skirmish line, no fighting took place on the left during the forenoon of Friday. The only further preparation to resist an attack, that under the circumstances could be made in that portion of the field, was attended

to. It was to collect the rails lying where the dividing lines of the fields had run, and to pile them into breastworks. There were not enough of them to make a breastwork proper, anywhere; but they sufficed for a low protection of from two to three feet in height, which would shelter men lying flat behind them, and we found that every such help was needed before the day was done.

For two hours succeeding the close of the musketry fight on the right, almost absolute quiet prevailed along the lines. Occasionally only, a distant cannon shot boomed from the northeast, where Gregg with the cavalry was harassing the enemy's left and rear. The silence else was oppressive. The batteries frowned like grim bull-dogs from the opposing ridges, but not a shot was fired. The great feature of the day—and a grander one has seldom been witnessed in the history of human warfare—was in preparation,—the charge of an *army*; for the body of infantry which Longstreet had been marshaling during the forenoon for the great assault on our left centre, was an army in itself. That charge has commonly been known as the charge of *Pickett's Division*,—a most inadequate title. The troops composing it were not one but *three* divisions (lacking one or two brigades) of the rebel army. They were Pickett's Division of Longstreet's Corps; Heth's Division of Hill's Corps, commanded by Pettigrew, Heth having been wounded the day before; and two-thirds of Pender's Division of the same Corps, commanded by Trimble, Pender being also wounded. Pickett, as stated by the correspondent of the *London Times*, by the *Richmond Press*, and by prisoners taken, took not less than 4,300 men of his division into that charge. Pettigrew's was a strong division, made stronger by the addition of Wilcox's Brigade of Anderson's Division, and numbered, on the same authority, 10,000 men. The two brigades of Pender's Division probably numbered not less than 2,500 men. The English officer who wrote the account of the battle in *Blackwood's Magazine*, says Longstreet told him afterwards that the great mistake on their side was in not making the attack on Friday afternoon with 30,000 men instead of 15,000. They made it, as the figures given above show, with about 17,000.

The grand assault was heralded by a cannonade of equally tremendous proportions. The *London Times'* correspondent states that 140 guns were in position opposite our left centre, without counting Ewell's batteries on the right, which, he adds, "made a

concert of about 200 guns." There was doubtless concentrated on our left centre the fire of from 140 to 150 pieces—a fire with hardly a parallel in field operations. The famous cannonade with which Napoleon preceded the decisive charge at Wagram was of but 100 guns, and that of Ney at Borodino of but 80.

At ten minutes past one o'clock the signal gun was fired; the rebel pieces were run to the top of the ridges which had concealed their movements from us; and in an instant the air seemed literally *filled* with flying missiles. It was a converging fire which came upon our lines at every angle, from direct point-blank at a range at which grape was served with effect, to an enfilading fire, from a battery of Whitworth guns far to the right, which sent their six-sided bolts screaming by, parallel to our lines, from a distance of over two miles. Shells whizzed and popped and fluttered on every side; spherical case shot exploded over our heads, and rained iron bullets upon us; solid shot tore the ground around us, and grape hurtled in an iron storm against the low breastworks of rails. About ninety guns replied from our side. It is impossible to describe such a cannonade. It may assist the imagination, however, to recollect that a field piece, actively served, is discharged with ease twice in a minute. The 240 guns in action probably gave over 350 discharges a minute, and, adding the explosions of the shells, it is not extravagant to estimate that in many a minute of those two hours the explosions amounted to 600; and this without count of the musketry. The din of the cannonade was compared, by the English writer I have quoted, to "the thundering roar of all the accumulated battles ever fought upon earth rolled into one volume." The sound was distinctly heard at Greensboro, Green County, Penn., 143 miles in a direct line from Gettysburgh.

This cannonade was in due accord with the precepts of modern military science. The article on artillery in the *New American Encyclopedia* closes as follows:

"The grandest results are obtained by the reserve artillery, in great and decisive battles. Held back out of sight the greater part of the day, it is brought forward in mass upon the decisive point, when the time for the final effort has come. Formed in a crescent a mile or more in extent it concentrates its destructive fire upon a comparatively small point. Unless an equal number of guns is there to meet it, half an hour's rapid firing settles the matter; the enemy begins to wither under the hailstorm of howling shot; the in

tact reserves of infantry advance,—a last sharp struggle, and the victory is won. Thus did Napoleon prepare McDonald's advance at Wagram, and resistance was broken before the three divisions advancing in column had fired a shot or crossed bayonet with the enemy."

Gen. Lee followed closely the general plan thus laid down, but there were some variations in details. Instead of half an hour of rapid firing, he gave two hours. There was another important variation,—the troops sustaining "the hailstorm of howling shot" did not "wither" according to the programme. Creeping close under the low protection of rails they had piled in the forenoon, and hugging the ground, heads to the front and faces to the earth, our men remained immovable in their lines. The general, staff and field officers alone, as their duties required, stood erect or moved from their places; all else needed little caution to keep down—even the wounded, for the most part, remained and bled quietly in their places. Col. Veazey, of the 16th Vermont Regiment, in a recent letter to the writer, recalls a most remarkable effect of the cannonade on his men, who, it may be premised, had been on picket the night before, and, in common with the rest of the Vermont Brigade, (the 14th Regiment excepted) had been almost without food for twenty four hours. He says: "The effect of this cannonade on my men was the most astonishing thing I ever witnessed in any battle. Many of them, I think a majority, *fell asleep*, and it was with the greatest effort only that I could keep awake myself, notwithstanding the cries of my wounded men, and my anxiety in reference to the more fearful scenes which I knew would speedily follow." The portion of his regiment of which he speaks was lying at this time in front of and almost under the muzzles of our own batteries, which fired right over them. Of course the rest obtained under such circumstances could have been nothing more than a stunned and weary drowse. The effect of this awful cannonade was especially noticeable on the batteries which occupied the crest on our side, and which were for the most part without any protection. They stood stoutly to their work but suffered greatly in both men and horses. Four caissons of Thomas' battery in position to the right and rear of the Vt. 2d brigade, were blown up at once by the enemy's projectiles. There was a scene of great confusion around it for a moment as the thick cloud of smoke, through which shot fragments of ex-

ploding shells, rolled up, and mutilated horses were seen dashing wildly to the rear; but another battery wheeled promptly into its place, and before the rebel cheers which greeted the sight from the opposite ridge had died away, our fire opened with fresh vigor from the spot. Cushing's battery, further to the right, lost 63 of the 84 horses attached to it.

The cannonade ceased on the rebel side shortly after 3 o'clock, and the grand charge followed. The assaulting forces were formed in two lines, with a front of about 1,000 yards, with supports in the rear, extending beyond the flanks of the front lines. The ground selected for this movement was the only portion of the whole field over which so many men could have been rushed in line. It was a broad stretch of open meadow ground, extending from the left of Cemetery Hill to the southwest, perhaps a mile and a half in length and varying from half a mile to a mile in width between the confronting ridges. It sloped gently for most of the distance, from the summit occupied by our batteries, for half the way across, and then rose with like gentle incline to the enemy's position.

The advance of the enemy was deliberate and steady. Preceded by their skirmishers the long gray lines came on at common time, till they reached the lowest ground half way across the open interval, when the Vermont regiments, which, it will be remembered, occupied a position advanced from the general front of the army, were ordered up in line by Gen. Stannard. The enemy's right was now aiming apparently directly upon the 14th Regiment; and the order was sent to Col. Nichols, by Gen. Stannard, to hold his fire till the enemy was close upon him, then to give him a volley, and after that the bayonet. A sudden and unexpected movement of the enemy rendered the execution of this order impracticable. At the instant that our troops rose the rebel force in front suddenly changed direction by its left flank, and marched to the north across our front for some sixty rods, when, again fronting, it came in upon the line of the 2d Corps, to our right, held by Webb's, Harrow's, Hall's and Carroll's Brigades, and Rorty's, Cushing's, Arnold's and Woodruff's Batteries. The exact occasion of this singular and dangerous side-movement on the part of the enemy was not apparent at the time. It appeared, from the position occupied by the Vermont 2d Brigade, to be participated in by the whole attacking force, and to have been caused by the sudden appearance of

a body of troops in firm line, much nearer to them than they expected, on ground from which they supposed all opposing forces had been swept away by their batteries. The fact was, however, that the *left* of the rebel line came in direct; but taking an oblique direction, their right became separated from it, and was obliged to march to the left to close the interval. It was a terribly costly movement for the enemy. The 14th Regiment, upon its commencement, at once opened fire by battalion, and continued it by file, at about sixty rods distance, with very great effect. The 13th joined its fire with the 14th, and a line of dead rebels at the close showed distinctly where they marched across the front of the Vermonters. As the rebel lines fronted and advanced after this side movement, they swung partly to the rear on their right, and becoming massed, presented from some points of view the appearance of a column massed by regiments; and the force is so described in some of the regimental and brigade reports. With a wild yell which rose above the roar of cannon and musketry, the rebels now came in on the charge. Our batteries, firing grape and canister, opened cruel gaps in their lines from front to rear. The 2d Corps met them in front with a destructive musketry fire, but they still swept on. They reached, pressed back, actually broke through our lines. The rebel Gen. Armistead had his hand on one of our guns when he was shot down. The general advance of the enemy was as yet unchecked, when a sudden assault on their right changed the aspect of affairs. The opportunity for a flank attack had been noticed by Gen. Stannard, and acted on with a decision and promptitude which did him infinite credit. Without hesitation, he ordered the 13th and 16th Regiments out upon the enemy's flank. They marched perhaps sixty rods parallel to the main line, and then changing front their line swung out nearly at right angles, on the right of the rebel force, which was still pushing resolutely forward, intent only on overcoming the resistance directly before them. The 13th Regiment moved first, and, marching by the right flank, approached so near the enemy's right that Gen. Stannard feared for the moment that his order had been misunderstood, and sent an order to "change front forward on first company" at once. This was immediately done. The extreme left of the battalion, as it swung out into the scattering fire now opened from the enemy's flank, faltered for a moment. There was danger for the instant that the

hesitation and disorder might extend down the line, and endanger the success of the movement; but the few men who had begun to hang back and look to the rear were promptly faced into line by a staff officer; and a line of fire ran down the front of the regiment, as it opened at half pistol range upon the enemy. The 16th regiment now came down and formed on the left, and once engaged in firing, all were so eager that it was with difficulty they were induced, after the enemy in front of them had surrendered, to perceive the fact and stop. The front of our regiments, where they opened fire, was hardly a dozen rods from the enemy's flank, and they advanced while firing, so that that distance was much lessened. At this short range the 13th fired 10 or 15 rounds, and the 16th probably half that number, into a mass of men on which every bullet took effect, and many doubtless found two or three victims. The effect upon the rebel lines was instantaneous. Their progress ceased close upon the low breastworks of the 2d Corps. For a moment they crowded together in bewilderment, falling like wheat before the reaper; then breaking into a disorderly mob, they fled in all directions. The larger portion, on their right and centre, dropped their arms and rushed within our lines as prisoners. On their left, where Pettigrew's Division had made a less resolute advance, the larger portion retreated whence they came. Their dead and wounded and small arms by thousands strewed the ground over which they charged.*

But the work on the left centre was not yet ended. The rebel brigade, which formed the support to Pickett's Division, on his right, was now advancing across the open fields. It did not follow the flank movement which had proved so disastrous to the main column, but marched straight forward, directing its course upon the position of the 14th Regiment. The 14th received it with a hot fire in front, while the 16th, (which had been already faced about by Col. Veasey

*The severity of the fighting and the carnage, during the actual shock and crisis of the great assault, has been seldom equalled. Of Pickett's Division, which, having the right, took the full brunt of the Vermonters' fire, the rebel historian, Poliard, says: "The havoc in its ranks was appalling. Its losses on this day are famous and should be commemorated in detail. Every Brigadier in the Division was killed or wounded. Out of twenty-four regimental officers only two escaped unhurt. The colonels of five Virginia regiments were killed. The 9th Virginia went in 250 strong, and came out with only 38 men, while the equally gallant 19th rivaled the terrible glory of such devoted courage."

Bachelder, in his Key to the Battle of Gettysburgh, says: "On the Union side, Generals Hancock, Gibbon, Webb and Stannard were wounded; on the enemy's side, Generals Armistead and Garnet were killed, and Generals Kemper, Pettigrew, Trimble, and Col. Nye, commanding Archer's Brigade, were wounded, all within fifteen minutes time, and within a hundred and fifty yards of a common centre."

and started back, in anticipation of the order) was ordered back, to take them on the flank. The 13th was at the same time directed to resume its former position. The enemy's batteries, which had ceased their fire, now reopened with redoubled fury, and shot and shell tore thickly through the ranks of our regiments, as these orders were obeyed. They sustained it, without being thrown into disorder, some of the rebel accounts to the contrary notwithstanding. The 13th resumed its place in the line in good order, while the 16th, marching by the flank, hurried back at double quick across the open field, losing many men killed or wounded, but keeping its formation as perfectly as if marching on parade. Soon changing front to the left, the regiment formed in line of battle, facing obliquely the left flank of the rebel force, now brought nearly to a halt by the front fire. At Col. Veazey's request, preferred in person to Gen. Standard, he was now given permission to charge. The regiment fell upon the enemy's flank, cheering, with bayonets at a charge, and without firing a shot. The movement was so sudden that the rebel commander could effect no change of front to meet it, and the 16th swept down the line of three regiments, taking their colors and scooping them in a body into our lines. The prisoners were, for the most part, passed over to the troops in our rear at once, and the exact number taken by the Vermont troops is not known. Of the rebels engaged in the great charge 3500 were left in our hands as prisoners. Nearly as many more were killed or wounded. The remainder, in scattered squads, retreated beyond the low ridge and were lost to our view. The colors taken by the 16th were those of the 8th Virginia, the battle flag of another regiment, which was lost by the fall of the man who took it and was brought in by other parties, and the colors of the 2d Florida, a beautiful silk flag bearing a rising sun with the inscriptions "Williamsburgh" and "Seven Pines." The 16th occupied for a while a position on the left, taken by them after the charge, under the final cannonade of the enemy which they opened on friend and foe alike, and was supported for a short time there by 4 companies of the 14th, under Lt. Col. Rose. The regiments were then all brought back to the original line and remained there till 10 o'clock in the evening, when they were withdrawn a short distance to the rear and allowed to bivouac for the night.

The loss of the brigade was :

	<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>	<i>Missing.</i>
Of the 13th Regiment,	8	89	26
“ “ 14th “	17	68	22
“ “ 16th “	14	89	15

Totals : 39 killed, 246 wounded, 63 missing—aggregate, 348.

During the last sharp shower of grape and shell, with which the enemy strove to cover his repulse, Gen. Stannard was wounded in the leg by an iron shrapnel ball, which passed down for three inches into the muscles on the inside of the thigh. His wound was very painful till a surgeon came (which was not for an hour) and removed the ball : but, though strongly urged, he refused to leave the field. He remained in front with his men till his command was relieved from duty in the front line, till his wounded had been removed, and arrangements made for burying the dead, when, having done all that could have been asked even of a man whole in flesh, the high spirit and stern purpose which had thus far sustained his body against pain and loss of blood, relaxed, and he sank fainting to the ground. To his perfect coolness, close and constant presence with his men, and to the promptness — almost inspiration — with which he seized the great opportunity of the battle, were very greatly owing the glorious success of the day.

Major General Hancock rode down to speak to General Stannard, and fell, while addressing him, close to the front line, just after the flank attack had been ordered. He was caught, as he sank from his horse, by General Stannard's aids, Lieutenants Hooker and Benedict, and the bleeding from his wound—a singular and very severe one from the joint entrance, at the upper part of the thigh, of a minie ball and a twisted iron *nail*—was stopped by the hands of Gen. Stannard and members of his staff.

Gen. Crawford drove in the enemy's right at dusk, and took some prisoners ; but the battle, in fact, ended with the repulse of Pickett's great charge. Two or three of the enemy's batteries retained their places opposite our position till dark ; but it is now known that in their rear a scene of complete panic prevailed. Henry Congdon, of Clarendon, Vt., a sharpshooter, then a prisoner behind the enemy's lines, states that the rebel forces of Gen. Lee's

right started at once in full retreat, and could not be rallied till they found they were not followed. This is confirmed by the English eye-witness, on the rebel side, who wrote the account of the battle published in Blackwood's Magazine, in September, 1863, who says: "It is difficult to exaggerate the critical state of affairs as they appeared about this time (subsequent to the repulse.) If the enemy or their general had shown any enterprise, there is no saying what might have happened."

I go back again to note the share in the battle taken by the other Vermont troops. The 1st Vermont Brigade, 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th and 6th Vermont Regiments, under command of Col. L. A. Grant, rested at Manchester, Md., during the day and until midnight of July 1st, when it marched with the rest of the 6th Corps for the field. It reached there at 4 P. M. of Thursday, July 2d, by a forced march of thirty-two miles, the last ten of which were made at a very rapid rate, to the sound of the guns that thundered from the hills of Gettysburgh. The battle was raging fiercely on the left as the corps came upon the ground, and waiting only to close its ranks it was at once formed in line of battle as a support to the 5th Corps, then warmly engaged in its immediate front. The lines in front stood firm, and the brigade did not become engaged. Soon after dark the brigade was marched to the left, and took position near the foot of Round Top Hill. Next morning it was moved still further down, and formed the extreme left of our army, — its line of battle extending nearly at right angles with the main line. This responsible position the 1st Brigade held till the close of the battle. Shot and shell, at times, on the 3d, fell along its line; but the enemy did not reach its immediate front. Probably it would have been fiercely assailed on Friday afternoon had it not been for an important diversion, effected by the cavalry, in which the 1st Vermont Cavalry took a prominent part, as will be described hereafter. On the morning of Friday, July 3d, the 4th Vermont, Col. Stoughton, was deployed in front as skirmishers, and through their line some of the cavalry retreated after their repulse in the charge. On the morning of the 4th, the rebels still maintaining their threatening position in front of our left, the 4th Vermont was ordered forward and drove in their skirmishers for a mile or more. On Sunday, the 5th, the brigade joined the 6th Corps, in its pursuit of

the retreating enemy, until he effected his escape through the mountains.

That Hood's Division, on Longstreet's extreme left, did not participate in the great rebel assault of Friday afternoon, is believed to be due to the presence and daring of our cavalry. At four or five o'clock in the afternoon Gen. Farnsworth, commanding a brigade of Gen. Kilpatrick's Division, which covered General Meade's left, was ordered to attack the enemy strongly posted behind some stone walls. With the 1st Virginia and 2d Battalion of the 1st Vermont Cavalry he charged. Leaping a wall, under a severe fire, he dispersed the front line of the enemy, followed them through a field swept by hostile batteries, and succeeded in piercing through a second line, in the rear of which his force became dispersed. Lieut. Col. Preston moved gallantly to his support with two squadrons of the 1st Vermont Cavalry, encountered a rebel regiment sent in to intercept the retreat of the first column, and, after a severe struggle, drove it from its position. The attack could not be maintained, however, and the cavalry withdrew, leaving behind them the brave Farnsworth and seventy-five of the Vermont Cavalry killed and wounded; but having accomplished the important diversion intended, and having made one of the most gallant charges by cavalry on infantry in line, on record in the war.

I have thus shown that at three important points in the field, and at two great crises of the battle, the presence and good behavior of Vermont troops had an important bearing on the final result. But something more than this may be justly claimed for them, viz: that *the flank attack of the 2d Vt. Brigade decided the fate of the great rebel charge of Friday afternoon, and with it the issue of the battle.* Disinterested testimony to this fact is given by the English and rebel correspondents, who certainly had no partialities to gratify on our side, and by the rebel officers taken prisoners. An account of the charge and its repulse, given in the *Richmond Sentinel* of July 13, 1863, contains the following passage:

"The order was given at 3 o'clock, P. M., and the advance was commenced, the infantry marching at common time across the field, and not firing a musket until within 75 yards of the enemy's works. As Kemper's Brigade moved up it swung around to the left and was exposed to the front and flanking fire of the Federals, which was very fatal. This swinging around unmasked a part of the

enemy's force, *five regiments being pushed out from their left to the attack.** Directly this force was unmasked, our artillery opened on it with terrible precision.

“Seven Confederate flags were planted on the stone fence, but there not being enough men to support them, they were captured by the advancing Yankee force, and nearly all of our severely wounded were left in the hands of the enemy.

“The 1st Virginia carried in 175 men, about 25 having been detained for ambulance and other duty. They brought out between 30 and 40, many even of them being wounded. There is but one officer of the regiment who was not killed or wounded, and that was Lieut. Ballou, who now commands it.”

Another account, in the same paper, derived from the surviving officer of the 1st Virginia, says :

“When the firing of cannon ceased, the order for the infantry to advance was given, which was done at common time—no double-quicking or cheering, but solemnly and steadily those veterans directed their steps towards the heavy and compact columns of the enemy. The skirmishers were at once engaged, the enemy having a double line of skirmishers to oppose our single line. The enemy were driven from their position behind a stone fence, over which entrenchments had been thrown up, and our forces occupied their position about twenty minutes. About this time *a flanking party of the enemy, marching in column by regiments, was thrown out from the enemy's left on our extreme right, which was held by Kemper's Brigade, and by an enfilading fire forced the retirement of our troops.*

“With their repulse the heavy fighting of the day terminated. Our loss here was heavy, and our forces, after the most desperate fighting, were forced to fall back beyond the range of fire.

The correspondent of the Richmond *Enquirer*, in a vivid account of the charge, after stating that Pettigrew's Division, on the left, first broke, adds :

“Pickett is left alone to contend with the hordes of the enemy pouring in on him on every side. Garnett falls, killed by a minie ball, and Kemper, the brave and chivalrous, reels under a mortal wound, and is taken to the rear. *Now the enemy move around strong flanking bodies of infantry,* and are rapidly gaining Pickett's rear. The enemy press heavily our retreating line, and many noble spirits, who had passed safely through the advance and charge, now fall on right and left. Armistead is wounded and left

*This overestimate of the number of the regiments making the flank attack was a very natural one. The rank of the Vermont regiments were quite full, containing at least double the average number of bayonets in the regiments of the Army of the Potomac.

in the enemy's hands. The shattered remnant of Wright's Georgia Brigade is moved forward to cover their retreat, and the fight closes here."

Similar extracts might be multiplied; but those given are sufficient to show that on the rebel side at least—and corroborative evidence is not wanting on our own—the failure of the great rebel assault of Friday, and the consequent loss of the battle, was attributed to a flank attack on Pickett's right by several Federal regiments. It is enough to add that no troops made, or claim to have made, such an attack, but those of Gen. Stannard's Vermont Brigade.

The proper limits of this paper, and its main purpose, which is simply to set down in plain, unvarnished record, the share taken by the Vermonters in the great battle, with such grouping of the other events as may show its true relation to the victorious issue, have forbidden me to attempt detailed allusion to acts of individual heroism; or description of the scenes of the actual conflict, or of the sights witnessed by me on Thursday night, during the whole of which—a bright, moonlight night—I rode, on a special duty, over the whole region within and to the rear of the lines of the Army of the Potomac, and through fields covered by the acre with wounded men, collected around the barns used for hospitals; or of the sickening horrors after the battle, of a field on which lay over *seven thousand* dead men and *three thousand* dead horses.

A brief summary of the casualties is all that need be added. The magnitude and severity of the battle is strongly shown by the losses of general officers, much exceeding those in any other battle of the war. Of Gen. Meade's Army, Maj. General Reynolds and Brigadier Generals Weed, Zook and Farnsworth, and Colonels Vin-

*An order, issued from Division Headquarters, July 4th, returned the thanks of the Major General commanding, to the Vermont Second Brigade, "for their gallant conduct in resisting in the front line, the main attack of the enemy upon this position, after sustaining a terrific fire from one hundred pieces of artillery," and congratulated them "upon contributing so essentially to the glorious victory of yesterday."

In Major General Doubleday's testimony before the Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War, he says, after describing the flank attack: "The prisoners stated that what ruined them was Stannard's Brigade on their flank, as they found it impossible to contend with it in that position; and they drew off, all in a huddle, to get away from it."

Bachelder says: "Stannard, whose brigade was at the front, moved it by the right flank, changed front forward on first company, and with his Green Mountain Boys opened a murderous fire upon their (the enemy's) exposed flank. The effect was resistless. The ground lay thickly covered with killed and wounded: hundreds, thousands, threw down their arms; while the broken, shattered mass sought refuge behind the hills from which they had emerged."

Swinton gives substantially the same account.

cent and Willard, commanding brigades, were killed; Major Generals Hancock, Sickles, and Brigadier Generals Barlow, Barnes, Gibbon, Graham, Paul, Stannard and Webb were wounded—fifteen in all. On the rebel side, Generals Armistead, Barksdale, Garnett, Pender and Semmes were killed, while Kemper, shot through the spine, lived but the wreck of a man, and Pettigrew, wounded survived the great charge, to be slain in the sequel to the battle at Falling Waters; and Generals Anderson, Hampton, Heth, Hood, Johnson, Jenkins, Jones, Kemper, Kimball, Robertson, Scales and Trimble were wounded—*eighteen* in all.

The greatest rebel loss of general officers, in any previous battle, was three killed and eight wounded, at Antietam.

Gen. Meade's casualties, including the skirmishes following the battle, (in one of which, at Funkstown, the 1st Vermont Brigade repulsed with a skirmish line a full line of battle attack, and lost nine killed and fifty-nine wounded,) were, as officially stated, 2,834 killed; 13,709 wounded; and 6,643 missing.

Gen. Lee made no official report of his losses: but it is known that over 5,000 rebel dead were buried on or near the field; that 7,600 severely wounded rebels, left in our hands, were registered in the Gettysburgh hospitals; that the total of rebel prisoners taken was 13,621; and that 2,100 wagons loaded with his wounded, taken with him on his retreat, were counted as they passed through Greencastle, Pa. The aggregate of killed and wounded on both sides probably fell little short of 8,000 killed and 35,000 wounded, rivaling the carnage of Waterloo, and exceeding by 10,000 the total of casualties at Solferino, the bloodiest foreign battle of this generation.

Gen. Lee's campaign into Pennsylvania cost him *one-third* of his army. His success at Gettysburgh would doubtless have been the signal for organized outbreaks of the Northern allies of the Confederacy in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York; it would have assured the fall of the National capital, and the recognition of foreign powers for the Confederacy. His failure was the failure of the rebellion.

G. G. BENEDICT.



MAY 69

N. MANCHESTER,
INDIANA



