

E475

.51

.G81

Permalife®
pH 8.5

E 475
.51
.G81
Copy 1

The Second Cavalry Division
OF THE
ARMY OF THE POTOMAC
IN THE
GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN

Penna. Comm.
M. O. L. U. S.

THE SECOND CAVALRY DIVISION ARMY OF THE POTOMAC IN THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN

The cavalry of an army are its eyes and ears. In the Gettysburg Campaign the cavalry corps so well used its sight and hearing that the commander of the Union Army was kept well informed of the movements of the enemy. But not only did the cavalry look and hear, but with its tried sabres and trusty carbines, it did its full share in winning the great victory that crowned our arms in the Gettysburg Campaign.

In preparing for war, resulting from the firing upon Fort Sumpter by the rebels at Charleston, in April, 1861, the Lieutenant-General commanding the armies of the United States not only discouraged, but, indeed, was firmly opposed to having a proper proportion of cavalry in the force about to be raised for the national defence. This opposition was for threefold reasons.

DAVID McMURTRIE GREGG.

Cadet U. S. Military Academy July 1, 1851; Brevet Second Lieutenant 2d U. S. Dragoons July 1, 1855; Second Lieutenant 1st Dragoons September 4, 1855; First Lieutenant March 21, 1861; Regimental Adjutant April 12 to May 14, 1861; Captain 3d U. S. Cavalry May 14, 1861; (changed to 6th Cavalry August 3, 1861); resigned and honorably discharged February 3, 1865.

Colonel 8th Penna. Cavalry January 17, 1862; discharged for promotion January 16, 1863.

Brig.-General U. S. Volunteers November 29, 1862; resigned and honorably discharged February 3, 1865.

Brevetted Major-General U. S. Volunteers August 1, 1864, "for highly meritorious and distinguished conduct throughout the campaign, particularly in the reconnoissance on the Charles City Road."

Elected August 29, 1866. Class 1. Insignia 342.

Commander of the Commandery May 5, 1886-1904.

Representative from the Commandery to the Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Quadrennial Congress of the Order.

Commander-in-Chief of the Order October 21, 1903-1905.

First, because the war would be of such short duration, that it would be ended before cavalry could be properly organized, equipped and drilled. Second, that the expense attending its organization and maintenance would not justify its employment. Lastly, that the character of the country in which war would be waged was such that mounted troops could not be successfully employed. The disaster at Bull Run convinced our governing authorities that the war was not to be ended in sixty days. It was determined to raise a great army in which the different branches would be represented in proper proportions. Cavalry regiments of young, ardent patriots, well mounted, well equipped and drilled, were put in the field, and were ready for the performance of the proper duties of that arm. But another hindrance arose, and one that long continued, and that was its misuse, which resulted mainly from the lack of proper corps organization. In the first and second years of the war there would be found here and there temporary brigades, but too often regiments were attached to army corps and broken up to serve at division and brigade headquarters. Instead of conserving its strength, it was wasted on useless details for duty that might well have been omitted, or have been performed by another arm of the service. This policy differed from that pursued by the enemy. Its cavalry, composed of the best class of the young manhood of the South, who were accustomed to the saddle and the use of fire arms, under the leadership of such able soldiers as Stuart, Hampton and Lee, was kept well in hand for large undertakings, and rode about very much at will, inflicting much damage upon our lines of communication and capturing or destroying material and supplies. Notwithstanding the disadvantage mentioned, in the Peninsular campaign and in other fields occupied by the Army of the Potomac in 1862, its cavalry did creditable and in many instances distinguished service. In 1863 it entered upon a career of distinction that placed it abreast with the other arms of service. In February of that year the cavalry corps was organized under the command of Brig. General George Stoneman. The corps was composed of three divisions, the regular reserve brigade and artillery. The Regular Brigade was commanded by Brig. General John Buford; the 1st Division by Brig. General Alfred Pleasanton; the 2d Division by Brig. General William W. Averell; the 3d Division by Brig. General David McM. Gregg. This last division con-

sisted of two brigades, the 1st, commanded by Colonel Judson Kilpatrick, with these regiments: 1st Maine, Colonel Calvin S. Douty; 2d New York, Lieut.-Colonel H. E. Davies, Jr.; 10th New York, Lieut.-Colonel William Irvine. The 2d Brigade, Colonel Percy Wyndham commanding; 12th Illinois, Lieut.-Colonel Hasbrouch Davis; 1st Maryland, Lieut.-Colonel James M. Deems; 1st New Jersey, Lieut.-Colonel Virgil Broderick; 1st Pennsylvania, Colonel John P. Taylor. These regiments of the 3d Division had constituted a brigade commanded by Brig.-General George D. Bayard, that splendid young cavalry leader who fell in the battle of Fredericksburg in the preceding December, and whom I succeeded on the field. They were well drilled and disciplined, and had done excellent service under their late and much lamented leader.

In the early part of June, 1863, the Rebel Cavalry Corps was assembled about Brandy Station and in front of that point on the Rappahannock. The final grand review of this corps by General Lee was made on June 8th, its effective strength being estimated at above nine thousand five hundred men. General Hooker, commanding the Army of the Potomac, from reports received, was satisfied that General Lee was withdrawing his army from Fredericksburg and was anxious to ascertain the direction of the movement contemplated. In furtherance of his desire, he ordered General Pleasanton, then commanding the cavalry corps, to make a reconnoissance in force towards Culpepper. The order of the corps commander, issued on June 8th, directed that General Buford, with the 1st Division and the Regular Brigade, supported by 1,500 infantry under General Ames, would cross the Rappahannock at Beverly Ford on the morning of the 9th, and that I, in command of the 2d and 3d Divisions, with their batteries and 1,500 infantry, would cross at Kelly's Ford, six miles below, at daylight. These two commands were expected to unite at Brandy Station, distant from the river about six miles, and from there move together upon Culpepper. Preparing for an early movement across the river on the morrow, General Stuart, ignorant of the concentration of our troops on the opposite side, had assembled his in the vicinity of Beverly Ford, his horse artillery bivouacked close to it. The attack of General Buford, commenced at a very early hour on the 9th, was a complete surprise to the enemy. But for the prompt withdrawal of Stuart's batteries they would have been captured.

His grand guard was able to oppose sufficient resistance to Buford's determined advance to accomplish the formation of a new line with his assembled brigades near St. James' Church, and here an obstinate contest was maintained for more than two hours without any decided advantage to either party. The 2d and 3d Divisions, under my command, bivouacked on the night of the 8th in rear of Kelly's Ford; the 2d some distance behind the 3d. No fires were allowed. Colonel Duffié, commanding the 2d Division, was ordered to be at the crossing at daylight and to proceed directly upon Stevensburg. His unnecessary delay in reaching the ford seriously interfered with the movement. His division across, the 3d promptly followed. Whilst crossing, the heavy firing of artillery heard from above, indicated that Buford was engaged and our column was pushed forward as rapidly as possible. Felled trees and other obstructions in the road interfered with the march. The 2d Division proceeded directly to Stevensburg, but the 3d, under my immediate command, when directly south of Brandy Station, turned to the right and followed a road leading to that point. As the head of the column emerged from the woods on the open plain in front of the station, it was greeted with shots from a gun placed there. The leading brigade, under Colonel Wyndham, was promptly formed, the fire from Fleetwood Hill was replied to by a section with the brigade, and the latter moved forward with drawn sabres to charge the force at the hill. General Stuart, on learning that a force had appeared in his rear at Brandy Station, hurried hither with Hampton's and Jones' brigades and artillery. The charge of Wyndham's brigade was gallantly made and was successful, but before it could be reformed, a brigade of the enemy charged it in turn and it was driven back. Kilpatrick's brigade was then ordered forward, and in a determined charge drove the enemy back and occupied the coveted hill. Hampton's brigade now appeared coming from the right, well aligned, at rapid gait. At first sight I thought it a part of General Buford's command coming to join me, but I was soon undeceived, as it was quickly plunged into the battle raging about the hill.

Kilpatrick's brigade had been ordered forward to the support of Wyndham and now the fight became general. The scene presented on the hill and on the wide plain in front was inspiring and wildly exciting. Charges and counter charges, guns captured and recaptured, the roar of sound made by the hurrahs

and shouts of the contestants, the clanking of sabres and the rattle of pistol firing, all contributed to an excitement not heretofore experienced. The distinguishing colors of blue and gray were effaced by the fearful dust that settled upon all alike, making it difficult to distinguish friend from foe in the general mix up. On the opening of the battle I sent an order to Colonel Duffié to at once bring his division from Stevensburg, about five miles distant, to join me at Brandy Station. This was not done for the reason, as was given by him, that his command became engaged with two of the enemy's regiments, which he successfully defeated. The contest of the 3d division at Brandy Station was maintained with great fury for an hour and a half, when it was reported to me that cars laden with infantry from Culpepper were approaching. Without any support, for General Russell's infantry was not seen during the day, largely outnumbered by the enemy's force, the division was withdrawn and reformed on the edge of the plain about a mile south of the station, the enemy not following. Learning that General Russell's infantry had joined General Buford's left, the 3d division was marched towards the Rappahannock, reported to General Pleasanton, and at about sunset crossed the river at Rappahannock Station Ford. The object of the reconnoissance had been fully accomplished. General Stuart did not start on a raid on the morrow. Longstreet's corps was known to be at Culpepper. The total strength of the 3d division in this action was 2,400. The loss in killed, wounded and missing 376. It captured eight commissioned officers and 107 enlisted men and two battle flags. A section of Captain J. W. Martin's 6th New York Battery, serving with Wyndham's Brigade, and around and over which the fiercest of the contest settled, was finally held by the enemy, one piece being disabled. In the camp of the 3d division, after a day of intense excitement, there prevailed a feeling of great satisfaction. The enemy had been met on a fair field with the odds in his favor, and yet we had maintained our own against him, and conscious of our strength, were eager for further trials with him. Major H. B. McClellan, Assistant Adjutant-General to General Stuart, who first learned of the movement of the 3d division and gave the information to his chief, in a published account says, "The fight at Brandy Station, or 'the battle of Fleetwood,' as Stuart called it, was one of the most splendid passages at arms which the war furnished;" and again he says, "One result of

incalculable importance certainly did follow this battle, it made the Federal Cavalry."

On June 11th the cavalry corps was reorganized and formed in two divisions, the 1st to be commanded by Brig.-General John Buford: the 2d formed of the then 2d and 3d divisions and to consist of three brigades, to be commanded by Brig.-General D. McM. Gregg. Its brigades formed as follows: 1st, Colonel J. B. McIntosh commanding: 1st New Jersey, 1st Pennsylvania, 3d Pennsylvania, 1st Maryland, 1st Massachusetts. 2d Brigade, Colonel Judson Kilpatrick commanding: 2d New York, 4th New York, 8th Pennsylvania, 6th Ohio. 3d Brigade, Colonel J. Irvin Gregg commanding: 1st Maine, 10th New York, 4th Pennsylvania, 16th Pennsylvania. In the movement northward of the two opposing armies the Rebel cavalry was employed to screen and protect the right flank of General Lee's army, whilst the Union cavalry was employed on the left and rear of its main army for observation and defense. On June 15th General Pleasanton with his corps began his march. On the 17th, when some nine miles from Aldie, the corps commander ordered me to send forward my leading brigade (General Kilpatrick's) to pass through that village, and thence towards Front Royal and later to join its division at Nolan's Ferry. Within less than a mile of Aldie the advance guard of the enemy was met, and it was soon ascertained that it was no mere scouting party, but that a large force had been met. Proper dispositions were made and the attack began, and soon involved the entire brigade. The 1st and 3d brigades having arrived, were formed in support, and the necessity of reinforcing Kilpatrick being apparent, I sent forward the 1st Maine. This regiment gallantly charged at a critical moment and not without severe loss in killed and wounded (among the former its brave Colonel Douty, who led the charge). The action was very severe, but it resulted in the rout of the enemy, General Fitz Lee's Brigade. On the morning of the 19th Colonel Irvin Gregg's 3d Brigade advanced upon Middleburg, which was occupied by the enemy (Lee's and Robertson's Brigades), and then ensued a desperate struggle which resulted in the withdrawal of the enemy, leaving his dead and wounded on the field. A large number of prisoners fell into our hands. On the morning of the 21st, Major General Pleasanton, commanding the corps, determined to attack. I was directed to make a tent with the 2d division on the turnpike leading to

Upperville, General Buford's division moving to the right to attack on the flank. General Kilpatrick's Brigade with a line of skirmishers moved forward and drew the fire of the enemy's artillery, the skirmishers of the opposing forces engaged and an hour later an advance was ordered. So rapid was this, that the enemy was compelled to abandon a gun and caisson which had been disabled. Driven from one position to another, the enemy made a determined stand at Goose Creek, but the appearance of the skirmishers of Vincent's Infantry Brigade and a charge of two mounted regiments across the bridge compelled an abandonment of their strong position and a rapid retreat to Upperville, where the enemy's forces were massed. Here Kilpatrick determinedly charged with his brigade, but was repulsed. The regular brigade having joined our column at Goose Creek, now joined with Kilpatrick and a united charge resulted in the enemy being driven through and beyond the town and his final retreat to Ashby's Gap. Hampton's and Robertson's Brigades were those opposed to us on the turnpike, whilst Jones' and W. H. F. Lee's were met by General Buford's command on a parallel road to the right. The limits of this paper do not admit of proper description of these three encounters with the enemy. In no instance was the force engaged on our part less than a brigade. In all the troops behaved with the greatest gallantry. Our losses in killed and wounded were very severe, the enemy's equally great. The engagement at Upperville presented a very inspiring, spectacular effect. On two parallel roads, in view of each other, were two columns of our troops engaged in battle and both successfully, and then the final converging of the columns and the retreat of the enemy before them as the sun was sinking behind the nearby mountain, made a glorious ending to a day filled with the incident and excitement of battle. And now for a time the 2d division is to part with an enemy with whom it has had some trials of strength, whose prowess it does not underestimate and whom it is destined to meet on many fields in the ensuing years of war. The division crossed the Potomac at Edward's Ferry just before nightfall on the 27th inst., marched all night and on the 28th reached Frederick, Maryland. A third division was now added to the cavalry corps by the joining of Stahl's Cavalry, and General Kilpatrick was placed in command. Passing through New Market, Liberty, Westminster and Manchester, the 2d division reached Hanover Junction on July 1st at about noon.

The 2d brigade was sent back to Westminster to guard the wagon trains of the army. The uncertainty of the enemy's whereabouts and intentions with reference to the line of the Susquehanna, led to the receipt by me of orders at Hanover Junction in rather quick succession. First, to move towards Baltimore; having marched far enough to get the column well on the road, another came from corps headquarters to proceed to York; counter-marching and passing the junction, a third order was received to move at once to Gettysburg. Leaving the junction for the last time, the division reached Hanover about one o'clock on the morning of the 2d, and after a brief rest, the march was resumed and continued towards Gettysburg until halted at about noon by striking a line of the enemy's skirmishers at Brinkerhoff's Ridge, about two miles east of Gettysburg, where a brisk skirmish ensued, in which the fire of the carbines of our regiments engaged compelled the withdrawal of the enemy's skirmishers to a position of safety. Having reported the arrival of the division, an order was received from the corps commander to remain in position, to see that our right and rear were not turned without giving timely information. At about 10 p. m. the two brigades moved to the Baltimore turnpike at the White Run crossing and near the park of the reserve artillery and ammunition trains, to secure rations and forage. A few hours' rest were greatly enjoyed by the tired horses and men. Early on the morning of July 3, an aide-de-camp of Major-General Pleasanton arrived at my headquarters with directions that I should accompany him to a position on the turnpike between that I occupied and Cemetery Hill. Reaching there, I was informed that in the event of any contemplated change in the position of the troops in front, I would be notified to occupy the field pointed out, and pending this I should hold my command in its present position. I then requested the aide-de-camp to return to General Pleasanton and to state to him that I regarded the situation on the right of our army as exceedingly perilous; that I was familiar with the character of the country east of Brinkerhoff's Ridge, that it was open and that there were two roads leading from the Hanover Road to the Baltimore Turnpike; that if these were not covered by a sufficient force of cavalry it would be to invite an attack upon our rear with possibly disastrous results. This aide-de-camp soon returned with an order authorizing me to send one of General Kilpatrick's brigades to take position on our right.

Two of the brigades had left their camp to take position on the left, but General Custer's, the strongest, was still at its bivouac, which it had reached just before dawn. By my order, it proceeded to the right of our line and occupied an admirable position between the Hanover and Low Dutch roads, about three miles east of Gettysburg, and where it rendered such magnificent service in the engagement of the afternoon. Afterwards, an order was received directing me to push some force into the woods on the right of our infantry, but no results of importance followed this movement. At 12 o'clock I received from corps headquarters a copy of a dispatch sent by General Howard, commanding the 11th Corps, to General Meade, informing him that large columns of the enemy's cavalry were moving towards the right of our line. In transmitting this General Pleasanton directed me to proceed to the right with my two brigades, and upon my arrival to relieve General Custer, and direct him to report to his division on the extreme left. Reaching his position, General McIntosh's Brigade was sent forward to relieve General Custer. It was soon discovered that the enemy occupied a position in front in great force. General Custer expressed the opinion that I soon would have a big fight on my hands. In reply I stated, that if such was his opinion, I would like to have the assistance of his brigade. To this he answered, "If you will give me an order to remain I will only be too happy to do it." The order was given and soon the fight was on. General Stuart's command consisted of four brigades and three batteries. The main body was massed in an opening just over the crest of a ridge known as Cress', lying between the York Pike and Hanover Road, and was screened from view by a skirting of timber. From the foot of this, the country to and beyond the Hanover Road was gradually sloping and embraced cleared fields with occasional fences. A fair field for mounted cavalry operations on which were arrayed for combat two forces: Of the Rebels, four brigades and three batteries. Of the Union, three brigades and two batteries. Of the latter Colonel J. Irvin Gregg's was held in reserve, and from it a strong line of pickets extended to the right of our infantry, and the remainder was not engaged in the fight for reasons hereafter given. Of Colonel McIntosh's Brigade there were present but three regiments, and one of these, the 1st Maryland, was placed by me at the intersection of the Low Dutch and Hanover Roads to guard that flank. But six

Union regiments participated, not exceeding 3,000 men. The enemy had the advantage in position, occupying the higher grounds and concealed from our view by the screen of woods. A pressing forward of the skirmishers of the 1st New Jersey compelled a reinforcement of the Rebel line and an opening of fire by a battery, and soon the 1st New Jersey, 3d Pennsylvania, 5th and 6th Michigan became hotly engaged. It is not my intention to give in detail all the phases of contention in that part of the field. The enemy was forced to employ one brigade after another until all were engaged. His batteries were replied to by Randol's and Pennington's with great accuracy and effect. A charge of the 1st Virginia was met by the 7th Michigan, but a stone fence prevented their striking, and the halt exposed the former to a withering fire from the flanks, as well as from the front. Soon there appeared emerging from the woods a large force advancing in fine style. It was evident that a grand charge was intended. It was about the hour when Pickett was advancing against the centre of our line of battle. The roar of the artillery fire preceding his desperate movement had ceased, the supreme moment was at hand. On came the column in squadrons well aligned, with drawn sabres glistening in the sunlight. On they came with increasing gait, exposed to the fire of our batteries, but no wavering. Exposed to attack in flank, they still press on. The 1st Michigan, being in reserve, was ordered by me to charge the head of the advancing column. General Custer, placing himself at the side of Colonel Town, led the charge. The Rebel column changed direction slightly with the view of taking Randol's Battery, but the rapid discharge of cannister from his guns compelled hesitation at the very moment the 1st Michigan struck the head of the column. Then ensued a most exciting combat amid yells and cheers. Then came together two mighty forces, one of which had to yield, and it was not that directed by Custer and Town. The defeated column turned in retreat and was again assailed in flank, as it had been in its advance by the 3d Pennsylvania, 1st New Jersey and the 5th and 6th Michigan regiments. The pursuit was kept up to Rumel's Barn, and as night was fast approaching, the engagement terminated in a desultory firing on the picket lines, ours holding the advanced position. Of the troops engaged on the field the preponderance in numbers was largely in favor of the rebels. Our total loss in killed, wounded and missing was 254, the bulk of

this loss falling on the Michigan Brigade. When official reports were made, the victory in the engagement was claimed by both commanders. To whom does it fairly belong? Let General Stuart's report decide the question. I quote from this: "I moved the command (Jenkin's Brigade) and W. H. F. Lee's secretly through the woods to a position, and hoped to effect a surprise upon the enemy's rear;" and again, "my plan was to employ the enemy in front with sharpshooters and move a command of cavalry upon the left flank from the position held by me;" again, "notwithstanding the favorable results attained, I would have preferred a different method of attack as already indicated, but I soon saw that entanglement by the force of circumstances narrated was unavoidable, and determined to make the best fight possible." General Stuart had in view the accomplishment of certain purposes, his plans were disarranged by being compelled to enter into a fierce encounter with a smaller force of Union troops. His was to do, ours to prevent. Could he have reached the rear of our army with his force of perhaps 6,000 bold and tried troopers, disastrous consequences might have resulted. It was in anticipation of a possible attempt of the enemy to force his way to our rear, between our position and the right of our infantry, that Colonel J. Irvin Gregg's Brigade was held in reserve to meet such a movement. In this engagement all of the regiments, those of the 2d division and Custer's Brigade, behaved with great gallantry and were ably handled by their own and their brigade commanders. Never were batteries more effectively served than were Randol's and Pennington's. The battle of Gettysburg was ended, and for some ten days thereafter the three brigades of the 2d division were separated in the pursuit of the enemy. On the 14th, in obedience to orders, I proceeded with two brigades to Harper's Ferry, where a pontoon bridge would be laid across the Potomac. After crossing this, my orders were to get among the enemy's wagon trains, these being unprotected, as his army was still north of the Potomac. At Harper's Ferry I received notice from the corps commander that Lee's army had crossed into Virginia, and I was required to ascertain what direction it had taken and to harass it as much as possible. At Shepardstown, on the 16th, my two brigades were confronted by Fitz Lee's Brigade, supported by that of Chambliss, and later by that of Jenkins. Severe fighting followed and was maintained with heavy loss to both sides until

dark. The enemy expected to renew the attack next morning. Colonel Huey arrived with his brigade some time after dark by a road along the river, the only one not strongly held by the enemy. At about 11 o'clock the division moved by this road to Harper's Ferry unmolested by the enemy. The loss in killed and wounded was severe, and fell about equally on the forces engaged. This ended the Gettysburg campaign. The regiments of the 2d division participated in its opening at Brandy Station, followed it through Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville, the main battle at Gettysburg, and ended it at Shepardstown.

In the division were thirteen regiments, of them six were from Pennsylvania, and later this number was increased to eight. The division fought not for glory, but for the honor and success of our cause. Among the regiments there existed the most harmonious feeling, there were no jealousies nor contentions, but the highest possible esprit de corps was maintained. It is not out of place to mention that of the two hundred and sixty cavalry regiments in the Union service, the one that had the largest number of men killed in action was in the 2d division—the 1st Maine Cavalry. The greater part of those who rode in its squadrons have passed over and are affectionately remembered by their comrades who survive. These last are closely knitted in undying friendship. The brigade commanders are all dead: Wyndham, Kilpatrick, J. Irvin Gregg, McIntosh, C. H. Smith, Davies and Huey are all remembered as gallant soldiers and able commanders. Of the regimental commanders, but a small minority survive. Included in these is a Companion of this Commandery, one who enjoyed the confidence of his superiors, the love of his men, and is held in the highest esteem wherever he is known. May General John P. Taylor, Colonel of the 1st Pennsylvania Cavalry, good soldier that he was, live to reach the century mark.

D. MCM. GREGG,

Reading, Pa., April 25th, 1907.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 701 998 A

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 701 998 A