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PROCEEDINGS OF THE VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VERMONT AT GETTYSBURGH

An Address Delivered before the Society

July 6th, 1870

by GEO. H. SCOTT, First Sergeant, Co. G. 13th Vt.

IT WAS the duty of our fathers to create a nation—it became our duty to preserve it—and the war of Preservation was greater than that of Creation. The story of this war can never grow old. For this reason I offer no apology for repeating what you have heard so often, the Story of Gettysburgh. I choose this theme moreover because it was the greatest and most decisive battle of the war, one of the half dozen decisive battles of the world—because *there* the rebellion culminated, *from* that it rapidly declined until it died and was buried at Appomatox—and chiefly because I was a witness and participant in the conflict, and as I was a member of a Vermont regiment, you will pardon me if I dwell more in detail upon the movements of the Vermont troops, and describe the battle from my own standpoint.

The second Vermont Brigade composed of the 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th Regiments was encamped during the month of June, 1863, on the Occoquon and Bull Run Rivers. We remained impatiently at our posts until June 24th when we received marching orders to break camp, follow and overtake the Grand Army of the Potomac which had just passed us. Lee after vainly endeavoring to find a vulnerable point through which to make a dash upon Washington crossed the Potomac

and invaded Pennsylvania with his whole army. Hooker, to watch the enemy and protect Washington, concentrated on Frederick, Maryland, north of the Capital. On the 30th of June, the day before the battle, the rebel army extended from Chambersburgh eastward to Carlisle near Harrisburgh. The left of the Union Army rested on Emmitsburgh, our line extending east and west along Pipe Creek; the one army in Pennsylvania; the other in Maryland, the divisional line of the two States and Gettysburgh lying between them: hardly a day's march separated the two armies. Meade who had succeeded to the command had struck at Lee's communications, and foresaw that the enemy would have to fight soon or retreat. Retreat would be as disastrous as defeat, so all felt a battle imminent.

Ere we enter into the details of the fight, let us consider the probabilities of success or failure; on the one side was the strongest army the Confederacy had ever put into the field. Lee was their greatest General; the Army loved and trusted him, and looked upon him as the world was pronouncing him, —the great Captain of the age. Grant had not then won immortality and could not dispute that honor with him. This army was divided into three Corps, thirty thousand each, commanded respectively by Longstreet, Ewell, and Hill, with ten thousand cavalry under Stuart, and between four and five thousand artillery, —in all over one hundred thousand men, mostly veterans thoroughly disciplined and equipped, their laurels yet fresh from a dozen victories over the army which confronted them. The memories of the past, hopes of the future, prospects of plunder pricked them on, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia were prizes to win, and if won the Yankee Government would totter to its fall. On the other hand the Army of the Potomac had been the most unfortunate of our armies. The sad memories of McClellan's change of base, of Bull Run, of Balls Bluff, of Fredericksburgh, of Chancellorsville, were theirs. Their experience would have demoralized any army but one of American citizens: but defeat did not dishearten the Army of the Potomac. At this time they felt that the fate of the nation rested upon them. Cripple the enemy in this conflict and the rebellion must crumble to the dust. Let him defeat *us* and our cause might be lost. Moreover the two armies had reversed positions—the enemy were invaders, and we were repelling them. In numbers and appointments

our army was about equal to that of the enemy. The 30th of June was a day of anxious preparation. Our cavalry were scouring the country, to feel the enemy and ascertain his position. Gen. Buford made a reconnaissance through Gettysburgh, and finding the enemy in some force returned a messenger to Gen. Reynolds to inform him of the fact. Reynolds was in command of the 1st Corps and also as ranking officer of the 11th Corps at Emmitsburgh. He at once moved these two Corps to within five miles of Gettysburgh, where he encamped for the night.

On the same night the greater part of Hill's Corps encamped within two miles of the town. Gettysburgh occupied a position of great importance: seven roads centered there, connecting it with Chambersburgh, Carlisle, Harrisburgh, York, Manchester, Frederick and Hagarstown, Gettysburgh represented the hub of a wheel—these roads its spokes, and the towns mentioned its circumference.

With *our* troops in the possession of Gettysburgh we could check the enemy on any one of these roads, and delay the concentration of his troops, while the *enemy* in similar possession would hold an equal advantage over us.

On the 1st of July, Gen. Buford opened the ball in the morning by spiritedly attacking the vanguard of the rebel army under Gen. Heath as they were advancing on Gettysburgh from the northwest. The first Corps, all but the Vermont Brigade, hastened to his relief. There are two ridges running nearly north and south, just west and north west of town, the more easterly of which is Seminary Ridge.

Buford was engaged with the enemy on the western ridge. Reynolds came up about ten o'clock, led his men through the fields, and at once sent Wadsworth's Division into the fight. As he was deploying his forces he fell mortally wounded. Doubleday succeeded to the command of the 1st Corps. At first our troops successfully resisted the enemy, but being greatly outnumbered were pushed back to Seminary Ridge. In their retreat they snatched laurels from the enemy. As Archer's Brigade was pushing back our left, our right swung round upon his flank and rear, and took some 800 prisoners. As Doubleday was reforming his Corps on Seminary Ridge, Gen. Howard with the 11th Corps arrived and at once took command. Foreseeing defeat on this day, and anxious to be ready for it, he stationed the second

Division of the 11th Corps on Cemetery Hill which he intended holding at all hazards should he be driven from his advanced position. In the meantime he threw forward the 1st and 3d Divisions under Schurz and Barlow to support and extend Doubleday's right. For a time they maintained their position against superior numbers, encouraged by the hope that reinforcements would soon arrive. When the battle commenced the 12th Corps commanded by Slocum were resting in the field at Two Taverns, about 3 miles distant on the Baltimore Turnpike. Howard repeatedly called on Slocum during the fight to bring up his Corps to reinforce him. But Slocum did not recognize his authority to command, Howard being junior in rank and did not move; and to Slocum more than to any other may be attributed the disasters of the first day's fight.

12½ o'clock! Scouts report the approach of Ewell from the northeast, in the York road, and his advance hardly four miles distant. Another messenger to Slocum informing him of the impending danger but he did not move. Still our brave boys hold their own. A quarter of 3 and 2 divisions of Ewell's Corps make their appearance, and deploy into line on the flank and front of our right wing. "I want a Brigade to help me" was the word from Schurz who commanded on the right and was resisting Ewell. Howard sent Costa's brigade which swept down through the town on a double quick, joined in the line. "I must have reinforcements" says Doubleday on the left. "You must reinforce me" says Wadsworth in the center. To these appeals Howard could only respond "Hold out a little longer if possible; I am expecting Slocum every moment." Another hour the Union forces hold their ground against four times their numbers and fight as only heroes fight. In the meantime the rebels were flanking our left, their artillery were fearfully decimating our center, while Ewell was enveloping and rolling up our right. For six hours our boys had fought. Could mortal man do more? The tide must change; the sheer momentum of the rebel hosts must sweep them back. Retreat was inevitable. Schurz with his Germans first gave way. Soon the order came to our whole line to retreat. But a part of Ewell's troops had got to the rear and occupied the town, through which our troops attempted to pass. In the confusion nearly five thousand, most of the 11th Corps were taken prisoners. Ewell pressed our troops severely

until he was checked by our batteries, stationed on Cemetery Hill, which covered the retreat of our troops. Upon this hill Howard reestablished his lines, from which the enemy made no attempt to dislodge us as they feared the near approach of our reinforcements. The Vermont Brigade at the commencement of the battle were just breaking camp at Emmitsburgh under orders to march to Gettysburgh. An hour later and the distant roar of artillery fell upon our ears and made assurance doubly sure that there was stern work before us; later still we beheld the smoke of battle rising from the distant hillside. As we approached the place of conflict, we began to meet stragglers and the wounded who were limping away from the battlefield. Two regiments of the 2nd Vermont Brigade, the 12th and 15th, were detached to guard our trains, and did not actively participate in the battle: the 13th, 14th and 16th arrived on the field about 7 o'clock P. M., but too late to share in the first day's fight. Our troops were already posted on Cemetery Hill. We were assigned to the 1st Corps. We marched up between the two armies, filed to the right, passed through our lines of battle and were posted for the night to the left of the Cemetery. After arriving upon the field, we first learned the details of the fight from participants in the conflict. One and another remarked as we passed them: "Well we have been fairly whipped today. The Army of Potomac is having its usual run of luck; it'll stand a whipping the best of any army in America, but just wait, we'll give them Hail Columbia (when they used no stronger terms) tomorrow."

Our first encounter proved disastrous to our arms. Two corps had been half wiped out. One of our most loved and experienced Corps Commanders had fallen. Several thousand prisoners had been taken by the enemy. General Doubleday says the 1st Corps entered the battle 8200 strong and came out of it 2450; the enemy numbered 45,000. But our defeat was after all a victory. The desperate resistance of our troops held back the enemy and prevented them from getting between the two wings of our army which were several miles apart, and crushing them in detail; and enabled our different Corps to concentrate on Gettysburgh. As night closed upon us our position was most precarious. True, Sickles and Slocum had arrived with the 2d and 12th Corps. When the battle commenced, Sickles

was at Emmitsburgh under orders to return to Pipe Creek. But unlike Slocum he chose to disregard Meade's order and hasten to the relief of Reynolds. Yet we were greatly outnumbered. At least $\frac{2}{3}$ of Lee's army were within striking distance.

It was a lovely July night. The full moon looked down smilingly as if in mockery upon a field which but yesterday waved with ripening harvests, now seamed and scarred, trodden underfoot by armed men, drenched with human gore, and bestrewed with the dead and dying. Everything favored a night attack, and we rested on our arms expecting it. In our then crippled condition, had the enemy under the light of the full faced moon assailed us, the Battle of Gettysburgh might have been the saddest event of our history.

The night was one of preparation. Meade on receiving reports of the day's battle, at once issued orders to all his Corps Commanders to concentrate on that place. He arrived on the field at one o'clock at night, examined the position which Howard had selected, found it a strong one and easily defended, and decided to hold it at least for the present. The silence of the night was broken by the trample of armed men, the rattling of wagons, the neighing of steeds, as Brigade after Brigade, Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery, arrived and were placed in position along the lines. All our army but the 6th Corps came up during the night and early morning. The 6th, including the old Vermont Brigade, were at Manchester at 7 o'clock, P. M. of the 1st, 30 miles away and there they received orders to hasten to Gettysburgh, where they arrived on the afternoon of the 2d of July.

As morning dawned two hostile armies, the greatest on the continent, confronted each other and were ready for action. Every elevation for miles around was bristling with batteries. At break of day an artillery duel of an hour's duration occurred between batteries on Cemetery Hill and the rebel artillery north of the village. Fortunately for us, I might say Providentially, after this prelude, the enemy wasted golden hours of the forenoon and a part of the afternoon, awaiting an attack from us, or preparing for the fight themselves. They were precious hours for the Union Army. They afforded our troops, exhausted by forced marches, much needed rest, while they enabled the 6th Corps, 15,000 strong, to come up so as to participate in the fight.

To get a clear idea of the 2d and 3d days' battle we should become familiar with the field on which it was waged. The shape of our line of battle has been compared to a horseshoe. It might better be compared to the two sides of a right angle triangle: the right angle resting on the Cemetery, the long base extending from the Cemetery to Weed's Hill and Round Top, facing westward, the perpendicular extending eastward from the Cemetery to Culp's Hill. Our extreme left rested upon Round Hill; our extreme right on Culp's Hill. We could throw reinforcements from one wing to the other, by passing along the hypotenuse of the triangle while the enemy had to traverse the base and perpendicular in passing from one wing to the other. Round Top, shaped like a sugar loaf, with rugged and somewhat precipitous sides, was the bulwark of our position. Starting from Round Top, the extreme left and most southerly point, and passing along the line, we next observe Weed's Hill, considerably higher than the land in front of it, though not as high or precipitous as Round Top, and separated from it by a small ravine. These two hills were held by the 3d Corps, supported by the 5th Corps with the 6th Corps in reserve after they arrived upon the field.

Our left center extended from Weed's to Cemetery Hill; the land is rolling, and spreads out into fields and meadows. This part of the field was held by the 2d and part of the 1st Corps. For some distance along this ridge was a stone wall behind which our Infantry fought. As we approach the Cemetery the land rises again into quite a hill. Our right center, including this Hill, was held by Howard's 11th Corps and the rest of Doubleday's 1st Corps, of which the 2d Vermont Brigade was held in reserve just back of the Cemetery in a ravine. From Cemetery Hill our line extended eastward along a ridge to our extreme right, terminated by Culp's Hill, quite an elevation defended by the 12th Corps, under Slocum. Our whole line was between two and three miles in extent. The enemy were posted along our front, nearly a mile from our line on high and rolling ground. Longstreet confronted our left, Hill our center, and Ewell our right. Between our left and left center, and the enemy's position, was a small ravine; the field was dotted here and there with clumps of trees which afforded protection and concealment to both armies. Notwithstanding this position Meade on the

morning of July 2d directed his chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Butterfield to prepare an order to withdraw the army. The order was drawn up, and a council of Corps Commanders called to consider it, but the attack of the enemy prevented the meeting of the council. Until about 4 o'clock, the day was spent in skirmishing by both sides. At that time a signal gun was fired! An ominous sound! What could be its meaning? Every voice was hushed! Every ear was intent to know its signification! In a moment suspense was ended! Along every crest held by the enemy light flashed, smoke puffed, and the very earth shook with the cannonade! A hundred cannon were raining down death and destruction on our devoted heads! Bugles sounded the call to arms, and in three minutes 90,000 men stood in line of battle awaiting the summons to duty, whether to sweep forward on the deadly charge, repulse an assault, or retrieve a disaster. Our artillerymen responded with equal warmth to this afternoon's salutation. Round shot, elongated bolts, spherical shell, came from the north, northeast, northwest, west and southwest, a converging fire upon our center and left of our positions. The guns of the enemy were well trained and did fearful execution.

The right wing, under Col. Munson of the 13th Vermont Regiment had been sent out in the morning to guard a battery on Cemetery hill. Company "B" of the 16th Vermont Regiment had been sent upon the picket or skirmish line, and did not join the Regiment again during the battle. The left wing of the 13th, the 14th and 16th Regiments of Vermont were in a position of great exposure. They were situated just back of the Cemetery in reserve, a position which drew a converging fire from the enemy.

As the left of the 18th Vermont was forming in line shot and shell began to drop among us; one and another and another of our comrades fell. Here the gallant Capt. Williams of Company "G" fell mortally wounded.

Stannard moved us twenty rods to the left and ordered us to lie down while he went up to the brow of a hill and watched the coming on of the storm. He was placed for a time in command of the position occupied by the batteries on the Hill. We Vermonters lay flat upon the ground, listening to the conflict, enduring the cannonade for two hours, until we were summoned to more active work.

Lee took advantage of a blunder which came near costing us

the day. Sickles in command of the 3rd Corps waited some time for orders but having received none proceeded to make his own dispositions and swing out the right of his corps a half mile in advance of our original position to a position in the Emmitsburgh road near Worte house, forming a new line at oblique angles with our original line, his left resting on Little Round Top. This as the result proved needlessly exposed our troops. Meade rode out to correct the mistake but found it was too late—the enemy were already moving to the attack.

Lee comprehended the situation with the eye of a master. He saw the trap into which Sickles had fallen and sprung it. In front of Sickles's position and commanding it Longstreet had placed sixty cannon. To distract our attention and conceal his real designs, Lee opened the fight with artillery along our whole lines. Ewell was ordered to attack our right, Hill our center, while Longstreet was to make the main attack on our left. Lee thought if he could push back Sickles in disorder, take Weed's Hill and Round Top by the flank, Meade would have to retreat, while with the broken ground in our rear and baggage wagons filling every avenue of approach, our retreat could be easily converted into a rout and the Army of the Potomac wiped out of existence.

Longstreet's sixty cannon opened the ball and poured their leaden hail upon the 3rd Corps. Soon Anderson McLaws and Hood's divisions in magnificent lines of battle came sweeping down upon the 3rd Corps. This line extended along Sickles's entire front and overlapped it at both ends.

Though the movements along this whole line were nearly simultaneous a separate description of the fight at different parts of the line will convey a clearer idea of the fight.

Let us begin at our extreme left. Sickles's unadvised advance had left Wood's Hill poorly garrisoned, while for some inexplicable reason Round Top, a position which Meade pronounced the key point of his position remained unfortified and undefended. Meade's and Vincent's Brigades were holding Weed's Hill. Vincent had asked for reinforcements and a brigade of three Maine regiments under Col. Fisher had been sent to aid him. Hood with the extreme right of the rebel line saw his advantage and made a charge on our left hoping to flank us and seize Round Top.

The rebels clamber over the rocky gorge unmindful of the batteries upon the ridge which are mowing them down, push up along the precipitous sides of those hills, pour into the gap between them, and strike the 20th Maine Regiment under Col. Chamberlain who holds the extreme left. They are getting to the rear of Round Top and are climbing up its sides. They are turning Chamberlain's flank. The 20th Maine are resisting the shock of a brigade. Chamberlain has the advantage of position while his men are not firing they are throwing up breastworks of stones. Can he stay the rebel tide three, five minutes longer till reinforcements come? Rebels are in his front, on his flank, and in his rear. Already the enemy have seized Round Top. They can be heard moving about its summit, though the smoke obscures them. They must be dislodged. A rebel battery placed there would sweep our lines as with the besom of destruction.

Fisher with his Maine regiments, asks permission to charge and strike for the possession of Round Top. The 5th and 12th Maine come to the rescue of Chamberlain. He in turn charges upon the enemy. He sweeps down into the ravine into which the rebels had entered, presses up the sides of Round Top, and after a severe struggle reaches its summit. He hurls down the enemy already in possession, and rescues the bulwark from their grasp. In the meantime McLaw's and a part of Hood's division are fighting desperately to push back the center and left of Sickles's line and seize Weed's Hill.

In front of the Hill is a wheatfield between two pieces of wood. On this field for two hours raged the tide of battle. The onslaught of the rebels was terrible. For a time our men stood firmly. At length Sickles's front began to waver. Sickles sent to Meade for reinforcements "give me batteries and men" said he. Sykes with the fifth Corps had been sent to the right to reinforce Slocum. He was ordered back and passed the Vermont boys on a double quick.

The Third Corps Commander of Artillery orders Capt. Bigelow to station his Battery near Worte house and hold the enemy at bay at any sacrifice short of sheer annihilation, until he could place batteries behind him and cover the retreat of our troops.

The enemy are advancing on Bigelow's battery. "Give them canister" says he. And his men pour double charges of

grape and canister into the ranks of the advancing enemy. Great gaps are made in the advancing line; the rebels close them up and press onward. Again his guns are shelled; he smites and shatters but cannot break the advancing line. He will not budge; the batteries are not placed in position behind him. The enemy are within a rod of him. And rebel heroes are blown from before the very mouths of his guns. Why doesn't he retreat? He remembers that solemn order.

The enemy are upon him. They shoot down his horses, attempt to seize his guns, a hand to hand conflict ensues. The gunners throw away the ramrods of the guns lost, so they will be useless to the enemy and actually seize and draw away two guns and five caissons. Again they stop. They unlimber and with these two guns pour spherical case into the ranks of the advancing enemy.

Of this battery sixty horses were killed, 31 men and all their sergeant's fell, and Bigelow was wounded. This was their first action. So they fought at Gettysburgh.

Sickles men are falling back in disorder. Reinforcements are at hand. Barnes's division of the 5th Corps go into the fight. They enter the woods, pass through them and into the wheat field, and join in the fray. Ayers's division of regulars rush down the hill on a double quick and engage in the conflict. Barnes and Ayers stay a short time and are rolled back a shattered wreck to the rear. The Pennsylvania Reserves under Crawford go in; they are fighting on their own soil.

Down on the Baltimore Pike in rear of our line dust is rising—troops are advancing. Who can they be? Has Stewart's Cavalry gain'd our rear? Every eye glass of officers sweeps the field in that direction. Meade at first thought so. It proved to be the Sixth Corps coming to the rescue. They pass into the field and are placed in reserve behind our left, all but two brigades who are ordered into the fight.

Weed's Hill is ablaze with fire. The roar of battle grows louder and louder. These brigades pass over the hill through the woods, and sweep down upon the exultant foe as he is struggling for the possession of this Hill. They pass by fragments of a dozen brigades shattered in the shock of arms. For a time theirs was hot bloody work. Soon a cheer, not the wild exultant yell of the rebels but the sharp loud hurrah of our troops rose above

the din of conflict. The enemy had been repulsed and were falling back. Weed's hill as well as Round Top was safe.

While these events were transpiring in front of and around Round Top and Weed's Hill, Anderson's Rebel division on the extreme left of the Rebel line of attack, was dealing destructive blows upon the right of Sickles's line under Humphrey. Sickles is wounded and carried off the field. Birney succeeds to the command of the 3rd Corps. Humphrey's front begins to waver. Hancock supports him. Brigade after Brigade are hurled against the enemy and are shattered by the concussion. Humphrey's line is broken. Our Infantry are swept back to and beyond the ridge. After breaking up our infantry the Rebels charge upon our batteries stationed between Cemetery and Weed's Hills, intent on breaking our lines here, and then rolling up our lines by a flank movement.

As they march through the open field our artillery which crowned every eminence did fearful execution. Onward they press up the slope, our infantry on the main line pour in an enfilading fire. It does not stop them. They reach the stone wall, behind which Hancock's men are fighting. A hand to hand encounter with our troops behind it, a short, terrible encounter, our troops give way. Can they reach our artillery? A battery is before them; they concentrate a murderous fire upon our artillery-men! Our gunners fall like leaves in Autumn. A yell of triumph. The battery is theirs. Another battery is lost. They have penetrated our stronghold. Our lines are broken. The tide of battle is sweeping towards the second Vermont Brigade.

The enemy are in sight—the fragments of companies and brigades which had been shattered in the fight are fleeing, a rabble rout, past us. Another crisis is upon us. The right wing of the 13th Regiment had been lying for two hours in reserve, and was ready for anything but to lie longer and endure the horrors of a cannonade. Col. Randall saw that Sickles and Hancock were being worsted and felt that his regiments would soon be needed. He mounted his horse and stood ready for action.

He soon saw an officer mounted and coming with all speed towards him. On seeing the regiment, he halted and thus addressed Randall. "Colonel what regiment do you command"?

"The 13th Vermont, Sir," said Randall. "Where is General Stannard"? Randall replied, pointing to a clump of oaks some 70 rods away. He then said "Colonel will your regiment fight"? "I believe they will sir." Said Randall "Have you ever been in a battle, Colonel"? Randall replied "I personally have been in most of the engagements of the Army of the Potomac since the war began, but my regiment being a new organization has seen but little fighting, but I have unbounded confidence in them." The officer then said "I am General Doubleday. Introduce me to your regiment. I command your corps." Randall rode with him close up to the regiment, and said "Boys, this is General Doubleday, our Corps commander." He addressed us substantially as follows:

"Men of Vermont: The troops from your state have done nobly and well on the battle fields of this war. The praises of the old Vermont brigade are on every lip. We expect you to sustain the honor of your state. Today will decide whether Jefferson Davis or Abraham Lincoln rules this country. Your Colonel is about to lead you into battle where you will have hard fighting and much will be expected of you." - -

The Vermont boys gave three cheers for Doubleday. Doubleday then requested Randall to take his regiment out towards Weed's Hill and report to Hancock; at the same time requesting him to make all speed as Hancock was hard pressed and was losing his artillery. This order Randall at once obeyed. Doubleday then directed Stannard to report to Hancock. The 14th Regiment under Col. Nichols led the way under a sharp fire to the rear of a battery, from which our men had been driven in confusion. The enemy fell back as they advanced. The 16th under Col. Veazey also advanced and came on a body of rebels, as they were rushing upon a battery. They fled, as the 16th approached and formed behind the battery, which they found without supports, and this the 16th supported until dark. Agreeably to Doubleday's order Randall spoke a few words of cheer to the left wing of his regiment, told them that we had met with a disaster and the 13th must go out and retrieve it. And then at the command "Attention; by the left flank, march"! we started towards the southwest, up the hill at a quick step.

Randall rode on and met Hancock, who was rallying his men and encouraging them to hold on to the last. A few sturdy

fellows were taking advantage of the ground to contest the advance of a rebel brigade in their front. As Hancock saw Randall, he said "Colonel where is your regiment"? "Close at hand" said Randall. "Good," said Hancock, "the enemy are pressing me hard—they have just captured that battery yonder (a battery about 20 rods in front) and are dragging it from the field. Can you retake it"? "I can, and damn quick too, if you will let me."

At that moment they both observed a rebel brigade deploying from the woods to the left and making for the guns. It proved to be Wright's brigade. "Dare you take the chance, Colonel" said Hancock. "I do, sir" said Randall. "Then go in." In a moment Randall was at the head of his regiment. We had not gone ten rods ere Randall's horse fell shot through the neck. His regiment faltered. Randall cried, at the same time pulling vigorously at his foot which had got caught in the stirrup, between the horse and the ground,—“go on boys I'll be at your head as soon as I get out of this damned saddle.” Several boys stepped up and rolled off his horse. Soon he came running around the side of the regiment to the front, on foot, limping badly, his hat off, his sword swinging in air, saying, "I am all right. Come on boys, follow me." He led us into the gap.

We were now in front of the enemy who was dragging off our guns. They did not await us: many fled, others threw themselves into the grass, we passed over them, and they were picked up by other regiments in the rear. They doubtless supposed from the steadiness and rapidity of our movements that we were fresh troops and much more numerous than we were. We deployed in line of battle, discharged our muskets into the enemy and gave three cheers, and then at the command "Charge"! bayonets bore down upon the enemy. We retook the guns and dragged them to the rear. The artillerymen to whom they belonged came up with horses, took them from us, and thanked us for recapturing them. This was battery "C" of the fifth regular artillery. Hancock says "I recollect of telling the officers and men where to leave the pieces or how far back to take them and remained with them for a few moments. I was anxious that they should not delay too long by carrying the pieces too far, so that they would not be delayed in advance." In recapturing these guns, Company "A", an Irish company, and Company "G" deserve special credit.

After leaving the guns, we turned about and pursued the enemy a half mile over the field through which they had passed and over which for two hours the battle raged. We drove the enemy down into the peach orchard until we reached a farm house on the Emmitsburgh road, where we halted and fired some 15 rounds into the retreating enemy.

In the meantime Capt. Lonergan, in command of Company "A" approached a house and found it full of rebels. He informed Randall of the fact, who went up and ordered them to throw their guns out the window and surrender, which they did. At which time Col. Randall, ever mindful of his laurels, remarked to them "remember you were captured by Colonel Randall of the 13th Vermont." Among them were 83 men, 1 Captain and 2 Lieutenants. The 13th while in this advanced position captured two brass field pieces from the enemy, the only guns taken from the rebels during this fight.

At this time, Col. Randall sent back Adj. Peck for further orders and soon received permission to return. Col. Randall was not the most modest man in the world. He was fond of his regiment and was determined that the world should recognize every laurel it won. So on getting within twenty rods of our main lines he ordered us to halt and lie down to rest. Soon an aide from the General came riding down to us whom the Colonel addressed as follows:

"Captain, report to your General what we have done. We have recaptured six guns, taken two from the enemy, driven him a half mile and taken a hundred prisoners. Also tell him we propose staying here until he acknowledges our achievements." Back rode the aide. Randall soon discovered the enemy were trying to flank us to take us prisoners, and preferring to loose his laurels than spend the Fall in Libby prison, he led us back to our original lines.

As the 13th approached our troops, cheer after cheer, long and loud, rang along our lines for the gallant Vermont boys in their first action. Report of this charge soon reached the Old Vermont Brigade on the left, and filled with state pride and loyalty as sons of the Green Mountains, they threw their hats in air and gave cheer after cheer for the gallant Infant Brigade as they termed the 9 months boys. Gen. Doubleday sent his aides to compliment and thank the 13th for their gallantry.

Randall says, "It was dark by this time, and on getting back to our lines my first point was to find the Brigade. I soon met one of Gen. Stannard's aides. On seeing me he said, 'where in Hell have you been? The General has been looking all over the field for your Regiment.' I inquired where the General was, and he showed me, and I approached the General and he rebuked me for wandering off without his orders. I told him I followed General Doubleday's orders and I supposed that to be right. By this time a half dozen aides from Hancock, Doubleday, and others surrounded me with congratulations from their chiefs."

If it be not invidious to make distinctions when all did so well, we say all honor to the 20th Maine and the 13th Vermont for snatching victory from defeat, the one upon Round Top, and the other upon the left center.

As the day closed in upon the left, the contest commenced upon the right center, north of the cemetery. A brigade of Ewell's Corps stealthily crept up the north slope of Cemetery Hill and sprang upon Ames's division of our troops. Ames was prepared for him. The contest was short, fierce, decisive. Ames hurled him back with severe loss.

Slocum had weakened our right by sending off William's division to reinforce our left. Ewell took note of his departure and suddenly made an assault upon our lines, pressed them back for some distance, and occupied a portion of our entrenchments for the night.

This closed the second day of Gettysburgh, a day of the most reckless assaults on the one hand and the most determined resistance on the other. Now the rebel wave seemed sweeping on with irresistible impulse, overwhelming brigades, divisions, corps, till the heart grew sick with apprehension. Now our troops would rally, and stand like a rock against which that wave would dash and be broken in pieces. Neither army had wholly succeeded or wholly failed. The Rebels had pushed back Sickles and occupied the ground he held, and had gained a foothold on the right. But they had failed to take Round Top or permanently to break our original lines. The chances for the morrow were about evenly balanced. On the evening of this day, a council of war was held at headquarters, and the question was submitted, "shall we fight it out on this field or retire to some other position"?

Slocum the senior officer first replied "Stay and fight it out." The majority agreed with him.

The Vermonters held the first line of battle during the night and next day, on the left center. The 16th Regiment was placed upon picket, of which Col. Veazey was commanding officer. He established a line of pickets extending from the Emmitsburgh road out towards Round Top, which position he held until the battle commenced on the following day.

During the night Col. Nichols of the 14th Vermont Regiment was informed that the rebel General Barksdale lay mortally wounded on the field in front of our lines. Col. Nichols sent out a detachment of eight men who brought him in on a stretcher. His last words were: "Tell my wife I fought like a man and die like one." He soon expired and was buried on the field.

The night passed quickly. On the morning of the 3rd of July, the battle opened on the Right. Slocum vigorously attacked Ewell with determination to regain the ground he had lost the night before. After about four hours of vigorous fighting, during which he received heavy reinforcements Slocum succeeded in pushing back Ewell and re-establishing his original lines. This was Lee's last attempt upon our right.

After this conflict there ensued a period of comparative quiet: two giants wearied with mutual slaughter and pounding, rested for a time to gather strength for a mightier pounding than ever. Lee accompanied by Longstreet, carefully reconnoitred our position, and decided to make the grand assault upon the left center on the level ground between Cemetery and Weed's Hill. He could easily form his lines back of the peach orchard and woods, out of our sight. If he could only silence our heaviest batteries with his artillery before his infantry advanced, his troops could pass over the open space of near $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile between the two armies, with comparative safety. Our lines once broken, he could fight each wing in detail. He spent the forenoon massing his men and making his combinations.

At about one o'clock the whole rebel artillery (120 guns) simultaneously thundered forth, while 70 guns on our side hurled back their stern defiance. Veterans pronounced it the grandest artillery prelude of the war. A battle of titans truly. All the hellish ingenuity which modern ingenuity could invent was now engaged. A pandemonium of discords. Solid shot, grape,

canister, spherical case, elongated shell, whizzing, whirling, shrieking, moaning, booming, bursting over our heads. The air is alive with messengers of death; to walk along the ridge is madness. Our men lie low; they get behind trees, stones, knolls, stone walls, breastworks, —anything to give them a partial protection. Lee's motive is soon divined. Cemetery Hill is bristling with Howard's batteries which enfilade the field in front of our left center. If Lee can make those batteries as silent as the graves beneath them his infantry can advance in comparative safety. And so from the northwest, north, and northeast a hundred guns cross their fire upon Cemetery Hill. Howard's batteries reply warmly, but suffer severely. A shell falls among them and 27 men are killed and wounded. Howard is ubiquitous: now here, now there, he knows the value of his position and is determined to improve it. His guns are hot; his men are falling. He orders them to lie low, cease firing, and make the enemy believe that he has silenced our batteries.

The Rebel batteries, to the west and southwest, opposite our left, in the meantime endeavor to cut up our infantry, situated between Cemetery and Weed's Hill. This is the left center and the weakest part of our lines. It is held only by the Second Corps, under Hancock, stationed behind the stone wall and a clump of oaks, —and a division of the 1st Corps and the 13th, 14th and 16th Vermont Regiments, who occupy the space between Weed's Hill and the Stone Wall. The 16th under Col. Veazey were drawn in from the picket line before the rebel charge. We had but three, and in some places only two lines of battle, with no reserves.

The right of the 13th lay just back of a small ridge hardly two feet high, affording a small protection when lying on our faces. The left wing was on higher ground and more exposed, but Col. Randall got permission of Gen. Stannard to place his left wing just back of the right so it could enjoy the advantage of this small ravine. The 14th Regiment at first extended in a direct line to the left of the 13th, but as this brought them on high ground they were badly exposed to the rebel artillery, and suffered severely until Col. Nichols got permission of Stannard to move his regiment to the front and right of the 13th, and occupy the same ravine which in its windings bent outward from our lines at this point.

We hardly dared rise on our elbows, even, for just above our heads raged a tempest of orchestral death. Shot and shell struck, rent and tore the bank just back of us. On that hot sultry day we were exposed to the full glare of the sun. Many overcome with heat and exhaustion went to sleep, notwithstanding the tumult and danger raging above them. This artillery fire continued for one hour and three quarters, when the rebel fire ceased.

To the roar of artillery succeeds the stillness of death. This silence is full of meaning. It is the lull which precedes a wilder fiercer storm. A general rides along the lines and exclaims: "The rebels are forming for a charge. Be ready to meet them." Lee had selected the flower of the Rebel Army to make this last great effort of the Battle of Gettysburgh, Pickett's, Pinder's, Heath's and Anderson's divisions. Pickett's were fresh troops, veterans in war, and accustomed to victory.

The columns of the enemy, preceded by a heavy skirmish line, soon emerged from the woods. There seemed to be two lines of battle numbering about 17500 men, with heavy supports. Pickett commands the first line. Officers superbly mounted are riding back and forth, cheering and encouraging their men. They must march $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile through an open field commanded by our batteries. Have they the nerve to endure it? Howard's artillerymen spring to their guns. Cemetery Hill is ablaze. "Give them canister, pour it into them" shouts Howard, as he passes from battery to battery. One hundred cannon sweep the field with their infernal missiles. Wide gaps are made in the rebel lines. They close them up and press onward. They sweep down into the ravine midway between the two armies, and begin to climb the inclined plane towards our lines. Now the guns from Weed's Hill join in a withering fire. At the same time the 14th Vermont spring to their feet as if rising from the ground to confront them. To avoid this fire the first line which had been marching directly towards the position held by the Vermonters, moved by their left flank, by a line parallel with our lines of battle for about 50 rods until they passed beyond our front and uncovered the right of the 13th Vermont. They then fronted forward and passed forward towards the Stone Wall and Hancock's men. This was a costly movement; their path was marked by a windrow of corpses.

To go back a little, the 13th Vermont formed in line, in the ravine, and at once marched out of it, over the ridge in front of it about 10 rods to an inefficient breastwork of rails some two feet high, which had been thrown up the forenoon before. We lay down and were ordered to reserve our fire until each one was sure of his man; to aim low and steady. Still our artillery mowed through their ranks, their lines grew shorter and shorter but still compact and unbroken. Now they were in reach of the muskets of the Vermonters. At first the 13th commenced firing while lying on our faces, behind the rails but in three minutes, every man, without command and unmindful of danger, stood erect and was loading and firing at will.

Sharp shooters were directed to pick off their officers, and before they crossed that fated field every horseman was unsaddled. The havoc which artillery and infantry combined produced was terrible. We could see them drop faster than we could count them along their lines. Yet still as if courting death that forlorn hope faltered not, wavered not. Valiant men. Had not a stronger sentiment possessed us, we their enemies could have thrown our hats in air and given them three times three for their heroism.

The Vermonters are to the left of the Stone Wall and some distance in advance of it. Against this wall the enemy are advancing. The 2nd line of the enemy are still unbroken. So near is the first line that our artillery can no more fire upon them. Howard orders his gunners to break their next line to smash their supports. The rebel line passes by the right of the 13th Vermont Regiment, and is nearly in line with it. They are within ten rods of the Stone Wall, the same wall over which the enemy passed the day before.

Randall found Hancock's line was not stout enough to resist the shock. He saw his opportunity to help Hancock by attacking the enemy upon his right flank. It was no sooner thought than executed without waiting for orders. To do this Randall moved his regiment by the right flank until his left cleared a clump of trees. And then he orders his regiment to change "front forward on first company."

This brings the regiment at right angles with its original position, and at right angles with the rebel line and on its flank. Here the Thirteenth pour a murderous fire into the flank of the

advancing enemy at short range. As Randall was bringing the companies of the regiment upon the new line the right of his regiment was temporarily thrown into confusion by an interference in the command on the part of a drunken aide, who gave orders to Company "A" to move back upon the line. He wanted to know of Randall what in Hell he was forming a new line for. Randall replied if he had any orders from Gen. Stannard he hoped he would give them to him as Colonel of the Regiment, and not interfere with the command; but the line was soon and handsomely formed and advanced a few rods. A body of rebels get into a clump of bushes in front of us and pour into our ranks a murderous fire during this delay. Our men are dropping all along our lines. Our gallant little Sergeant-Major Smith came up to me, spatted his hands, and exclaimed, "Scott, aren't we giving them Hell"? in a moment he fell dead, shot through by a cannon ball. Here Lieut. Sinnott of Company "A", the Irish company, fell while gallantly doing his duty.

The Rebels advance notwithstanding our attack. Such was their momentum, they reached, pressed back, and actually broke through our lines. They forced back Webb's Brigade of Hancock's Corps, planted their colors upon the Stone Wall, got into our batteries. Officers exchanged pistol shots. Men clubbed their muskets! The Rebel General Armstead had his hand upon one of our guns when he was shot down.

In the meantime the 13th fired 10 or 15 rounds, at half pistol range into the men of the enemy. And then Stannard ordered the 16th to form on the left of the 13th, which they proceeded to do, after which Randall ordered an advance and a charge. We swept down upon their flank and rear. Mortals could not withstand such a fire longer. Already they had lost two-thirds their number; regiments had been annihilated. To retreat over that field of slaughter would be madness. They throw down their arms and surrender, many of them to the 13th Vermont. Companies "I" and "G" are detailed to guard the prisoners and take them to the rear. After this the 16th Regiment of Vermont supported by the 14th did a noble work. A second column of rebels some 50 rods to the rear of the first did not change their direction as the first column, but marched directly on the position held by the 14th Regiment. As they approached our lines, the 14th poured in a murderous fire in front. Col. Veazey saw his

opportunity, changed front, and aided by 4 companies of the 14th, attacked this body on the flank, scooped them in enmasse, and took 3 battle flags belonging to the 2nd Florida, 8th Virginia and another regiment. The rest of the enemy are shattered by our artillery and are fleeing over the field a rabble rout.*

Towards the close of the engagement Gen. Stannard received a severe wound in the leg from a shrapnel ball. Though his wound was a very painful one he would not leave the field until after the battle was over, and his services were no longer needed, after which he turned the command over to Col. Randall, the ranking officer. At the same time he remarked, with eyes suffused with tears, "I leave the boys with you Colonel, you know what they can do; take good care of them." Thus ended the battle of Gettysburgh; the supreme effort of the Rebellion had proved a signal failure.

To the Vermont boys more than to any others is due the credit of breaking and finally capturing their strong lines of battle. Said a Rebel Colonel to one of our officers, "I have been in many battles and was never beaten before. As we marched over that fatal field never was I more confident of victory. But when I saw that Damn Vermont Colonel on foot, hat off, sword swinging in air in front of his men and cheering them on upon our flank, I knew we were doomed."

Says General Meade, "I know of no body of troops entitled to more credit for distinguished services there rendered than Stannard's Brigade of Vermont troops."

Says Hon. E. M. Stanton, then and afterwards Secretary of War: "The patriotic valor exhibited by the soldiers of Vermont and their gallant officers upon many battlefields, was never more conspicuous than in that great decisive battle of Gettysburgh."

Says Gen. Hancock: "The troops of General Stannard behaved with spirit at the battle of Gettysburgh. They were well ordered

*In the meantime Gen. Stannard sends word to Randall that his regiment must be very tired and directs him to bring his regiment back on to the line. Meanwhile two companies of the 13th detached (Companies "G" and "I") to guard and take the prisoners to the prison camp in the rear, remained and guarded the prisoners during the night and rejoined their regiment the next morning.

and well and vigorously handled by General Stannard and his subordinate officers, who did not hesitate to put them in front of the fight, and to keep them there until the battle was decided."

Says General Doubleday, "you ask what I think of the valor of the Vermont troops on that occasion. I can only say that they performed perhaps the most brilliant feat during the war. For they broke the desperate charge of Pickett, saved the day and with it, the whole North from invasion and devastation."

The Rebels attributed their defeat to the flank movements of the Vermonters. Says the Richmond Sentinel, a Rebel paper, "About this time" (after the Confederates had reached the Yankee lines) "a flanking party of the enemy from the enemy's left, was thrown out on our extreme right, and by an enflaming fire forced the retirement of our troops. The day was ours and that was all. The battle had been long, sanguinary and terribly exhausting to both armies."

Our losses in killed, wounded and missing have been estimated at 23,000 and the enemy's loss at 35,000.

The horrors of war are best witnessed after a battle. The farm houses and barns for miles around were converted into hospitals, yet they were insufficient to contain the wounded. On the 4th of July, a rainy day, thousands lay in the open air exposed to the pelting of the storm. So numerous were they that many lay for days awaiting for the surgeon to come and dress their wounds. But I forbear. Wellington must have been viewing a great battlefield when he remarked that next to a great defeat the most terrible thing in all the world is a great victory.

But thank God our brave boys did not suffer or die in vain. Gettysburgh avenged Waterloo, America gained what Europe lost. Imperial despotism triumphed at Waterloo; Democratic liberty at Gettysburgh. Waterloo was a victory of kings; Gettysburgh of the people. Caste and aristocracy triumphed at Waterloo; Fraternity and Equality at Gettysburgh. Waterloo riveted yet tighter the chains of the European peasantry; Gettysburgh broke the chains from 4,000,000 slaves. Not to us alone should be ascribed the victory but to the God of battles who rules and overrules nations.