

Confederate Veteran

January, 1923

p. 22

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, JULY 1, 1863.

When but a small fraction of the Confederate army remained confronting the Federal army, in command of Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker, on the north bank of the Rappahannock River opposite Fredericksburg, Va., in June, 1863, Hooker, on June 13, withdrew his army from Stafford Heights and the bank of the river, and slowly maneuvered toward the upper waters of the Rappahannock and Potomac. He had no other purpose except to "keep in view always the importance of covering Washington and Harper's Ferry, either directly or by so operating as to be able to punish any force of the enemy sent against them." On June 24, Hooker laid a bridge at Edwards's Ferry, near Leesburg, Va., east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, where his army crossed the Potomac River into Maryland. His rear guard crossed that bridge on June 26.

Harper's Ferry held a garrison of ten thousand or twelve thousand troops, and Hooker wished to abandon that place and utilize the garrison in the prospective field work which confronted his army. He was overruled by his superiors, and, on June 27, requested to be relieved of his command. His request was immediately accepted. Maj. Gen. George Gordon Meade was promptly made his successor, and took command of the army on June 28, 1863. Meade immediately set to work to familiarize himself with conditions, and, if necessary, to advance against his adversary. He soon possessed himself of the fact that the Confederate forces had abandoned the project of advancing upon Harrisburg and were moving south from the Susquehanna River.

He soon selected the ridges east of Pipe Creek as a suitable position to form his line of battle and that Westminster should be his base of operations. These were within the State of Maryland. This selection was, no doubt, a precautionary measure and intended to meet immediate needs. But fortune and the advance troops of both armies decreed that Gettysburg and its vicinity should be made famous, hence Pipe Creek and Westminster must be content to remain in obscurity until Dame Fortune decided to scatter her favors in their direction.

General Lee had received no report that the Federal army had crossed the Potomac River, and the absence of the cavalry rendered it impossible to obtain accurate information. But on the night of June 28 a Confederate scout reached the Confederate camp in the vicinity of Chambersburg, and reported that the Federal army had crossed the Potomac River and was advancing northward. The orders to Ewell to advance upon Harrisburg were immediately countermanded, and, instead, he was ordered to proceed to Cashtown or Gettysburg, and similar orders were given Longstreet and Hill.

On June 29, Lieut. Gen. Ambrose Powell Hill ordered Maj. Gen. Henry Heth to move his division to Cashtown, situated east of and at the base of South Mountain, on the road from Chambersburg, via Fayetteville, to Gettysburg. On the morning of June 30, Heth's Division having reached Cashtown, he ordered Pettigrew to take his brigade to Gettysburg, nine miles distant, and search the town for army supplies (especially shoes), and return the same day. On reaching the suburbs of Gettysburg, Pettigrew encountered Brig. Gen. John Buford, of the Federal army, with two brigades of cavalry and a battery of horse artillery. Buford had just arrived at Gettysburg. Not knowing the strength of the force confronting him, Pettigrew returned to Cashtown as directed.

Pettigrew's discovery was reported to Hill, who reached Cashtown that evening with Pender's division. Hill com-

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

municated the information to General Lee, and requested that Maj. Gen. Richard Herron Anderson be ordered forward immediately. He also notified Ewell, who was marching from Carlisle, of his purpose "to advance next morning to see what was in his front." At 5 A.M., July 1, Heth moved toward Gettysburg, followed by Pegram's Battalion of artillery, and Pender followed Heth with McIntosh's Battalion of artillery.

Archer's Brigade, leading Heth's column, came in contact with Buford's videttes after marching about three miles from his camp. These were pressed back slowly for about three miles, which brought Archer to the vicinity of Willoughby Run, which crosses the Cashtown and Gettysburg road two or three miles northwest of Gettysburg. Heth was ignorant of the character and magnitude of the force in his front. Archer's Brigade, numbering about eight hundred effectives, was deployed on the right of the Cashtown road, and Davis's Brigade was deployed on the left of the same road. Davis had but three of his four regiments with him, the fourth having been left as a guard for the division wagon train. The two brigades, Archer's and Davis's, numbered less than two thousand effectives when they entered the battle.

Maj. Gen. John Fulton Reynolds, of the Federal army, had been invested by Meade with the command of the First, Third, and Eleventh Corps, constituting the left wing of the Federal army, on the evening of June 30. When Buford discovered the advance of Heth's Division, he sent notice to Reynolds at his bivouac a few miles southwest from Gettysburg. At about 8 A.M., Wadsworth's Division, of the First Corps, marched under the immediate direction of Reynolds. When within about a mile of Gettysburg, information reached Reynolds that the Confederates were approaching from the direction of Cashtown. He deflected the head of his column to the left, and approached the Cashtown road about three-quarters of a mile from Gettysburg at about 10 A.M. Cutler's Brigade, leading the column, was deployed in line of battle north of the Cashtown road, and Hall's Battery was placed in position near the road.

Meredith's Brigade, which followed Cutler, was deployed and placed in line of battle south of the Cashtown road. Both brigades held position on the east side of Willoughby Run and near McPherson's farm house and barn. As they assumed position previously held by Buford's cavalry, the latter moved away, Gamble to the Federal left and Devin eastward to look out for Ewell, reported to be approaching from the north. Cutler became sharply engaged before his line was formed, and while supervising the formation of Cutler's line, Reynolds was mortally wounded, and died soon after, by the bullet of a Confederate sharpshooter. Cutler's Brigade met Davis's Brigade and was forced to retire to Seminary Ridge. Hall's Second Maine Battery fell into the hands of Davis's Brigade. As Cutler fell back, pursued by Davis, Doubleday, commanding the First Corps, hurried his reserves to the relief of Cutler's retreating forces. These new troops made a charge on Davis's men and renewed the fight. The sudden onslaught caused some of Davis's men to seek shelter in a railroad cut, and when the brigade retreated they were entrapped and forced to surrender.

Meredith confronted Archer's Brigade and during the desperate fighting which followed, it charged across the run, forcing Archer back and capturing sixty or seventy members of his command, including Brigadier General Archer. The dead of both sides, which were thickly strewn on this hotly contested field, attests the resolute character of the battle was waged by the contestants. After the stubborn and bloody contest between the Confederate and Federal brigades, which

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

began soon after 10 A.M., there is ample evidence that a lull occurred in the fighting, which continued for at least an hour and a half or two hours, and was not actively resumed until after 1 P.M., and after the arrival of Rowley's and Robinson's divisions of Doubleday's Corps. Desultory cannonading was engaged in by both sides. It was during this lull that Rodes's force reached the field. The roar of Hill's and Reynolds's guns was the stimulating force which urged Rodes's men to quicken their pace.

Heth now decided that the enemy had "been felt and found in heavy force in and around Gettysburg." He proceeded to form his line of battle between the Cashtown and Fairfield roads. Archer's Brigade (Col. B. D. Fry, 13th Alabama Regiment, commanding), on the right, Pettigrew in the center, and Brockenbrough on the left. Davis's Brigade was allowed to remain on the left of the road to gather its stragglers. After resting an hour or more (one witness says two or three hours), Heth received orders to attack the enemy in his front, advised that Pender's Division would support him.

The divisions of Rowley and Robinson, of the First Federal Corps, reached the vicinity of the battle field between 12 M., and 1 P.M. Rowley's Division formed between the Cashtown and Fairfield roads in Heth's front, with Cooper's Battery of four 3-inch rifles, and Robinson's Division was held in reserve near the Lutheran Seminary. (See page 464, CONFEDERATE VETERAN, December, 1922.)

At first Iverson's Brigade only was deployed by Rodes, but as the conditions were of such character as to admit of cover for a larger opposing force, two other brigades were deployed, Iverson on the right, O'Neal in the center, and Doles on the left. The artillery and two other brigades were moved up closely to the line of battle. The force had to move nearly a mile before coming in view of the enemy, when it finally reached the highest point on Oak Ridge, and the whole of the Federal force engaged with Hill's troops were presented to view. Rodes discovered that to get at the enemy properly more than a half mile off, it was necessary to move his whole division by the right flank, and to change direction to the right.

During the delay following these maneuvers, Carter's Battalion of artillery was ordered forward, and the two leading batteries, Carter's and Fry's, were placed in position on an elevated point near the Cashtown road, and fired, with decided effect, an enfilading fire, which compelled the Federal infantry to take shelter in the railroad cut and change front on their right. The Federal force here was evidently surprised, as no troops were formerly fronting Rodes's formation.

Before Rodes could get his dispositions made, the Eleventh Federal Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, after a hurried march of ten or twelve miles, reached the vicinity of Gettysburg. As Reynolds had been killed earlier in the day, Howard, being the ranking officer present after his arrival; assumed chief command and relinquished the command of the corps to Maj. Gen. Carl Schurz, and Schurz transferred the command of his division to Schimmelfennig. When Howard had made a survey of the surrounding conditions from a high building in the town, he directed Schurz to place Steinwer's Division in position on Cemetery Hill, and proceed with the other two divisions and seize Oak Ridge, which he quickly saw was the key to the situation as it then existed. The divisions were each followed by a battery of artillery.

As Schimmelfennig moved toward Oak Ridge, he was met by a forcible protest from Rodes in the form of a storm of shot, shell, and shrapnel, which was warmly responded to by the accompanying Federal batteries. Barlow's Division

moved northeast from the town, along the Heidlersburg road, and seized an elevation near the bank of Rock Creek, when his battery opened fire on the Confederate forces in its front. As Barlow's Division moved to its position, Doles's Brigade and Rees's Battery made a corresponding movement to meet it, and it was these troops that the Federal battery opened on.

Almost simultaneously with the movement, the Eleventh Corps, Robinson's Division of the First Federal Corps, consisting of the brigades of Baxter and Paul, previously held in reserve near the Lutheran Seminary, moved to the Federal right and formed near the Mummasburg road. When the Eleventh Corps formed its line made a right angle with the line of Wadsworth's and Heth's divisions, and the move of Robinson to the Mammasburg road connected Schimmelfennig's left with Wadsworth's right, though considerable gaps occurred in the line.

As the line now existed, it began at the Fairfield road, more than a mile west of Gettysburg, extended thence north to the Cashtown road, thence northeasterly across the Mummasburg and Middletown roads to the west bank of Rock Creek. Its length was perhaps two and one half or three miles between extremities. It was the extension of the Federal line by Barlow's Division that presented the apparently dangerous condition previously mentioned, when the long train of covered wagons appeared still farther toward the Confederate left and intensified the already apparent serious condition on that flank.

When Rodes saw the formation of Robinson's Division, and the advance of the two divisions of the Eleventh Corps toward his center and left, he considered the movements as a threat to attack him, and he promptly determined to attack with his center and right, holding at bay Barlow's Division with Doles's Brigade and Reese's Battery. The latter troops occupied the open plain at the foot of Oak Ridge extending to Rock Creek. O'Neal's Brigade, with a wide gap between it and Dole's, guarded by the 5th Alabama Regiment, extended from the plain up the slope of the ridge; Daniel's Brigade supported Iverson's, and extended some distance to the right of it; Ramseuer's Brigade was in reserve. All of Rodes's troops were in the woods of Oak Ridge, except a part of O'Neal's and all of Doles's Brigade and Reese's Battery, but all were subject to loss or annoyance from the Federal artillery.

Rodes ordered Iverson to attack, and Daniel was ordered to advance to support Iverson, if necessary, or to attack on O'Neal's right as soon as possible. Carter's entire battalion of artillery was now engaged. Page's Battery opened on Schimmelfennig's Division and its accompanying Federal batteries; Reese's Battery opened on Barlow's Division and its accompanying battery, and Carter's Battery was changed so as to direct its fire against the threatening conditions presented by the Eleventh Corps. Reese's Battery occupied position in a wheat field where the grain was nearly as tall as the men. The shot of the Federal batteries directed toward it caused the stocks of grain to part as the missiles speeded through it.

The Federal batteries which met the fire of Carter's batteries were Lieut. Bayard Wilkinson's six 12-pounders; Dilger's six 12-pounders; Wheeler's four 3-inch rifles; and later Heckman's four 12-pounders. These were supplemented by Weidrick's six 3-inch rifles from Cemetery Hill; total twenty-six guns. Carter had but sixteen guns, part of which were engaging the batteries of the First Corps on Rodes's right. Fry's Battery of Carter's Battalion devoted its whole attention in an opposite direction.

Iverson's Brigade attacked in fine style, but suffered heavily from the musketry of Paul's Brigade located behind a stone

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

fence. Three regiments of O'Neal's Brigade, the 6th, 12th, and 26th Alabama, attacked Baxter's brigade. In the confused condition in which these regiments went into action, they were quickly repulsed and gave Baxter an opportunity to assault Iverson, and Cutler, of Wadsworth's Division, attacked Iverson's left flank. This unequal contest cost Iverson five hundred men, killed and wounded, besides a considerable number captured. Iverson's "men fought and died like heroes. His dead lay in a distinctly marked line of battle. His left was overpowered and many of his men, being surrounded, were captured."

Daniel made a most desperate, gallant, and successful charge on Stone's Pennsylvania Brigade, located slightly northwest of the Lutheran Seminary, along the Cashtown road. Two commanders of Stone's Brigade were wounded and had to retire. This caused its command to fall upon Col. Edmund L. Dana, who was in command when the brigade was forced to retreat. When Daniel's last effort was made, Ramseuer's Brigade was hurled forward with skill, gallantry, and irresistible force against Baxter's, Paul's, and Cutler's brigades, the troops which had repulsed O'Neal's brigade. In addition to his own regiments, Ramseuer was joined by the remnant of Iverson's Brigade and the 3rd Alabama Regiment of O'Neal's Brigade.

Until 3:30 P.M. Doles's Brigade and Reese's and Page's batteries had held Barlow's Division and Krzyzanowski's Brigade, of Schimmelfennig's Division, at bay. After Rodes's attack by his right and center, the sound of artillery on Doles's left, and the familiar "rebel yell" which broke forth with great enthusiasm, satisfied this writer that the extensive train of army wagons, which came in sight in that direction, was not an attachment of a column of Federal troops. So on after that familiar yell, and a salvo of artillery which followed, almost immediately there appeared from the Confederate left, from behind the elevation opposite Doles's front, a mass of broken and fleeing Federal soldiers, pursued by cheering Confederates, who fired an occasional shot at the fleeing mass. The entire line formed of the two divisions of the Eleventh Corps immediately crumbled into a broken and ungovernable mass.

As the fugitives passed across the front of Reese's Battery in their wild flight toward the town, rapid shots, accompanied by such cheers as only Confederate soldiers could give, were fired at them. To shoot at a flying foe gives an artilleryman more ecstatic pleasure than any other duty connected with his gruesome business, especially if that foeman has shown stubborn tenacity in his effort to retain his position. This fire was continued until the pursuers were endangered by its continuance. The battery, with the other batteries of Carter's Battalion, was limbered up; the cannoners mounted the limber chests (something not often permitted), and galloped into the town of Gettysburg, distant slightly less than a mile from the position just vacated. As it moved toward the retreating Federals, who had shown more determination on the Confederate right and were right inclined to move away, the guns were again unlimbered and fired at the pugnacious remnant who would defy the victorious Confederates, and a shot or two invariably moved them off.

The troops which approached on Rodes's left, and were followed by the supposed frightful train of army wagons, were Early's Division. The artillery which fired the welcome shots were twelve guns of Lieut. Col. Hilary P. Jones, commanding the battalion which was attached to that division. The position held by Jones enabled him to enfilade both the Federal infantry and Wilkinson's Battery, operating with that force. Gordon's Brigade of Early's Division joined

Doles's Brigade, and while the latter assailed the Federal troops in the front and flank, the brigades of Hoke and Hays, also of Early's Division, were preparing to strike the line in the rear. When the Federal troops were hit by such an overpowering force, they crumbled and sought safety in flight. These troops made a gallant fight, but were not able to stand the whirlwind of Confederate fighters that threw themselves against that line. Barlow was seriously wounded and Wilkinson was killed, and both fell into the hands of the Confederates.

When Schurz found that his two advance divisions were crumbling he ordered forward Colonel Coster, commanding a brigade in Steinwer's Division in reserve, and Heckman's Battery of four 12-pounder guns. These troops went into position slightly northeast of the limits of the town. Heckman fought his guns valiantly and stood his ground until exulting Confederates were actually among his guns, shooting down his men and horses. Coster's Brigade of infantry soon abandoned their line and returned to Cemetery Hill before the advancing Confederates. Many of them either hid in the residences of the town or were captured. So insignificant a force as a single brigade of infantry could be but little more obstruction to the force that was driving the fugitives than a feather to a tornado.

Heth, of Hill's Corps, attacked the brigades of Biddle, Meredith, and Dana. These troops made a stubborn stand, but were gradually forced back, both sides sustaining heavy losses. Gamble's brigade of cavalry was discovered hovering around Heth's right flank, when Col. B. D. Fry, of the 13th Alabama Regiment, commanding Archer's Brigade, changed front on his right to meet the menace. After breaking through several lines confronting it, and several of Heth's regiments were out of ammunition, Pender, about 4 P.M., ordered an advance of three of his brigades, with instructions to pass Heth if found at a halt, and charge the Federal position on Seminary Ridge. Pender's forward movement was also menaced on his right flank by Gamble's cavalry brigade, causing a delay of Brigadier General Lane, who slowed up to meet it. Though Pender's Division met with a warm reception and suffered considerable loss, it drove the commands of Biddle, Meredith, and Dana, and perhaps other troops, from their position, when they were forced to retreat through the town to Cemetery Hill, south of the town, in a more or less broken condition, notwithstanding the several statements of Federal officers that such retreat was made in an orderly and compact condition.

When Reese's Battery reached the public square of Gettysburg, the Confederate skirmishers were having occasional conflicts with the same class of Federal troops, as was shown by the frequent spasmodic outbursts of musketry. An occasional cannon shot was heard from Cemetery Hill, seemingly directed toward Seminary Ridge. Thousands of Federal prisoners were captured in the town of Gettysburg. Rodes reported that his "division captured about two thousand five hundred—so many as to embarrass its movements materially." Many prisoners were captured in the houses in which they had taken refuge. Wash Traweek, Gus Acker, and W. J. ("Big Zeke") Melton (there was a "Little Zeke" Melton in the company too), members of Reese's Battery, all noted for their extra qualities for prying into the surroundings when the battery reached a new location, peeped into the cellar of a neighboring residence and discovered Federal soldiers therein. When called out, they found they had five commissioned officers and four private soldiers, who were turned over to the guards.

Schimmelfennig, commanding Schurz's Division in the

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

fight, fell into the hands of the Confederate skirmishers, but succeeded in escaping and hiding in a woodpile, where he remained until the Confederate forces evacuated the town on the night of July 3. This unauthorized seizure of the possessions to which the swarthy Ethiopian is supposed to hold a fee-simple title can be excused only by the "necessities of war." H. M. M. Richards's, Company A, 26th Pennsylvania Militia, says: "On the first day of the battle hundreds of the unfortunate men of Reynolds's gallant corps were secreted, sheltered, fed, and aided in every way by the men and women of the town." So it seems the doughty general "in the woodpile" was not the only concealed Federal soldier in Gettysburg after the First and Eleventh Corps were shattered on July 1, 1863.

Early does not give the number of prisoners captured by his division, but says the number was so great as to embarrass it. Ewell states that the number captured by the two divisions exceeded four thousand. No other Confederate troops entered the town that night except Early's and Rodes's divisions.

In reading the reports of this battle by our friends on the other side, and articles written since, I have been forcibly impressed with the great exaggeration and erroneous statements made as to the number of Confederates engaged, the captures of prisoners, and deaths inflicted on the Confederate forces. If all the statements were true, the entire Confederate infantry and its accompanying artillery were engaged, whereas but four of the nine divisions constituting the army were engaged, and an equal number of battalions of artillery. These divisions would hardly average seven thousand effectives engaged. The artillery battalions would hardly average two hundred and seventy-five effectives. Hence both arms would not exceed thirty thousand, including Jenkins's cavalry brigade.

Nearly all the troops engaged on the Confederate side had been in active service nearly two years and had suffered many casualties in battle, besides deaths from sickness. Many brigades numbered less than a thousand effectives. Archer's and Davis's brigades, of Heth's Division, Hill's Corps, bore the brunt of the fighting for at least three or four hours. Both of these were diminutive brigades. Pender's Division did no fighting until about 4 P.M. Why it was permitted to remain idle, simply supporting Heth, for four or five hours, is not shown. When the division did advance, its gallantry was unexcelled. Did Hill hesitate because he felt he was only authorized to make a reconnoissance in force?

After remaining in column in the streets of Gettysburg for several hours, listening to the desultory firing of cannon and the fitful rattle of musketry from the opposing pickets, expecting at any moment to be ordered forward to drive the shattered Federal troops from Cemetery Hill, where they had effected a lodgment, and night coming on, the batteries of Carter's Battalion were ordered back to Seminary Ridge and placed in position north of the Lutheran Seminary near the railroad cut in the ridge. Though all the batteries were held in readiness to advance at a moment's notice if required to do so, they never left that position until the night of July 4, when the army began its retrograde movement. The long-range guns of the battalion fired during the great bombardment on July 3.

Our friends (?) who opposed us in the battle on July 1, 1863, do not hesitate to magnify the number of Confederate troops engaged. As a sample of their estimates, I quote the commander of the First Corps: "It must be remembered that A. P. Hill's Corps alone, which fought us on the west, was estimated at thirty-five thousand men, of whom twenty-five thousand, under Heth and Pender, were in line opposed to us, and that

Ewell's Corps, which attacked us on the north, was said to amount to thirty thousand more. Its two divisions, with which we contended under Rodes and Early, contained about twenty thousand men. Reserves amounting to twenty thousand additional men, belonging to the two corps, and backed by the whole rebel army, were within a few hours' march. When that part of the Eleventh Corps adjacent to us fell back, a force of thirty thousand men was thrown upon the First Corps, which in the beginning contained only about eight thousand two hundred men."

On June 30, 1863, the day before the battle, the number "present for duty" in the First Federal Corps is shown to have been ten thousand three hundred and fifty-five, a shrinkage of more than two thousand. The combined strength of the First and Eleventh Federal Corps is shown to be, "present for duty," including the artillery, twenty-one thousand nine hundred and forty, plus two thousand seven hundred and forty-two for two brigades, Buford's cavalry: total twenty-four thousand seven hundred and eighty-two. Our friend above estimates the Confederate forces present and engaged at forty-five thousand. This number is within twenty-five thousand of the entire Confederate force, including infantry, artillery, and cavalry, constituting the Army of Northern Virginia at Gettysburg. Though the Confederate force engaged on July 1, was greater than that of the Federal force, it did not number as much as thirty thousand in all.

I reached the battle field of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863, soon after the fighting began between Hill's Confederate troops and Reynolds's Federal troops, and was a participant in the battle and witnessed the break up of the Eleventh Corps and the final crumbling of the First Corps, which showed itself more tenacious than the Eleventh. I was in the pursuing party which followed the shattered Federals into the town of Gettysburg while the sun was high in the western heavens. It was then my deliberate conclusion, and I have never seen any reason to change it, that the first great mistake in the conduct of that battle was made when the Confederates failed to drive the demoralized Federal troops from their lodgment on Cemetery Hill and Ridge. There was but one brigade of Federal troops, Col. Orlando Smith's Brigade of Steinwer's Division, Eleventh Corps, in the vicinity of Gettysburg, which had not been engaged and shattered during the engagement. Though all the Confederates had been engaged, and many of the commands had suffered greatly, they had all just experienced the exhilarating feeling which follows victory. Early's division had not suffered greatly. I am sure the men who followed the broken troops into the town were ready to follow, or move forward, in any effort to dislodge the enemy from his newly acquired position. Not that Cemetery Hill was of any particular value to the Confederate army, but the victory just won was incomplete without the evacuation of the hill by the Federal remnants and its occupation by the Confederate troops.

The battle that had just been fought was an accident, as the commanders of both armies cautioned their advanced troops that if they found their enemy in force not to bring on a general engagement until the remaining commands of the army could be concentrated.

JOHN PURIFOY, MONTGOMERY, ALA.