
THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

THE THIRD DAY

PICKETT'S CHARGE.

Pickett's Division of Longstreet's Corps was moved from the rear to the ravine in front of the Spangler Woods and placed in line as follows: Kemper on the right; Garnett on the left in the front line; Armistead in the rear, overlapping Kemper's left and Garnett's right, in the second line. On the left of Garnett was ranged Archer's Brigade of Hill's Corps under Frye, then Pettigrew's Brigade under Marshall. Next to Marshall came Davis' Brigade of Hill's Corps, and on the extreme left Brockenbrough's Brigade, also of Hill's Corps. In the rear of the right of Pickett were the brigades of Wilcox and Perry of Hill's Corps and in the rear of Pettigrew were the brigades of Scales and Lane of Hill's Corps, in command of Trimble.

The column of assault consisted of 42 regiments—19 Virginia, 15 North Carolina, 2 Alabama, 3 Tennessee, and 3 Mississippi—a total of about 15,000 men.

In addition to the artillery fire, they encountered 27 regiments—9 of New York, 5 of Pennsylvania, 3 of Massachusetts, 3 of Vermont, 1 of Michigan, 1 of Maine, 1 of Minnesota, 1 of New Jersey, 1 of Connecticut, 1 of Ohio, and 1 of Delaware—a total of 9,000 to 10,000 men.

In advance of the assaulting column a strong skirmish line was deployed. A skirmish line was also deployed in front of Meade's line, which fell back as the assaulting column drew near.

THE ADVANCE.

General Longstreet ordered General Alexander, Chief of Artillery, to watch the havoc wrought in the Union line and signify the moment for advance.

General Alexander says:

"Before the cannonade opened I made up my mind to give the order to advance within fifteen or twenty minutes after it began. But when I looked at the full development of the enemy's batteries and knew that his infantry was generally protected from fire by stone walls and swells of the ground, I could not bring myself to give the word.

"I let the 15 minutes pass, and 20, and 25, hoping vainly for something to turn up. Then I wrote to Pickett: 'If you are coming at all, come at once,

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

or I cannot give you proper support; but the enemy's fire has not slackened at all; at least eighteen guns are still firing from the cemetery itself.'

"Five minutes after sending that message, the enemy's fire suddenly began to slacken, and the guns in the cemetery limbered up and vacated the position.

"Then I wrote to Pickett: 'Come quick; eighteen guns are gone; unless you advance quick, my ammunition won't let me support you properly.'

"Pickett then rode forward, and on meeting Longstreet said: 'General, shall I advance?' Longstreet nodded his assent and the column moved forward."

The column passed through the line of guns, fifteen or eighteen of which had been ordered to follow. Meanwhile the eighteen Union guns that were withdrawn were replaced by others. The Union line was once more intact, and it opened a terrific fire against the rapidly moving columns of assault. As the Confederates continued to advance, their courage unaffected in face of the tremendous fire of both artillery and infantry, their enemies were filled with admiration.

At the Emmitsburg Road, where post-and-rail fences had to be crossed, the line was broken, but only for a moment. The musketry fire from the Union line was so heavy that the attacking column was unable to maintain a regular alignment, and when the Angle was reached the identity of the different brigades was lost.

Armistead's Brigade forged to the front at the Angle, and, reaching the wall, Armistead raised his hat on his sword and said:

"Give them the cold steel, boys!"

With a few men he advanced to Cushing's guns, where he fell, mortally wounded. Cushing also was mortally wounded. Garnett, who was mounted, was killed a short distance from the wall. Kemper was badly wounded. Pickett lost all of his field officers but one. The Union Generals Hancock and Gibbon were wounded at the same time. For a short time the struggle was hand to hand.

To the right of the Angle most of the brigades on Pickett's left reached the stone wall on Hays' front at Ziegler's Grove, but were obliged to retreat after meeting a withering fire both in front and on flank.

The brigades of Wilcox and Perry, in the rear of Pickett's right, did not move until after the advance lines were part way across. Because of a misunderstanding, a gap was opened between Pickett's right and Wilcox's left. At once Stannard's Vermont Brigade of the 1st Corps attacked both Pickett's right and Wilcox's left.

THE THIRD DAY



WHITWORTH GUNS.—These two Whitworths, imported from England by the Confederates, were the only breech-loading guns used in the battle

General Pickett, who had reached the Codori buildings, saw that the assaulting forces were unable to accomplish the object of the charge, and ordered a retreat. It was accomplished, but with heavy losses.

Both commanding officers witnessed the retreat: General Meade from where his statue stands east of the Angle, and General Lee from the position of his statue north of the Spangler Woods.

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

BY

W. C. STORRICK

Retired Superintendent of Guides. For Twenty Years Connected with the
Gettysburg National Park Commission

J. HORACE McFARLAND COMPANY

1951

OldMagazineArticles.com