

GETTYSBURG

IN July of 1863 occurred the great battle of Gettysburg, which really decided the issue of the mighty war. For two full years Lee had repulsed every advance of the Union armies into Virginia; but his one attempt at offensive war had been defeated at Antietam. His forces were not strong enough to conquer the mighty North, and Lee knew this well; but the Southern government insisted that he must menace the wealthy cities of the enemy. So against his better judgment Lee, in the summer of 1863, hurled his forces suddenly forward. He crossed Maryland, and entered Pennsylvania before the Union regiments could be gathered to meet him. The van of the two opposing forces met at Gettysburg, each side hurrying troops onward as rapidly as possible to gain the first advantage of position for the main battle.

In this first rush the Confederates were successful, the scattered Union regiments under General Hancock were pressed back. But on the second day, the main body of the Northern army under General Meade arrived, and the contest held even, with awful slaughter on both sides. The third day the Confederates made one last desperate charge, "Pickett's charge." That was the "high tide" of the Confederacy, the moment in which its soldiers reached farthest North. When the unyielding Northerners hurled back that desperate column, all men saw that further advance, in face of such resistance, was impossible. Once more Lee retreated into Virginia.

