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GETTYSBURG FIFTY YEARS AFTERWARD

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE

BY

HERBERT FRANCIS SHERWOOD

ON the morning of July 1, the anniversary of General A. P. Hill's victory, the writer wandered through the encampment of Confederate veterans on the gentle slope of Seminary Ridge, and climbed the wall on the crest where Lane's brigade had rested before joining Pickett's charge. Dropping on the grass in the grateful shade of the trees lining Confederate Avenue—for the day was one of the hottest of the reunion—the ear caught the sound of the hearty voice of a grizzled "vet" wearing a badge indicating that he was a native of South Carolina, as it rose above those of the other men in blue and gray comprising the group.

"I'm glad to meet up with you-all, boys," and the owner of the voice wrung the hand of a man in blue.

That afternoon a throng of fifteen thousand persons assembled beneath the ample roof of the great circus tent standing in the track of Pickett's charge near the Emmitsburg road. The heat was almost unbearable. Men, prostrated by it, were borne out, but thoughts of self and discomfort were submerged by the sense of the greatness of the occasion. Lindley M. Garrison, Secretary of War, was introduced to speak. Behind and around him on the long platform sat men in gray and men in blue. In the name of the Nation he welcomed the "whole people of a united country" to Gettysburg.

"Once again is Gettysburg the center of the world's attention," he said. "Once again does this field tremble under the tread of a mighty host—not now in fear, however, but in joy. The field of enmity has become the field of amity. You have trodden under your feet the bitter weeds of hate and anger, and in their places have sprung up the pure flowers of friendship and love. . . . Thousands and tens of thousands of former foes are here gathered together in brotherly union. You who first met upon this field to vie with each other in doing hurt, the one to the other, now meet here to outvie each other in deeds of kindness and friendship and love. History holds no parallel."

This was formally expressing what the South Carolinian had said so comprehen-

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sively on the other side of the vale in the shadow of the trees. Many times and in many ways in the course of the four days constituting the reunion the fact that no longer was there a cleavage between North and South was formally expressed. The formal statements, however, were not the significant fact of Gettysburg fifty years afterward. This was a reunion of comrades, not officers. It was a meeting chiefly of the privates of fifty years ago, the youths of sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen years, whose participation had been actuated by sentiment—not of leaders of opinion spreading the gospel of renewed fraternity. Their attitude toward one another showed that no longer need men preach a reunited land, for there were no separated people. The act of the two old veterans representing the blue and the gray who bought a hatchet in the village and solemnly buried it in the soil near Devil's Den, where they had stood opposite each other half a century before, was symbolical.

This spirit of fraternity and of hatchet-burying was illustrated by so many incidents that it is difficult to choose from the multitude one more typical than another. Many of them were so dramatic that one would have asserted that they could not happen outside a book or a play had he not witnessed them.

An acquaintance of the writer's made the tour of the battlefield in an automobile, and took up as a guide an old veteran who had been on the field on the memorable day when Meade almost lost his right flank on Culp's Hill. In due course the machine reached Culp's Hill. While going over the incidents of the fight a Confederate with empty sleeve came up. The two veterans fell into conversation, in the course of which the Southerner remarked:

"I'd like to see the Yank who shot my arm off!"

"What regiment did you belong to?" asked the Northerner.

The reply opened the door to the discovery that they had literally stood face to face.

"Perhaps I shot you," was the Yank's grim joke. "I was firing there."

And they shook hands. The frequency of these dramatic personal coincidences was one of the notable characteristics of this unprecedented reunion.

Apparently there was not a veteran on the field who had not come prepared to fraternize with his former foemen. This was amusingly illustrated one day when the writer was on his way up the slope of Seminary Ridge to the camp of the Virginians. A short, kindly faced man, with rosy cheeks and gray mustache and wearing the rich blue-gray uni-

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form of the Confederate veteran, was standing in the company street debating which way to direct his steps. A wiry veteran in blue, with bronzed and seamed face, stepped jauntily up and exclaimed:

"Well, I'm glad I shot over your head!"

Then he burst out in a stream of flamboyant rhetoric whose fluency suggested that the remarks had been prepared in advance and memorized. His style of delivery was that of one who considered himself the oratorical hero of many an engagement on the rostrum of the Grand Army Post of his hometown. He appeared to be framing an incident which would furnish a theme for future vocal displays upon his return from the far-famed battlefield. In his speech he declared this to be the greatest occasion in the history of the world, and welcomed back the wandering Southerner to the fold of the Union in high-flown phrases. In the middle of his flight the former Confederate soldier turned toward him and interrupted him with:

"Would you please speak a little louder? I do not hear what you say."

The peroration was directed toward the ears of the writer and his companion, for it were death to descend in other than graceful circles. Although the man in gray could not hear the oration intended for his ears, it was evident that his sentiments were at least as fraternal as those of the Northerner who had shot over his head for the second time, for he grasped the orator's hand at parting with a simple "God bless you!" twice repeated.

When men can twit one another over their "recent unpleasantnesses" without offending, then, indeed, is there peace and good will. Raillery between former foes abounded. A heavily mustached veteran of the North came upon a nut-brown bearded Virginian campaigner in "the Valley" on Long Lane.

"You stole our food supplies," said the former, in a mockingly solemn, accusing voice.

"Yes, we jes' lived on your wagon trains," replied the latter, with a laugh. This was the prelude to a good-natured exchange of descriptions of the manner in which the Confederates had subsisted on the bounty of Uncle Sam when their own resources were low.

"Old Man Clark" of the Philadelphia Brigade wandered into the Virginia camp one day to gossip with the survivors of Pickett's charge, which he had aided in repulsing. He could not refrain from exclaiming:

"We saw you coming, and we licked you, didn't we?"

"Yes, you-all licked us, but we crowded

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ye some," replied the Virginian.

"All right, we did it," came back "Old Man Clark," "and, Lord God, how I like to tell you about it!"

What greater proof that the war is over is required than the ability to accept such badinage good-naturedly!

The writer in the course of one of his peregrinations along Lee's battle line on Seminary Ridge came upon a man in gray deciphering the lettering on a monument which stated that Lane's brigade had been stationed at this point. A man in blue with frosted mustache, whose cap indicated that he was a member of a Brooklyn Grand Army Post, came up.

"I was in Lane's brigade," said the Southerner, beginning in the middle. "Out of our whole company only three came back after the charge, and I was the only one unscathed. When we got over the wall there, we marched as if on parade; but I said to my comrades, 'Boys, we aren't going to take it. It's too far across.' Most of the boys didn't think that way, though."

"I saw you charge," said the Union veteran. "I was in Sedgwick's corps in reserve, and watched you come across."

Thereupon the two men shook hands and the latter asked:

"Aren't you glad you're here now?"

"Yes," agreed the Confederate.

"Now we can talk over and under the war," concluded the Union man as they shook hands again.

That was what everybody was doing. The unanimity of feeling, and its elevated character, which permeated the great assemblage, were illustrated by the fact that incidents symbolical of brotherhood, one of the chief evidences of man's capacity to rise in the scale of civilization, were constantly taking place.

One of the most enjoyable evenings for the writer was the one spent at the old red brick Lutheran Theological Seminary near Lee's headquarters, which played so interesting a part in the battle and gave the name to the ridge along whose crest the Confederate line ran. Beneath its roof were sheltered two grandsons of General Pickett, undemonstrative lads of high school age; a son of General Longstreet (a veteran of the Spanish-American War), and a grandson of that famous Confederate general; Mrs. McGill, the fine-souled daughter of General A. P. Hill; and a score of children and grandchildren of General Meade. All these and many garbed in the rich gray and gold lace of a Confederate officer were grouped on the lawn in the shadows cast by the lights of the band. Could anything symbolize better the fraternity that characterized Gettysburg fifty years after-

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ward than the dwelling together beneath one roof of the children of the great commanders and their presence side by side at many of the formal events of the reunion?

"We are one people now," remarked a citizen of Richmond, who was a member of one of the groups. He had fought through the four years of the war, and was among those who surrendered at Appomattox. His face and figure, however, were those of a man of fifty, for he was one of the many ex-Confederates whose well-preserved physiques drew forth so much comment. "These Pennsylvanians," he continued, "are receiving us with open arms. This will do great good all over the country."

On the following afternoon the survivors of Pickett's men and of the Philadelphia Brigade which received them at the meeting fifty years before assembled at the wall at the Bloody Angle. The latter bore aloft the white trefoil which they had carried forward at that point a half-century before, amid shouts of "Hurrah for the white trefoil!" "Clubs are trumps!" and "Forward the white trefoil!" Its hues were dim now, however. On the other side of the wall, directly opposite, Pickett's men carried a dingy Confederate flag, one of those which had been borne across the fields in the famous charge. The survivors of the Philadelphia Brigade advanced to the wall on one side, while the thin line of Pickett's men approached through the long grass on the other. The two flags were crossed, and then a third was added, a silken banner, the Stars and Stripes. It was a gift of the survivors of the Seventy-first Philadelphia Volunteers, upon whose front Pickett's troops had converged, to the Confederate survivors. With hands stretched across the stone fence, the former foemen greeted each other in the hot sun while some one began singing,

"My country, 'tis of thee."

On one of the afternoons of the eventful week the writer visited the Devil's Den. The shadows lay peacefully upon its floor and the rocks which form this picturesque spot. Although streams of sightseers were passing through it, they could not rob it of its character of a sequestered dell. There lingered in the mind of the writer a picture which he had seen a few days before. In it were shown the bodies of Confederate soldiers lying thickly upon the shelves of rock. It was difficult, on this afternoon, fifty years afterward, to repeople nature's chambers with the grim sleepers who occupied them on the night following the titanic struggle. The gray rocks were dappled with shifting shadows and the stains had all been washed

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away.

As I looked upon the scene and thought of what it typified I was reminded of one other incident. It was connected with the evening spent at the Seminary. The band was about to conclude its programme. The conductor raised his baton, and the strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner" floated out upon the air. All of those gathered upon the dusky lawn—the Picketts, the Longstreets, the daughter of General Hill, the Meades, the long row of men in gray and gold—became silent, rose to their feet, and uncovered. That was Gettysburg fifty years afterward.

