

(1870)
THE
SOUTHERN REBELLION

A HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.

By W. A. CRAFTS.

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The losses of the enemy were even more severe. The federal troops buried about four thousand five hundred of their dead, and their wounded were more than twenty thousand. They lost in prisoners captured on the field and on the retreat upwards of thirteen thousand six hundred. Three guns and forty-one standards were captured from them, and twenty-five thousand small arms were collected on the field, some of which, however, were those of fallen Union soldiers.

The following is General Meade's brief report of the battle and his previous movements:—

“HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, }
October 1, 1863. }

“General: I have the honor to submit herewith a report of the operations of this army during the month of July, including details of the battle of Gettysburg, which have been delayed by failure to receive the reports of the several corps and division commanders, who were severely wounded in battle.

“On the 28th of June I received orders from the President, placing me in command of the army of the Potomac.

“The situation of affairs was briefly as follows: The confederate army, which was commanded by General R. E. Lee, was estimated at over one hundred thousand strong. All that army had crossed the Potomac River and advanced up the Cumberland valley. Reliable intelligence placed his advance thus: Ewell's corps on the Susquehanna, Harrisburg, and Columbia; Longstreet's corps at Chambersburg; and Hill's corps between that place and Cashtown.

“The 28th of June was spent in ascertaining the positions and strength of the different corps of the army, but principally in bringing up the cavalry which had been covering the rear of the army in its passage over the Potomac, and to which a large increase had just been made from the force previously attached to the defences of Washington.

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“Orders were given on this day to Major-General French, commanding at Harper’s Ferry, to move with seven thousand men to occupy Frederick and the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, with the balance of his force, estimated at four thousand, to remove and escort public property to Washington.

“On the 29th the army was put in motion, and on the evening of that day it was in position, the left at Emmitsburg and the right at New Windsor. Buford’s division of cavalry was on the left flank, with his advance at Gettysburg. Kilpatrick’s division was in the front at Hanover, where he encountered this day General Stuart’s confederate cavalry, which had crossed the Potomac at Seneca Creek, and passing our right flank, was making its way towards Carlisle, having escaped Gregg’s division, which was delayed in taking position on the right flank by the occupation of the roads by a column of infantry.

“On the 30th the right flank of the army was moved up to Manchester, the left still being at Emmitsburg, or in that vicinity, at which place three corps, first, eleventh, and third, were collected under the orders of Major-General Reynolds.

“General Buford having reported from Gettysburg the appearance of the enemy on the Cashtown road in some force, General Reynolds was directed to occupy Gettysburg.

“On reaching that place, on the 1st day of July, General Reynolds found Buford’s cavalry warmly engaged with the enemy, who had debouched his infantry through the mountains on Cashtown, but was being held in check in the most gallant manner by Buford’s cavalry. Major-General Reynolds immediately moved around the town of Gettysburg, and advanced on the Cashtown road, and without a moment’s hesitation deployed his advanced division and attacked the enemy, at the same time sending orders for the eleventh corps, General Howard, to advance as promptly as possible.

“Soon after making his dispositions for attack, Major-General Reynolds fell mortally wounded, the command of the first corps devolving on

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Major-General Doubleday, and the command of the field on Major-General Howard, who arrived about this time (half past eleven A. M.) with the eleventh corps, then commanded by Major-General Schurz. Major-General Howard pushed forward two divisions of the eleventh corps to support the first corps, now warmly engaged with the enemy on a ridge to the north of the town, and posted his third division, with three batteries of artillery, on the Cemetery Ridge, on the south side of the town.

“Up to this time the battle had been with the forces of the enemy debouching from the mountains on the Cashtown road, known to be Hill’s corps. In the early part of the action the success was on the enemy’s side. Wadsworth’s division of the first corps, having driven the enemy back some distance, captured numerous prisoners, among them General Archer, of the confederate army.

“The arrival of reënforcements to the enemy on the Cashtown road, and the junction of Ewell’s corps coming in on the York and Harrisburg roads, which occurred between one and two o’clock P. M., enabled the enemy to bring vastly superior forces against both the first and eleventh corps, outflanking our line of battle, and pressing it so severely, that, about four o’clock P. M., Major-General Howard deemed it prudent to withdraw these two corps to the Cemetery Ridge, on the south side of the town, which operation was successfully accomplished — not, however, without considerable loss in prisoners, arising from the confusion incident to portions of both corps passing through the town, and the men getting confused in the streets.

“About the time of the withdrawal, Major-General Hancock arrived, whom I had despatched to represent me on the field, on hearing of the death of General Reynolds. In conjunction with Major-General Howard, General Hancock proceeded to post the troops on Cemetery Ridge, and to repel an attack that the enemy made on our right flank. This attack was not, however, very vigorous; the enemy, seeing the strength of the position occupied,

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seemed to be satisfied with the success he had accomplished, desisting from any further attack this day.

“About seven o'clock P. M. Major-Generals Slocum and Sickles, with the twelfth corps and part of the third, reached the ground, and took post on the right and left of the troops previously posted. Being satisfied, from reports received from the field, that it was the intention of the enemy to support, with his whole army, the attack already made, and reports from Major-Generals Hancock and Howard on the character of the position being favorable, I determined to give battle at this point, and early in the evening first issued orders to all corps to concentrate at Gettysburg, directing all trains to be sent to the rear at Westminster at eleven P. M. first.

“I broke up my headquarters, which till then had been at Taneytown, and proceeded to the field, arriving there at one A. M. of the 2d. So soon as it was light I proceeded to inspect the position occupied and to make arrangements for posting several corps as they should reach the ground.

“By seven A. M. the second and fifth corps, with the rest of the third, had reached the warmly engaged with the enemy, who had debouched his infantry through the mountains on Cashtown, but was being held in check in the most gallant manner by Buford's cavalry. Major-General Reynolds immediately moved around the town of Gettysburg, and advanced on the Cashtown road, and without a moment's hesitation deployed his advanced division and attacked the enemy, at the same time sending orders for the eleventh corps, General Howard, to advance as promptly as possible.

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“By seven A. M. the second and fifth corps, with the rest of the third, had reached the ground, and were posted as follows: The eleventh corps retained its position on Cemetery Ridge, just opposite to the town; the first corps was posted on the right; the eleventh on an elevated knoll connecting with the Ridge and extending to the south and east, on which the twelfth corps was placed, the right of the twelfth corps resting on a small stream at a point where it crossed the Baltimore pike, and which formed on the right flank of the twelfth something of an obstacle.

“Cemetery Ridge extended in a westerly and southerly direction, gradually diminishing in elevation till it came to a very prominent ridge called ‘Round Top,’ running east and west. The second and third corps were directed to occupy the continuation of Cemetery Ridge, on the left of the eleventh corps and fifth corps; pending their arrival the sixth corps was held in reserve. While these dispositions were being made, the enemy was massing his troops on an exterior ridge, distant from the line occupied by us from a mile to a mile and a half.

“At two P. M. the sixth corps arrived, after a march of thirty-two miles, which was accomplished from nine P. M. of the day previous.

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On its arrival being reported, I immediately directed the fifth corps to move over to our extreme left, and the sixth to occupy its place as a reserve for the right.

“About three P. M. I rode out to the extreme left to await the arrival of the fifth corps and post it, when I found that Major-General Sickles, commanding the third corps, not fully apprehending my instructions in regard to the position to be occupied, had advanced, or rather was in the act of advancing, his corps some half mile or three quarters of a mile in the front of the line of the second corps on a prolongation of which it was designed his corps should rest.

“Having found Major-General Sickles, I was explaining to him that he was too far in the advance, and discussing with him the propriety of withdrawing, when the enemy opened upon him with several batteries in his front and his flank, and immediately brought forward columns of infantry, and made a vigorous assault. The third corps sustained the shock most heroically. Troops from the second corps were immediately sent by Major-General Hancock to cover the right flank of the third corps, and soon after the assault commenced, the fifth corps most fortunately arrived, and took a position on the left of the third; Major-General Sykes commanding, immediately sending a force to occupy ‘Round Top’ ridge, where a most furious contest was maintained, the enemy making desperate but unsuccessful efforts to secure it. Notwithstanding the stubborn resistance of the third corps, under Major-General Birney, (Major-General Sickles having been wounded early in the action,) superiority in numbers of the enemy enabling him to outflank its advanced position, General Birney was counselled to fall back and reform, behind the line originally designed to be held.

“In the mean time, perceiving the great exertions of the enemy, the sixth corps, Major-General Sedgwick, and part of the first corps, to which I had assigned Major-General Newton, particularly Lockwood’s Maryland brigade, together with detachments from the second corps, were all brought up at different periods, and succeeded, together with a gallant resistance

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of the fifth corps, in checking, and finally repulsing, the assault of the enemy, who retired in confusion and disorder about sunset, and ceased any further efforts on our extreme left.

“An assault was, however, made about eight P. M. on the eleventh corps, from the left of the town, which was repelled by the assistance of troops from the second and first corps. During the heavy assault upon our extreme left, portions of the twelfth corps were sent as reënforcements.

“During their absence the line on the extreme right was held by a very much reduced force. This was taken advantage of by the enemy, who, during the absence of Geary's division of the twelfth corps, advanced and occupied part of the line.

“On the morning of the 3d July, General Geary, having returned during the night, attacked at early dawn the enemy, and succeeded in driving him back and reoccupying his former position. A spirited contest was maintained all the morning along this part of the line. General Geary, reënforced by Wheaton's brigade of the sixth corps, maintained his position, and inflicted very severe losses on the enemy.

“With this exception, our lines remained undisturbed till one P. M. on the 3d, when the enemy opened from over one hundred and twenty-five guns, playing upon our centre and left. This cannonade continued for over two hours, when, our guns failing to make any reply, the enemy ceased firing, and soon his masses of infantry became visible, forming for an assault on our left and left centre.

“An assault was made with great firmness, directed principally against the point occupied by the second corps, and was repelled with equal firmness by the troops of that corps, supported by Doubleday's division and Stannard's brigade of the first corps. During this assault both Major-General Hancock, commanding the left centre, and Brigadier-General Gibbon, commanding the second corps, were severely wounded.

“This terminated the battle, the enemy re-

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tiring to his lines, leaving the field strewn with his dead and wounded, and numerous prisoners in our hands.

“Buford’s division of cavalry, after its arduous service at Gettysburg, on the 1st, was, on the 2d, sent to Westminster, to refit, and guard our trains. Kilpatrick’s division, that, on the 29th, 30th, and 1st, had been successfully engaging the enemy’s cavalry, was, on the 3d, sent out on our extreme left, on the Emmitsburg road, where good service was rendered in assaulting the enemy’s line and occupying his attention.

“At the same time General Gregg was engaged with the enemy on our extreme right, having passed across the Baltimore pike and Bonaughtown roads, and boldly attacked the enemy’s left and rear.

“On the morning of the 4th the reconnoissances developed that the enemy had drawn back his left flank, but maintained his position in front of our left, apparently assuming a new line parallel to the mountain.

“On the morning of the 5th it was ascertained that the enemy was in full retreat by the Fairfield and Cashtown roads. The sixth corps was immediately sent in pursuit on the Fairfield road, and the cavalry on the Cashtown road, and by Emmitsburg and Monterey passes.

“The 5th and 6th of July were employed in succoring the wounded and burying the dead. * * *

“Our own losses were very severe, amounting, as will be seen by the accompanying return, to two thousand eight hundred and thirty-four killed, thirteen thousand seven hundred and nine wounded, and six thousand six hundred and forty-three missing—in all twenty-three thousand one hundred and eighty-six.

“It is impossible, in a report of this nature, to enumerate all the instances of gallantry and good conduct which distinguished our success on the hard-fought field of Gettysburg. The reports of corps commanders and their subordinates, herewith submitted, will furnish all information upon this subject.

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"I will only add my tribute to the heroic bravery of the whole army, officers and men, which, under the blessing of divine Providence, enabled the crowning victory to be obtained, which I feel confident the country will never cease to bear in grateful remembrance.

"It is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to call attention to the earnest efforts and co-operation on the part of Major-General D. N. Couch, commanding the department of the Susquehanna, and particularly to his advance of four thousand men under Brigadier-General W. F. Smith, who joined me at Boonsboro', just prior to the withdrawal of the confederate army.

"In conclusion, I desire to return my thanks to my staff, general and personal, to each and all of whom I was indebted for unremitting activity and most efficient assistance.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"GEO. G. MEADE,

"*Major-General commanding.*

"Brigadier-General L. THOMAS, *Adjutant-General U. S. A.*"

Shortly after the battle of Gettysburg it was proposed that the remains of the Union soldiers who had fallen there should be honorably interred in one enclosure, and a commemorative monument erected. This pious work was proposed by the governor of Pennsylvania, and the governors of the other loyal states which had soldiers among the dead gave their approval and coöperation in accomplishing it. An appropriate tract of seventeen acres was secured on Cemetery Hill, the key to the federal position, and overlooking the whole battle-field; and there the fallen brave were brought together and interred in lots set apart to each state, with a record of all who were known. The grounds were tastefully laid out, and provision made for their perpetual protection and improvement. This national cemetery was dedicated with appropriate services on the 19th of November, 1863, when President Lincoln and a large number of civil and military officers were present, and Hon. Edward Everett, of Massachusetts, delivered an address. In this address Mr. Everett gave a concise narrative of the battle and the events preceding and fol-

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lowing it, and as he enjoyed superior facilities for obtaining information, the following extracts are authentic as well as interesting:—

“Although General Lee broke up from Fredericksburg on the 3d of June, it was not till the 24th that the main body of his army entered Maryland. Instead of crossing the Potomac, as he had intended, east of the Blue Ridge, he was compelled to do it at Shepherdstown and Williamsport, thus materially deranging his entire plan of campaign north of the river. Stuart, who had been sent with his cavalry to the east of the Blue Ridge, to guard the passes of the mountains, to mask the movements of Lee, and to harass the Union general in crossing the river, having been very severely handled by Pleasanton at Beverly Ford, Aldie, and Upperville, instead of being able to retard General Hooker’s advance, was driven himself away from his connection with the army of Lee, and cut off for a fortnight from all communication with it—a circumstance to which General Lee, in his report, alludes more than once, with evident displeasure. Let us now rapidly glance at the incidents of the eventful campaign.

“A detachment from Ewell’s corps, under Jenkins, had penetrated, on the 15th of June, as far as Chambersburg. This movement was intended at first merely as a demonstration, and as a marauding expedition for supplies. It had, however, the salutary effect of alarming the country; and vigorous preparations were made, not only by the general government, but here in Pennsylvania and in the sister states, to repel the inroad. After two days passed at Chambersburg, Jenkins, anxious for his communications with Ewell, fell back with his plunder to Hagerstown. Here he remained for several days, and then, having swept the recesses of the Cumberland valley, came down upon the eastern flank of the South Mountain, and pushed his marauding parties as far as Waynesboro’. On the 22d the remainder of Ewell’s corps crossed the river and moved up the valley. They were followed on the 24th

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by Longstreet and Hill, who crossed at Williamsport and Shepherdstown, and, pushing up the valley, encamped at Chambersburg on the 27th. In this way the whole rebel army, estimated at ninety thousand infantry, upwards of ten thousand cavalry, and four thousand or five thousand artillery, making a total of one hundred and five thousand of all arms, was concentrated in Pennsylvania.

“Up to this time no report of Hooker’s movements had been received by General Lee, who, having been deprived of his cavalry, had no means of obtaining information. Rightly judging, however, that no time would be lost by the Union army in the pursuit, in order to detain it on the eastern side of the mountains in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and thus preserve his communications by the way of Williamsport, he had, before his own arrival at Chambersburg, directed Ewell to send detachments from his corps to Carlisle and York. The latter detachment, under Early, passed through this place on the 26th of June. You need not, fellow-citizens of Gettysburg, that I should recall to you those moments of alarm and distress, precursors as they were of the more trying scenes which were so soon to follow.

“As soon as General Hooker perceived that the advance of the confederates into the Cumberland valley was not a mere feint to draw him away from Washington, he moved rapidly in pursuit. Attempts, as we have seen, were made to harass and retard his passage across the Potomac. These attempts were not only altogether unsuccessful, but were so unskillfully made as to place the entire federal army between the cavalry of Stuart and the army of Lee. While the latter was massed in the Cumberland valley, Stuart was east of the mountains, with Hooker’s army between, and Gregg’s cavalry in close pursuit. Stuart was accordingly compelled to force a march northward, which was destitute of strategical character, and which deprived his chief of all means of obtaining intelligence.

“Not a moment had been lost by General

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Hooker in the pursuit of Lee. The day after the rebel army entered Maryland, the Union army crossed the Potomac at Edwards' Ferry, and by the 28th of June lay between Harper's Ferry and Frederick. The force of the enemy on that day was partly at Chambersburg, and partly moving on the Cashtown road in the direction of Gettysburg, while the detachments from Ewell's corps, of which mention has been made, had reached the Susquehanna opposite Harrisburg and Columbia. That a great battle must soon be fought, no one could doubt; but in the apparent and perhaps real absence of plan on the part of Lee, it was impossible to foretell the precise scene of the encounter. Wherever fought, consequences the most momentous hung upon the result.

“In this critical and anxious state of affairs, General Hooker was relieved, and General Meade was summoned to the chief command of the army. It appears to my unmilitary judgment to reflect the highest credit upon him, upon his predecessor, and upon the corps commanders of the army of the Potomac, that a change could take place in the chief command of so large a force on the eve of a general battle,—the various corps necessarily moving on lines somewhat divergent, and all in ignorance of the enemy's intended point of concentration,—and that not an hour's hesitation should ensue in the advance of any portion of the entire army.

“Having assumed the chief command on the 28th, General Meade directed his left wing, under Reynolds, upon Emmitsburg, and his right upon New Windsor, leaving General French with eleven thousand men to protect the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and convoy the public property from Harper's Ferry to Washington. Buford's cavalry was then at this place, and Kilpatrick's at Hanover, where he encountered and defeated the rear of Stuart's cavalry, who was roving the country in search of the main army of Lee. On the rebel side, Hill had

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