

**GETTYSBURG
AS WE MEN ON THE RIGHT SAW IT**

By George A. Thayer, Late Captain Second Massachusetts V. I.

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BY GEORGE A. THAYER,
Late Captain Second Mass. V. I.

In the beginning of June, 1863, Slocum's Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, to which the Second Massachusetts Infantry belonged, was awaiting events upon the barren hills of Stafford Court-house, in Virginia. We had come to this region in the previous December, when it was covered with woods, broken by an occasional clearing of—for the most part—worn-out tobacco fields. Under the winters demand for house timber and fuel, the trees had disappeared as far as the eye could reach; the fields, where they had not been beaten hard by parade and drill, showed the neglect of cultivation which attends the neighborhood of a hostile army, and had no interest as landscape. The court town was a shadow of a village, without trade or society. We were glad to bid it all good-bye as we went to Chancellorsville in the last of April; but in ten days we were back again, to waste a month of invaluable campaigning weather.

The sound of cannonading near Fredericksburg, ten miles away, was a not unwelcome break upon this tedium. It set loose the tongue of rumor, that imaginative dame whose wild inventions were not confined to the ear of the newspaper correspondent, but afforded food for strange plans of cam-

paigns marked out and fought in the knots which gathered in regimental tents of rank and file.

Then came a sudden summons of a few picked infantry regiments to join a scouting party with Pleasanton's cavalry. Then a few days more of quiet and *ennui*, when at sundown of Saturday, June 13th, the corps was hurriedly set in motion northward. In grand strategy the foot soldier, even though he be an officer, is but a pawn upon the chess-board, moved hither and thither by an incomprehensible master. He contents himself, therefore, while history is being organized, with reflections upon his personal comfort, or inconveniences of body and mind; and that all-night march comes back to my memory as an exasperating race which might perfectly well have been postponed to daylight, over worn-out corduroy roads, whose projecting log ends tripped up the sleepy men, whose holes jolted the wagons into ditches, whence all hands must lift them, and which were very apt to be altogether wanting when straggling creeks or marshy places disposed us to be most lenient toward their general shortcomings. But what seemed to us a nefarious plot of some evil-disposed officer to harass helpless footmen was but an inevitable feature of a hurried movement of Hooker's army to intercept an invasion of the North by Lee. That heavy firing at the Falmouth crossing of the Rappahannock was a feint of Hooker's, made to learn the meaning of the ominous quiet in the Fredericksburg intrenchments, and the cavalry and infantry battle of Beverly Ford, in which the picked regiments had met the Confederate, Stuart, was another phase of the same investigation, both of which showed that Lee was gathering his resources for an offensive cam-

paign through that ever-available gate-way to Maryland or Northern Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley.

On that Saturday whose evening set us on foot to Dumfries, Lee's advance, under Ewell, had invested the Union general, Milroy, at Winchester, well down the Shenandoah Valley, and on the morrow the larger part of Milroy's command, some 4,000 men, were captives to the enemy, and the passage into Maryland was open. The rest of Lee's forces were following hard upon Ewell, but their movements were so closely veiled behind the Blue Ridge that the Army of the Potomac was, for the most of June, groping in the dark, uncertain whether its opponent would emerge through the mountain gaps into the Manassas Plain, or would try once more the tempting farming country of Southern Maryland. Hence our movements seemed fitful and capricious to those of us whose business it was to obey orders. To-day we were hastening breathlessly forward; to-morrow we lingered by the roadside, or in the fields. The latter days of June found my fragment of the army at Leesburg, near Edwards' Ferry, on the Potomac. It was a restful picture upon which we looked from the lordly hill to whose keeping, with some old field-works of rebel construction, my regiment was assigned. A pretty village, in whose yards we saw roses as we passed, and which the breath of war had apparently touched but lightly, if at all, with church spires from which issued on our single Sunday's stay the tones of bells on whose wings our home-sick souls were straightway carried to New England; wide-stretching green fields, with an occasional grazing cow which had marvelously escaped the forager, as if for the purpose of preserving a pastoral completeness to the

landscape; even the groups of tents seemed to belong there, and only the distant sound of a cavalry battle around Upperville, a dozen miles to the westward, on that Sunday afternoon, reminded us of the dreadful business which brought us here. Happiness is the result of contrasts, and we remembered that the day of our arrival had been one of misery. We had marched through torrid summer heat and stifling dust; we had waded Goose Creek in default of a bridge, and a fierce tempest of rain and hail had completed our soaking as we issued from the stream; we had bivouacked in our drenched garments, without blankets, with small and ineffectual fires, and in the face of the searching wind which usually follows thunder-storms. So it was pleasant to be physically comfortable, even under the trifling inconvenience of having our baggage so far away that changes of under-clothes were out of the question, as they continued to be for some three weeks.

While we lingered here, Lee boldly determined the course of the summer campaign.

On Monday, the 22d of June, Ewell's two divisions crossed into Maryland at the Sharpsburg and Williamsport Fords; and a week later, the rear-guard, under Longstreet, passed the river at the same points. As soon as tidings of these movements reached Hooker, he marched his army over Edwards' Ferry, and we were once more upon loyal soil. What a superior world it seemed to our not too-prejudiced eyes!

The season was one of perfect foliage. Heavy and frequent rains had fallen, to the great disturbance, indeed, of the farmers; for the wheat fields were ready for the reaper, and

already the grain was beginning to be lodged in tangled masses. But our uncommercial eyes beheld only the freshness of the many-tinted fields, the roads free from dust, which wound through picturesque landscapes, and the trim houses and huge and well-filled barns. Cherries were ripe; we could vary our dry army diet with bread and butter from the hands of house-wives; our insinuating foragers persuaded the thrifty farmer folks—who, in the midst of their glow of gratitude at our intervention betwixt their hearthstones and the cruel invader, were never unwilling to turn an honest penny—to bring forth hidden delicacies; in the phrase of a Confederate raider, “we had a right smart of apple-butter, and a right smart of cow butter;” and, as we approached the villages which had been entered by the enemy’s scouting parties, the voluntary donations of edibles lavished upon us in welcome of our timely appearance were almost beyond our capacity to appropriate.

To both the inhabitants and the soldiers the march was a festival.

The prodigious length of our wagon-trains filled the country people with amazement.

The ranks of troops tramping in unbroken procession from morning to night seemed to have drained the North of men. And we, well fed, marching at leisure, and looking every-where upon friendly and hospitable faces, felt for the the time as if we were only in the pageantry of war, its perils wholly past.

In my diary of the second day’s march after passing the river, there is mention of tedious delays, which kept us upon our feet—before reaching the night’s bivouac—until nine or

ten in the evening. The causes of that delay, as has since transpired, were momentous in changing the plan of the campaign, and in assigning to the Union army a new commander at that most critical juncture—the eve of a battle. When Hooker learned that all of Lee's army had passed into the Cumberland Valley of Maryland, he proposed to the Washington authorities to move Slocum's corps up the left bank of the Potomac to the Sharpsburg Ford—by Antietam battle ground—and, upon his way, take the garrison of Harper's Ferry, some 12,000 men under French—leaving Maryland Heights unoccupied—and thus throw a strong force across Lee's communications with Virginia, capturing his pontoons, intercepting his re-inforcements of ammunition, as well as the herds of cattle and other supplies on their way South from pillaged Northern farms, and so pressing upon the Confederate rear-guard as it advanced into Pennsylvania that the invaders would be forced to turn and make fight wherever the Union general chose to take position. The various corps of the Army of the Potomac were within easy supporting distance of such a movement, and Hooker, confident of its feasibility, accompanied Slocum's column to Knoxville, within three miles of Harper's Ferry. But there he received a message from General Halleck that French's garrison must not be taken away. In vain did he urge that the troops were useless there under the present or any probable disposition of the enemy's forces; in vain he set forth the importance of saving the loyal states from the devastation of war; in vain he met the terrors, with which the Washington people were constantly filled, lest the army should leave their city uncovered to the enemy's assaults, by the plea that a vigorous ag-

gressive movement upon Lee's rear would be the most effective of parries against the Confederate thrust upon the capital. Hooker's requests were peremptorily refused, and under such an exhibition of obvious lack of confidence in his fitness to deal with the emergency of the invasion, he asked to be relieved of the command of the army.

The Twelfth Corps turned its back upon Harper's Ferry, and moved, with the rest of the army, north-eastward toward Frederick. As we bivouacked at this city, we heard that Meade had succeeded Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac. And it may be mentioned incidentally, as throwing some light upon the motives for thwarting Hooker's well-conceived plan, that Meade was straightway granted permission to do as he would with the Harper's Ferry garrison, and was also placed in command of the scattered detachments distributed through Maryland, which, under divers pretexts, had been kept from Hooker's control.

Two features of our march through Frederick come to me with vivid impression, viz., the enthusiasm of the people as we passed through their streets with such cheering and displays of the American flag as our men had not witnessed since the days when they marched from home; and the general drunkenness of the army. I know nothing of the sobriety of the officers; certainly those of my acquaintance had too much anxiety to get their men safely out of the town to stop for any hilarity. But abundant whisky, sold on every hand despite the vigilance of the provost-guard, thrust upon the men by well-meaning citizens, put into the midst of our companions as we marched, and drank before we could break the bottles, which we did most promptly and inexorably,

threatened a general demoralization of the rank and file, and did leave hundreds of them within my limited observation reeling in the streets, lying in the ruts in perilous proximity to artillery wheels, or snoring by the roadsides far beyond the town.

In the nice calculations which have been lately made as to the causes which served to deplete Meade's forces from that preponderance over Lee's numbers, which the ordinary muster returns show to about an equality with the Confederate forces, I have never heard that the disabilities of the Frederick drunkenness have ever been taken into account. Yet I am sure many men missed the fighting on account of their debauch.

We were sauntering slowly through Littlestown on the morning of Wednesday, July 1st. We halted in mid-forenoon at the group of houses called Two Taverns, five miles south-east of Gettysburg, and ate our dinners leisurely. The sound of guns must have been largely cut off from our ears by intervening hills, for it was afternoon before the artillery became so demonstrative as to demand our presence. But, as we now know, Buford's cavalry had met the advance of the Confederate general, Hill, at 10 o'clock, a mile and a half north-east of the town of Gettysburg. He had been speedily re-inforced by Reynolds' First Corps, this commander being killed almost as soon as he entered the fight; at 1 P. M. Howard had brought up the Eleventh Corps to meet the swelling numbers of the enemy, from the first largely superior to the Union forces; at 4 P. M. the day's battle was practically done. The First Corps had been worn out; the Eleventh Corps had been crushed and driven pell-mell through the

streets of Gettysburg;* of the 16,000 Union troops engaged through the day, scarcely 5,000 remained in condition to rally about a brigade of Steinwehr's division which held the abrupt height upon the southern edge of the town, since known to fame as Cemetery Hill. These alarming facts came to us in fragments as we pushed toward the firing. Groups of frightened women and children, on their way to safe shelter, met us with imploring eyes; men hurrying away with their household goods in carts reported disaster to our army and the death of Reynolds; now and then a hospitable array of refreshments in a farmer's yard showed the superiority of the host to personal fears in his sympathy with the soldiers, whose heads the July sun was fiercely smiting; and the white bursts of smoke high in the air came closer, and the double explosion of cannon and shell was more nearly simultaneous.

The Twelfth Corps was now moving upon the Baltimore Turnpike, which ran directly over the crest of Cemetery Hill, the highway to the Nation's capital, the point of the most strategic importance in the battle-field, the army's roadway of retreat. Two miles from the town the skirmish line was formed, and Williams' First Division felt its way slowly to the right and front of where the battle had been, while Geary's Second Division went away to the left. It is but little that a line officer knows of the topography of the fields he hurriedly

* Ames' brigade was the last of the Eleventh Corps to fall back, and did not share the panic of some of its associate regiments. The Second Brigade of Steinwehr's division of the same corps, under Colonel Orland Smith, held Cemetery Hill from the time of Howard's arrival upon the field, and was not engaged in Wednesday's battle.

traverses. Hills and woods quite invariably shut from his view the operations of other than his own regiment or brigade; and as his positions change from hour to hour, he is apt to retain in mind only a confused impression of rocks, trees, and fences, not much unlike their kind every-where. Yet, as it seemed then, so it would now, if I were to be dropped among the woody hills south-east of the cemetery. We were in a place capitally suited to sturdy defensive warfare, for the wide-stretching woods were of goodly sized trees, and quite free from underbrush, while every-where large bowlders cropped out of the soil. This formation characterized both the right and left flanks of Gettysburg battle-field. On the left, the two Round Tops were wooded from base to summit, and thickly beset with ledge, bowlder, and shingle. On the right, Wolf's, McAllister's, and Culp's Hills were somewhat less ragged with rocks; but the forest with which they were covered in 1863 formed a curtain of some two miles or more in length—not, however, very broad. Through this curtain our division took a peep, on Wednesday afternoon, to see if we were not wanted upon the right flank of the Eleventh Corps, which would have placed us upon the cultivated open ground of Benner's Hill, by the eastern outskirts of the town. But the fighting was over for the day, and where we hoped to take position the enemy were already in occupation. Hence we withdrew from Wolf's Hill and the Hanover Road, and, after a night's bivouac near the Baltimore Pike, we advanced in the early morning, to the stern music of some measured artillery duelling in our front—whose resonant ring was practically our first assurance that we were to take part in a pitched

battle betwixt the two great armies—to the southerly slope of Culp's Hill, overlooking Rock Creek, and with the sweet waters of Spangler's Spring a few yards behind us.

The configuration of the battle-field has been often described. A line drawn from the town of Gettysburg nearly due south for the distance of two and a half miles would pass through Cemetery Hill and the entire formation of the left center to its termination in the Round Tops. Cemetery Hill, which is at the edge of the town, was the strategic center of the field. From here, bending pretty abruptly to the south-east, ran the right of the battle-line for the distance of a mile, over East Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill to the base of McAllister's and Wolf's Hills, which are practically one, all of the heights averaging some four or five hundred feet above the sea level.

Before the men who were on Cemetery Hill lay the town, and at right and left a broad cultivated valley, suitable for cavalry operations—a use to which Buford put it on Wednesday afternoon in delaying the Confederate pursuit—upon whose yonder slope, a mile or more away, were the Confederate lines, except those of one division, which were in the streets of the town.

The only protection of this central part of the Union line were the stone walls and rail fences, with perhaps a very slight earth-work thrown about the cannon which were posted here Wednesday noon. The spade was an unknown tool in most of the Gettysburg lines.

The Culp's Hill troops, consisting of the re-united divisions of the Twelfth Corps, under Ruger and Geary (Williams being in temporary command of the corps, and Slocum of

the right wing of the army), were among woods and rocks, the sluggish waters of Rock Creek—for the most part a narrow shallow stream, although, near my brigade, deep—at the base of our hill toward the enemy. Woods were thick before us. Behind us, at a few hundred yards distance, was the Baltimore Turnpike, about which were clustered, out of reach of the guns, the wagon trains and some of the hospitals. Far across the country, through orchards and over undulating fields, we could catch glimpses of troops and guns in position. The inner distance from right to left was some two miles.

The day was dreadfully still, save for some intermittent shelling in attempts to find out what the enemy was doing. As the morning mists broke away, it became clear and hot, uncomfortable for them who were in the open fields. But we were upon the picnic-grounds of Gettysburg; the oaks a grateful tent above our heads, as they had been over generations of pleasure groups; the pellucid waters of the spring refreshingly cool. We made our ground strong with breastworks of logs and stones. It was not till four in the afternoon that the battle broke behind us at the left. In the hurry of establishing the long lines, Sickles' Third Corps was thrust three-quarters of a mile in advance of its true position; and upon Sickles, and involving Hancock's Second Corps at his right, and Sykes' Fifth Corps at Little Round Top, Longstreet made strenuous assaults, whose furious reverberation and roar lasted for three or four hours, the crash of musketry, apart from the artillery, sounding like incessant peals of thunder. Our ears served as witnesses of the drift of the battle; for steadily the noise came nearer, and

the Southern yell could be more and more distinctly heard. So critical was the case, that, in order to re-inforce the left, Meade stripped his lines wherever it seemed safe to do so, and with us the safety border was overpassed, for all but one brigade of the Twelfth Corps was hurried across the fields, arriving to find that, happily, the assault had spent its force. In this movement one of Geary's brigades* wandered somewhere southward, out of reach of the enemy, and was useless for the emergency at the left, as well as for its old post at Culp's Hill, where it was sorely needed. But a single brigade held the half mile or so of Culp's Hill intrenchments on Thursday evening, that of General George S. Greene—emphatically the hero of the right wing of Gettysburg—his troops, five New York regiments. It was in Lee's plan of battle to attack our right with Ewell's corps simultaneously with Longstreet's assault upon the left, while some of Hill's divisions carried East Cemetery Hill. Thus, at the hour when the right wing was being stripped, a series of determined attacks was begun there which came seriously near success; whose complete success, with disaster to our position, was probably prevented only by the fall of darkness. The assailants of Greene were Edward Johnson's division of four brigades.

Neither combatant could make any use of artillery, a fact which served the advantage of Greene, whose defenses were made almost impregnable against infantry assault by the massive rocks bestrewed all along his line, betwixt which he piled a wall of lesser bowlders and tree trunks. Yet it re-

* Kane's brigade.

quired nerve, vigilance, and good generalship for this slender line of defenders to steadfastly withstand, for two or three hours, the impetuous charge of fourfold their numbers.

So far as he occupied the hill, Greene held it firmly. But the intrenchments vacated by our brigade were entered without hindrance by the Confederate brigade of Steuart, who was thus upon Greene's flank, which, however, was specially guarded by a solid traverse. In daylight Steuart's position was within full view of the Baltimore Turnpike. Between nine and ten o'clock in the evening the Twelfth Corps came back to its post. With our ears intent upon the battle to which we were hurrying in the afternoon, we had heard none of the tumult of Ewell's attack. But as we drew near to our place, rumor hinted to us that all was not as it should be. The Second Regiment sent forward a reconnoitering company, which quickly struck traces of foreign occupancy, but our incredulous colonel was not satisfied till another venture was made. How pokerish it seemed to wait amid the darkness and the dead silence for revelations of a danger, most formidable because mysterious. But it was probable that the enemy was as scared as we, for one of our reconnoitering company's officers commanded the surrender of a group of pickets upon whom he stumbled, and came marching them out, to the number of a dozen or more; but then followed a command of "Fire!" from the bushes, and a furious volley flew over our heads.

Fortunate was it for the Union army that Ewell did not fully know the significance of his lodgment within our lines. The undisturbed march of a few more yards would have set him directly across the turnpike, taking in reverse Culp's and

Cemetery Hills, the whole of the Union right and center; and the story of Gettysburg might not, perhaps, have been that which history now records. The night was our salvation. In direct continuation of the Culp's Ridge, separated from it by a meadow a hundred yards wide, is another wooded acclivity, a part of McAllister's Hill. To that hill our brigade retreated, and there, taking Steuart in flank and rear, we built other breastworks of logs and rails. Ewell's position was not a strong one for his aggressive movements. He had no place for artillery; the only guns he had tried to bring to bear, stationed in the open ground of Benner's Hill, having been quickly silenced on Thursday.

From day-break—about four o'clock—on Friday morning, till seven, three or four of our batteries swept the valley of Rock Creek, where Ewell lay, with terrific fire. Slocum had increased the Union strength to eight brigades—six of the Twelfth Corps and two from the Sixth Corps. Stirred up by the artillery, Ewell's men, increased to seven brigades, fiercely resumed the assault, their sole available points of attack being the rocky stronghold against which they had vainly surged the night before. Until eleven o'clock—for seven hours—the terrific crash of musketry resounded through the woods; and after years have shown, in the death of nearly all of the trees which came within the range of fire, how continuous the sheets of bullets were in the course of that struggle, at which we, upon its outside, listened with dreadful suspense.

Yet not listened only. Two regiments of our brigade—the Second Massachusetts and the Twenty-seventh Indiana—have borne witness, by memorial stones erected in the edge of the meadow which divides Culp's from McAllister's, to the

fatality which took from their ranks nearly half their men in a gallant, but mad and comparatively fruitless, charge over that meadow, soaked with the rivulet which trickles from Spangler's Spring. Some one had blundered. Slocum requested Ruger to try the enemy at this portion of the line, and, if practicable, force him out. By the time the order issued from the mouth of Colonel Colgrove, of the Twenty-seventh Indiana, in temporary command, it became, "Advance two regiments immediately, and dislodge the enemy from his works!" What two regiments of six hundred men could essay against a brigade safely hidden in strong defenses, these regiments attempted. But only one passed the meadow, the Second Massachusetts. The Twenty-seventh Indiana, Colgrove's own regiment, in a broader stretch of the meadow, was stopped midway in its course. The Second touched the enemy's works, fought there for many minutes—would have stayed there if there had been any thought of re-inforcements—but the enemy, recovering from his surprise, was already sending out his skirmishers to intercept our retreat, and that part of our brigade left behind us could not fire without endangering us; so, without disorder, we turned about and took the nearest and least exposed course to our hill-side, where, under shelter of a wall, we made it hot for our opponents. That this charge was not without its influence, at least in showing the enemy that all his paths of advance toward the turnpike were hemmed in, may be true.*

* Extract from the report of the Confederate, Edward Johnson: "A demonstration in force was made upon my left and rear. The Second Virginia Regiment and Smith's brigade of Early's division were

But it was hard to persuade the survivors of the regiment that the waste of valor and life was not utterly disproportionate to the effect upon the morning's battle; for the assault was made at seven o'clock, and the roar of combat went on unbroken till eleven. Then Ewell was driven back. He left in the hands of the Twelfth Corps some 500 prisoners, while the losses in killed and wounded were enormous. The dead and mangled lay thick every-where in the woods, but especially were they clustered around Spangler's Spring. One dying Virginian bore plaintive tribute that men who could kill one another at the post of duty could be brothers in the hour of pain. "You uns have been right kind to we uns," he said, as, with difficulty, he gulped the cup of cold water brought to him from the spring, from whence it has been said the enemies drank in truce even while the fight was raging.

To this spot, after the battle, came some curious spectators from the neighboring country to learn what war was like. To us, who were hardened to such things, the effluvia and the distorted bodies, swollen to blackness under the blazing sun, were becoming most intolerable to every sensibility. It required a very brief experience to divest these sight-seers of desire to be more familiar with a battle-field. A few glances, and faces became deadly pale, as one faltered, "Come, Bill, we have had enough of this!"

The culminating assault of the battle, it is well known, was

disposed to meet and check it, which was accomplished to my entire satisfaction."

made at the point occupied by Hancock's Second Corps, at some distance to the left of Cemetery Hill, on Friday afternoon. With Ewell's repulse an ominous silence fell upon the field every-where for two hours. Then burst what we then could only compare to a tornado of shells and solid shot. Lee directed the fire of one hundred and thirty-eight guns upon our lines, the chief of this discharge falling upon the center. The fire was often in volleys by battery, and was most appalling to us who received only the shots which fell beyond their mark. In the thick of the storm as many as six shells in a second are said at times to have burst, and horses seemed to share the consternation with men. I have recollections of the appearance of here and there an orderly flying across the open ground upon some indispensable errand, with something of the attitude ascribed in pictures to people who are trying to run from a volcanic eruption; but whoever could find cover of a stout tree or a huge rock, clung to it with determination, and prayed heartily that it would not fall upon him, as it seemed as if every thing must tumble upon our heads.

From my lookout I could see a battery in the left center, standing out against the sky. It was my index of the effect of the cannonading upon the stability of our lines. So long as it stood fast and delivered its fire, I felt somewhat at ease. But once or twice it was relieved, or its caissons were sent to the rear for ammunition, and at such times it appeared as if the break had been made, and the *sauve qui peut*—save himself who can—was to be next. But its post was not abandoned, and the battle was not lost.

We could not see the infantry action which followed at three o'clock; that imposing advance across a mile of open field, with occasional halts to tear down fences, of the 14,000 Confederates, who, before they came in contact with Hancock, were reduced to Pickett's noble band of 4,500—the steel lance head, to which it has been compared, of a shaft of softer fiber. The crash, long prolonged; the shouts, as much Yankee as rebel; then the diminution to pattering shots, and the Union hurrah outlasting the Confederate yell, and closing the drama; these came to us to give us somewhat more of assurance than of fear, and then followed more of comparative stillness. Whether or not we were to have another day of this terrific strain, nobody knew. We slept soundly enough at night, but how nervous we were is shown by an episode of my night's duty as officer of the guard. Some time after midnight, one or two musket shots were exploded upon our picket front. In an instant the whole brigade was upon its feet, and without orders blazed furiously into the darkness. It was many minutes before discipline could be long enough asserted to show that there were no signs of any enemy in our front. It may be that the shots which provoked our uproar were a feint of the enemy's withdrawing pickets, for at eight o'clock on Saturday morning our reconnoissance, as far as the York road leading north-east from the town, discovered only the *débris* of battle; dead men, dead horses, and exploded caissons, where our batteries had silenced the hostile guns; abandoned wagons, leveled fences, dwellings in whose yards were bloody clouts; desolation where four days ago were the thrift and beauty of rich farms.

For two days we staid upon the field to bury our dead, and to await the reports of scouting parties as to Lee's movements. On Sunday afternoon, our faces were set once more toward Virginia.

Read May 5, 1886.