

CHATER III Three Days at Gettysburg

Wednesday, July 1 "At daybreak they were again on the road to Gettysburg, but not in the best of shape to do battle with the enemy. On the march from Carlisle to Gettysburg Jenkins' men had been absolutely worthless to Ewell."¹ "The time had come when the lack of effective cavalry support to screen his advance and to pinpoint the location of enemy forces was impairing Lee's efficiency. If the 2,000 or so cavalry troopers accompanying Ewell had been guided by such wily warriors as Stuart, Wade Hampton, Fitz Lee, or "Grumble" Jones, they might have served the purpose, but under Jenkins they could not cope with tough aggressive (Brigadier General) John Buford, who easily kept them from spying on the Union forces advancing south of Gettysburg."² Not everyone believed Jenkins' troops were so worthless, but they were not as effective as more experienced troops.

Lieutenant Schuricht reports: "At daybreak we were again in the saddle and on the road to Gettysburg. During the prenoon we heard heavy cannonading from that direction, and soon we learned that the two hostile armies had met unexpectedly. The Federal troops were finally defeated, but the loss on both sides was heavy, and that of the Union army the most severe. General Reynolds, the commanding general, was among the dead, and thousands of prisoners were taken by our victorious troops."³

The 17th Cavalry rejoined the Brigade at Gettysburg. The Brigade was assigned guard duty over the 5,000 Union prisoners taken that day.⁴

Most historians report the Battle of Gettysburg starting with the arrival of Harry Heth's infantry in that town about 8:00 a.m., driving in the pickets of Buford's First U.S. Cavalry Brigade. However, one of Buford's officers, Lieutenant Calef, reported that he opened fire "on the head of a column of rebel cavalry advancing on the right of the road."⁵ None of the Confederate reports mention cavalry with Heth. It is possible that a detachment from Jenkins' oft-maligned Brigade had ridden west from Heidlersburg to meet with Heth's advancing columns. One of Jenkins' captains later reported "that some of his command were the first to get to Gettysburg 1 July 1863."⁶

Those of Jenkins' troopers not guarding prisoners were part of several divisions kept in reserve on the first day of fighting.

¹Coddington, p. 191. ²Ibid., p. 196. ³Schuricht, p. 344. ⁴Dawson, p. 25.

⁵Coddington, p. 684, f.n. 33 and 34. ⁶Ibid.

Thursday, July 2 Lieutenant Schuricht: "In the morning we advanced into the valley between Seminary Ridge and the mountain range held by the Union Army (Cemetery Ridge, Round Tops and Culp's Hill). Jenkins' Brigade was posted in a piece of woodland, part of yesterday's battlefield, in sight of the seminary and the city of Gettysburg. Both armies had been reinforced and concentrated during the night. General Stuart, with the main force of our cavalry, was not at hand, and for the want of cavalry the defeated Federals had not been pressed,* and still held and fortified the eminence, above Gettysburg, controlling the valley. Our forces were in possession of the town. We were wondering at the silence prevalent, only in long intervals the report of a gun was heard. General Jenkins resolved to reconnoitre, and I was of his companions. Arrived on top of a hill our party attracted the enemy's attention, and we were fired upon. A shell exploded among us, wounding the General and his horse. The hours dragged on wearily, until in the afternoon twenty-seven Confederate batteries opened fire on the enemy's lines. The Federal artillery replied at once, and soon the rattling noise of the fire of small arms joined in the terrible accord of battle. Several infantry regiments en route for the bloody field passed by our position, and I was struck by the composure and determination the men displayed. The contest lasted until 9 in the evening, but scanty reports came to us respecting the course of the battle. At 9 o'clock our brigade was ordered back some miles toward Petersburg. Hungry and fatigued, I slept while in the saddle, but suddenly awoke, hearing my name called by the adjutant of the regiment. The brigade had just met General Stuart, who, with his cavalry corps, had, after severe engagements with the Federal cavalry at Hanover, brought with him 200 wagons, and 1,200 horses and mules, captured in the vicinity of Washington City, and, after having repulsed the enemy's attack, he now wanted an officer to inform Generals Gordon, Heth, and Early that he did no longer require any of the reinforcements he had asked for. I was selected to carry these messages, and all the directions regarding the headquarters of said generals, General Stuart could give, was: 'You will find them somewhere in the left wing of our army; numerous men wounded in to-days battle will cross your way, and they can tell you.' I galloped off and soon met many suffering victims of the bloody struggle. Finally emerging from a dark forest, a wide field, brilliant in the moonshine, was before me, and I observed a very slender line of soldiers in a hollow, within 200 yards of the enemy's sharpshooters. 'Where will I find General Gordon's division?' I enquired from an officer, who came to

* A strange statement from an officer in a brigade of 1,800 cavalymen. Probably written after others said the same.

meet me. Pointing to a line of soldiers stretched on the ground, and holding their muskets in their arms, he replied in a most mournful voice: 'This is what is left of it.' A few minutes later, General Gordon approached us, returning from an inspection of his scattered command, and I delivered to him General Stuart's message. 'It is luck for General Stuart,' he answered, 'that he does not require the regiments asked for. I have none to spare.' Under similar discouraging circumstances I was received ... by Generals Heth and Ewell, and several times on my way thither, the sharp whistle of a bullet sent after me by some Yankee outpost, touched my ear. Gettysburg impressed me like an enormous hospital -- and a Yankee surgeon told me there were about ten thousand of their wounded within our lines. About half past 1 in the morning I arrived at the camping place of my regiment."⁷

Stuart had finally returned to Lee's army, but two days of opportunity had been lost. "The Confederate cavalry had made a wide swing around the Union lines, engaged in a skirmish in the streets of Hanover and then pushed on to Carlisle ... It was evening (of July 1) when the column reached town. Carlisle was occupied by two brigades of infantry under General W. F. Smith. Stuart demanded that he surrender. The demand was refused. Therefore, Stuart lobbed some shells into town and burned the Carlisle Barracks.

"When Stuart's men applied the torch to the Carlisle Barracks, the army post and the city were illumined by the flames shooting skyward. The houses of Carlisle were revealed as well as ... the parade ground of the post where so many of the Southern officers had served for previous hours of duty."⁸ But Stuart was needed by Lee. "About midnight, scouts returned with the news that the main army was at Gettysburg, and had been successfully engaged in combat during the day. Throughout the early morning hours of the second, the tired gray troopers rode toward Gettysburg; some engaged in a brisk encounter at Hunterstown."⁹

One of Stuart's officers, Colonel William Willis Blackford, met with General Lee on the second "to bring a report from the cavalry commander. Then he rode along the Confederate lines and through Gettysburg. He found his brother Eugene's battalion of skirmishers holding a group of brick buildings near Cemetery Ridge. They were firing from the back windows at the Union men. Being a cavalry man, it was the first time

⁷Schuricht, pp. 344-45.

⁸Roads From Gettysburg, John W. Schildt, 1979. Chewsville, Md., pg. 9 (hereafter, Schildt, Roads From).

⁹Ibid., p. 10.

Willis had witnessed street warfare. Leaving his horse with a courier he walked to a nice home and went upstairs. Holes had been knocked in the walls of adjoining houses so the men could move back and forth without hinderance. Beds and mattresses were propped against the walls to give added protection. The infantrymen were stripped to the waist and covered with black powder. Pools of blood marked the spots where some had fallen. Some who had been killed in action had not yet been removed."¹⁰

Not all of the Union cavalry was present on July second, either. Buford, who had fought very well on the first, was ordered to Westminster, and left before the afternoon battle of the second. "Kilpatrick's division of 3,500 officers and men was still miles away to the northeast of Gettysburg hurrying from East Berlin to join the other forces. ... Gregg, who was temporarily in command ... kept it in the area north and east of town. Around sundown Kilpatrick fought Stuart's three brigades at Hunterstown."¹¹ The cavalry would fight again the next day.

"It was the afternoon in the 2nd when Stuart, riding ahead, reached his anxious chief on Seminary Ridge ... tradition is that Lee said, 'Well, General Stuart, you are here at last.' -- that and little besides. "Need of the presence of the cavalry was shown immediately by a clash at Hunterstown, five miles Northeast of Gettysburg, between (General Wade) Hampton and a Union cavalry force (Kilpatrick's) which the Confederates believed to be moving against the rear of the Army. Because the Federals were driven off, Stuart reported that he had arrived 'just in time to thwart' a bold dash, and he believed from what he saw of the field, that Pennsylvania the next day would be opened to the Confederates through the defeat of the enemy."¹²

"To be prepared for whatever opportunities might come, Stuart sent word to the Ninth Virginia Cavalry, and perhaps to other regiments also, that he wished the men to remain in the saddle all night. Colonel Beale answered that he would comply cheerfully of course, but the limit of endurance of the men had been reached. Unless the troopers got rest, Beale tactfully intimated, neither they nor their horses would be fit for any service on the 3rd. The courier was instructed to say Beale was correct. Men had been seen, said Stuart, who had fallen asleep while their horses were trying to get over a fence. Tomorrow they might renew the battle. For the short summer night, they should have repose and renewal of strength."¹³

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16. ¹¹Ibid.

¹²Lee's Lieutenants, Vol. III, Gettysburg to Appomattox, Douglas Southall Freeman, 1944, Scribner's Song; N.Y. p. 139.

¹³Ibid., p. 139.

With Albert Jenkins wounded, not to return for several months, Colonel Milton J. Ferguson of the 16th Regiment Virginia Cavalry assumed command of the Brigade. During the one major battle in which Jenkins' Brigade would fight with Stuart's troopers, the Brigade would be led by a country lawyer from Wayne County (West) Virginia. Corporal Sansom and Private Morrison would be with Ferguson in this great struggle. They all may have slept fitfully that hot July night.

Friday, July 3 About 1 o'clock in the afternoon 150 guns of the Confederate artillery started the greatest cannonade ever made on this continent. For two hours there was a screaming thundering hell as the Confederates fired round after round into Cemetery Hill and the Union artillery answered. About 3 o'clock Major General George Pickett's Division, supported by Wilcox and Lang on the right and Pettigrew and Trimble on the left, moved toward the center of the Union line. Marching as in parade, 42 regiments with battle flags flying, 15,000 gray-clad infantry crossed the Emmitsburg Road headed for the "stonewall" and the "little clump of trees" defended by 10,000 blue-coated soldiers of Brigadier John Gibbon, Alexander Hays and Abner Doubleday, and 118 guns of well-placed artillery. About 150 men, led by Brigadier Lewis Armistead, leaped the stonewall. Armistead rested his hand on a Union cannon, raised his hat high in the air on the end of his sword to rally his men and dropped mortally wounded. Six thousand men badly beaten men fell back to the protection of their own lines. Gettysburg and Pickett are remembered for that deadly charge the high water-mark of the Confederacy, but the battle was not over.

About 2 o'clock "a less expensive but no less futile action (was) waged ... by the Confederate cavalry beyond Ewell's left flank"¹⁴ Stuart was trying to attack the Union positions from the rear. Success by Stuart might have allowed Pickett's charge to succeed also, but Stuart was intercepted by Brigadier General D. M. Gregg's troopers, including the "boy wonder," George A. Custer.

"Taking the three brigades of his command (Wade Hampton, Fitz Lee and Chambliss) and Jenkins' troopers, Stuart rode out in the morning on the York road for about two and a half miles beyond (east) of Gettysburg before turning off on a cross road to the right, which led him to Cress Ridge a mile away. The position controlled a wide area of cultivated fields stretching east toward Hanover and south to the frowning hills of the Union lines. With Stuart occupying it, Ewell's left and rear would be secure against attack, but more important, Stuart would obtain a view of the routes leading to the

¹⁴ Lee's Lieutenants, Vol. III, p. 163.

enemy's rear. If Lee could achieve his purpose in the Pickett-Pettigrew assault, Stuart knew that he would be 'in precisely the right position to discover it and improve the opportunity,' by spreading confusion in the Union rear and rounding up fleeing soldiers.¹⁵ There were no fleeing soldiers.

Lieutenant Schuricht describes the day briefly in his diary. "At 4 o'clock in the morning we mounted horses and, through fields and on by-roads, advanced to our extreme left, attempting to flank the enemy's army, and to cut off its way of retreat. Our sudden attack on their rear was a success, nearly fifteen minutes passed before they replied to the discharge of our artillery. For nearly an hour, the air was alive with shells -- we lost men and horses, and finally we changed position and dismounted to charge the enemy on foot. General Fitzhugh Lee commanded our left wing, Generals Hampton and William H. F. Lee (actually it was Chambliss acting commander), our centre, and Jenkins' Brigade formed the right wing. My company was ordered to the extreme right on the slope of the hill. Our opponents poured a rain of bullets and shells on us, but were forced slowly to fall back. We lost heavily - Lieutenant Allan, of our regiment (17th) was killed at my side. In the evening, General Hampton charged upon the Union cavalry, they could not withstand his attack, their line broke, and they fell back. It was a day of triumph for the Confederate cavalry, but unfortunate for the main force of our army, ended this third day of battle. The war of cannon and the rattling volleys of infantry fire had told us that desperate fighting was carried on along the entire line. The results and details of the struggle were not, however, positively known to us when we moved back towards Hunterstown and encamped on fields and meadows."¹⁶

It was not a complete Confederate victory, more likely a draw, but it accomplished a very important effect, it prevented the Union cavalry from cutting off Lee's line of retreat.

Stuart "had hoped to get to the top of Cress Ridge undetected, but unfortunately as he later charged, Hampton's and Fitz Lee's brigades bringing up the rear of the column debouched onto the open ground and disclosed his presence. Stuart blamed them unjustly, however, for their untimely arrival only confirmed an earlier discovery by watchful United States signal officers of large columns of cavalry moving towards the right of the Union line. Ther message wig-wagged to General Howard finally reached General Gregg by way of Cavalry Corps headquarters about noon."¹⁷

¹⁵Coddington, p. 520.

¹⁶Schuricht, p. 345-346.

¹⁷Coddington, p.521.

Stuart himself was guilty of clumsiness in his attempts at deception. His adjutant, Major McClellan related, "While carefully concealing Jenkins' and Chambliss' brigades from view, Stuart pushed one of Griffin's guns to the edge of the woods and fired a number of random shots in different directions, himself giving orders to the gun. This, quite as much on the subsequent appearance of Hampton and Fitz Lee in the open ground on the left, announced his position to the enemy's cavalry."¹⁸

McClellan speculates that Stuart may have been firing prearranged shots to notify General Lee that he had gained a favorable position (doubtful in view of the great cannonades being fired to the west), or, finding none of the enemy in sight, "he may have desired to satisfy himself whether the Federal cavalry was in his immediate vicinity before leaving the strong position he then held; and receiving no immediate reply to this fire he sent for Hampton and Fitz Lee to arrange with them for an advance and an attack upon the enemy's rear. In the meantime Lieutenant-Colonel Vincent Witcher's battalion (39th), of Jenkins' brigade, was dismounted and sent forward to hold the Rummel barn and a line of fence on its right."¹⁹

Stuart had not explained his plan of attack to his generals before starting this morning. He sent for his two senior brigadiers, but Hampton decided, on receipt of Stuart's message, that he and Fitz should not leave their position at the same time. By arrangements with Fitz, Hampton started out to find Stuart; Lee would go to "Jeb" when Hampton returned. This led to more trouble.

"On the morning of the 3rd several hours were consumed in replenishing the ammunition of the cavalry. Jenkins' brigade, commanded by Col. M. J. Ferguson, of the 16th Virginia Cavalry, was added to Stuart's command, but by some bad management was supplied with only ten rounds of cartridges to the man."²⁰ The artillery of "Breathed and McGregor had not been able to obtain ammunition, and were left behind, with orders to follow as soon as their chests were filled. Griffin's 2nd Maryland battery, which had never before served under Stuart, accompanied Jenkins and Chambliss."²¹

Hampton searched in vain for Stuart. "Returning he had been surprised to find that his Brigade was beginning a charge ordered by Fitz Lee"²² Hampton immediately countermanded what he considered an injudicious order and moved his men back to their

¹⁸I Rode with Jeb Stuart, H. B. McClellan, Civil War Centennial Series. Indiana Univ. Press, 1958, p. 338 (hereafter, McClellan).

¹⁹McClellan, p. 339. ²⁰McClellan, pg. 337.

²¹Ibid. ²²Coddington, p. 521.

former position. But the Federals were prepared to start the battle. A horse battery of the 2nd United States artillery started firing from near the house of Joseph Spangler. "The fire of these guns was most accurate and effective. The first shot struck in Griffin's battery, and shot after shot came with such precision and rapidity that Griffin was soon disabled and forced to seek shelter. The enemy now advanced a strong line of dismounted men against Colonel Witcher's position, overlapping his right. Witcher was reinforced by a dismounted squadron from Chambliss' command, which took position on his left, and the line was further extended in that direction by sharp shooters from Hampton's and Fitz Lee's brigades. The 2nd Virginia Cavalry held the extreme left. ... Witcher's battalion had been hotly engaged on the right, and so long as his ten rounds of cartridges lasted, he not only maintained his ground, but even gained on the enemy. The failure of his ammunition caused him to retire for a short distance just as the lines on his left closed in deadly fight. Here the charge of the Confederate sharpshooters was a success. The men sprang eagerly to their work, and the Federal line was driven back across the field for a long distance."²³

Up to this time no mounted men had been used by either side, "but now the enemy brought forward a body of cavalry which rode through the Confederate line, drove it back, and captured a number of prisoners. This Federal charge was continued nearly to the original line held by the Confederates at the Rummel barn, where it was met by Chambliss' brigade, aided by the 1st Virginia Cavalry.* The Federal cavalry was in turn forced back, but being reinforced, the tide was turned against Chambliss, and he was driven back to his starting point. Just then Hampton arrived ... and the battle was renewed back and forth across the plain until all of Hampton's brigade except the Cobb Legion, and all of Fitz Lee's brigade, except the 4th Virginia Cavalry, were engaged in the fierce hand to hand melee which followed. For many minutes the fight with sabre and pistol raged most furiously. Neither party seemed willing to give way. The impetuous attack of the Federal cavalry was, however, finally broken; both parties withdrew to the lines held at the opening of the fight. During this conflict the artillery on either side had participated so far as the safety of their own troops would permit. Breathed and McGregor had reached the field ... (and)... held their position until nightfall."²⁴

²³McClellan pp. 339-340.

*Most descriptions of the Confederate's fight were written by members of Stuart's Cavalry; Jenkins' brigade is mentioned usually in a negative fashion, but it did fight, possibly quite well.

²⁴McClellan, pp. 340-341.

After the war another conflict, a literary conflict, arose as to who won this battle, or who pushed whom the farthest down the field. We will never know. Union General Gregg set his losses at 295 killed, wounded or missing; General Custer at 542. But even the Confederates believed the Union losses for this one battle were much less, more like 30 killed, 147 wounded, and 67 missing, an aggregate loss of 252, not 837. Stuart stated his losses at 181, but this did not include Jenkins' brigade; Albert did not believe in paperwork.

The Battle of Gettysburg was over. The Confederates lost badly, but for Private Morrison, Corporal Sansom, Brigadier A. G. Jenkins, Major General Stuart and all of the cavalry, there would be nearly two more weeks of hard fighting, hard rides, hard rain and little rest. What had started as a grand adventure three weeks previously would now end with two agonizing weeks of defeat and victory as Lee's battered, but still powerful army slowly retreated southward down the Cumberland Valley and waited for the rain-swollen river to recede before they all could cross the Potomac again.

On the night of July 3, Lee withdrew his left wing from Gettysburg.



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A TRIO OF CONFEDERATE PRISONERS LOITERING ON THE BREASTWORKS

CHAPTER IV Aftermath of Battle

Nearly all of the available cavalry was now north of the Potomac. Brigadier General John D. Imboden would be given the task of escorting the wagon train of wounded back to Virginia. Brigadier W. E. Jones had moved up, defeating Wesley Merritt's brigade of the U.S. 6th Cavalry at Cashtown on July 3rd. Brigadier J. B. Robertson had arrived. There would be adequate cavalry to protect the army's flanks and rear as it moved south in retreat.

"The burial details and the ambulance crews were overwhelmed with work. They did their best, but there were too many dead and wounded. They were sickened by the stench of decaying bodies of men and animals, made worse by the heat of July."¹ "The Confederate hospitals were located on Rock Creek and along the Chambersburg, Mummasburg, Heidlersburg, and Fairfield Roads. Some were also being treated at Pennsylvania College, the Seminary, and in private homes within the town."² Local doctors threw open their doors to the wounded of both armies. When the Confederates withdrew to the South over 6,800 wounded were left behind to be cared for by the enemy.³

At the Carroll County Court House 3,500 Confederate prisoners marched through town on their way to Federal prisons. The Confederates carried 4,000 Union prisoners back to Virginia; 2,000 had already been paroled. Lee sent a flag of truce to Meade requesting that more prisoners be paroled. Meade refused, he wanted Lee to be forced to commit part of his troops to guard duty.

In three days of fighting, the Union Army of the Potomac had lost 23,000 officers and men; Lee's Army of Northern Virginia 20,450 officers and men. Many of the wounded and missing would die at later dates from wounds or disease contracted in prison.

A Union soldier, Robin Berkeley, was detailed to get some fresh water for his mates ... He rode five or six miles on the Shippensburg road trying to find water fit to drink. "Every house, shed, barn and hut were filled with wounded, dying and dead men. Could there be anything more sad and gloomy than a battle field. I think not."⁴

The long train of Confederate wounded started south on July 4th. General Imboden describes the agony and the difficulty of the wagon train of wounded.

"Shortly after noon the very windows of heaven seemed to have been opened. Rain

¹Roads From Gettysburg, John W. Schildt, Chewsville, Md., p. 19 (hereafter, Schildt, Roads From).

²Schildt, Roads From, p. 11. ³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 30.

fell in dashing torrents, and in a little while the whole face of the earth was covered with water ... The storm increased in fury every moment, canvas was no protection against it, and the poor wounded lying upon the hard, naked boards of the wagon-bodies were drenched by the cold rain. Horses and mules were blinded and maddened by the storm and became almost unmanageable. The roar of the winds and waters made it almost impossible to communicate orders; night was rapidly approaching and there was danger that in darkness the confusion would become 'worse confounded.'"

"About 4:00 p.m. the head of the column was put in motion and began the ascent of the mountain. The train was seventeen miles long when drawn out on the road. It was moving rapidly and from every wagon issued wails of agony ... In the wagons were men wounded and mutilated in every conceivable way. Some had their legs shattered by a shell or Minnie-ball; some were shot in the face, or a jagged piece of shell had lacerated their heads."

"Scarcely one in a hundred had received surgical aid; and many had been without food for thirty-six hours."

"Their ragged, dirty, and bloody clothes, all clotted and hardened with blood, were rasping the tender, inflamed lips of their gaping wounds. Very few of the wagons had even straw in them, and all were without springs. The road was rough and rocky. The jolting was enough to have killed strong, sound men. From nearly every wagon as the horses trotted along such cries and shrieks as these greeted the ears:

"My God! Will no one have mercy and kill me, and end my misery?"

"O God! Why can't I die?"

"Oh! Stop one minute, take me out and leave me by the roadside to die."

"I am dying! I am dying! Oh, my poor wife and children! What will become of you?"

"Some were praying, others were uttering the most fearful oaths and imprecations that despair could wring from them in their agony."

"Occasionally a wagon would be passed from which only low, deep moans and groans could be heard."

"No help could be given to any of the sufferers. On, on, we must move on."

"The storm continued and the darkness was fearful. There was not time even to fill a canteen with water for the dying man; for, except the driver and guards, disposed in compact bodies every half mile, all were wounded in that vast train of human misery."⁵

⁵Schildt, Roads From, pp. 30-33.



CHAPTER V

Roads from Gettysburg

Saturday, July 4 Stuart was given orders to hold the passes at Cashtown and Jack's Mountain, preventing Union cavalry from controlling the escape routes. Lee had the choice of staying and fighting again or retreating to Virginia. The army was still strong, even after its terrible beating, but Lee's decision was to withdraw.

Luther Hopkins of the Sixth Virginia Cavalry was grazing his horse about 4:00 p.m. on the 4th. Suddenly he and the other troopers heard "a low rumbling sound ... resembling distant thunder, except that it was continuous." One of the cavalymen pointed toward the battlefield and said, "Look at that will you!"

"... a number of us rose to our feet and saw a long line of wagons with their white covers moving ... along the Chambersburg Road." The Army of Northern Virginia was in retreat. "The wagons going back over the same road that had brought us to Gettysburg told the story, and soon the whole army knew the fact. This was the first time Lee's army had ever met defeat."¹

Albert Jenkins, wounded and replaced by Ferguson, and John R. Chambliss were to be with Stuart, under his direct command, and together they were to move toward Emmitsburg. Their purpose was to guard the left flank of the Army of Northern Virginia. Colonel Willis W. Blackford, Stuart's chief engineer was sent on ahead to scout the Emmitsburg area, because Federal troops were thought to be there.

"It was dark before Stuart passed the right of Lee's line. The rain was falling heavily."²

Lee, planning his retreat carefully and without hurry, specified the order of march and the departure time of every major unit. Lee now had the advantage of shorter lines to reach the Potomac than Meade, and Lee started his retreat almost a day before Meade could fathom what he (Lee) was doing.³

On the 4th Meade sent his cavalry to strike the enemy's rear so as "to harass and annoy him as much as possible in his retreat."⁴ Major General Alfred Pleasonton, commanding the cavalry, "succeeded in quickly spreading his cavalry over the countryside in pursuit of Lee's trains long before the Union infantry could get under way. His one mistake ... may have been that he scattered it too much."⁵

¹Schildt, Roads From, p. 28. ²Schildt, Roads From, p. 29.

³Coddington, p. 543. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid.

Lieutenant Schuricht of Jenkins' Brigade had a different view of July 4th. "At daybreak I was ordered to take charge of all members of the regiment (17th), whose horses were not in marching condition and needed shoeing. There were forty men to follow me and we started to find field forges, but in vain. We were sent from place to place, and at last I was told that they had been ordered to join the wagon train on the Chambersburg road ... This was the first information I received of the retrograde movement of our army. I resolved then to try Gettysburg, and passing the house where our wounded general was quartered, I enquired about his health, and also if Gettysburg was still in our hands. The general's adjutant laughed at my doubt, and we rode on. ... ascending the road to the city, we suddenly saw a large column of Blue-Coats before us. We were only about 100 yards apart, and I commanded to halt. Observing another large body of Federal infantry coming down hill on our left, I ordered my men to turn back. ... They (the Federals) had not advanced, evidently not knowing what to make of our approach, but a gun was fired on us from the top of the hill above the city... The adjutant hastened to remove our general to some place of safety. Following the road to Petersburg, we met General Stuart and his staff. He enquired where we came from, and if the Yankees were moving on, and upon my report, he turned off towards Cashtown. There was no escort to protect him, but he declined ours, seeing the condition of our lame horses. I took the same road and in a village we discovered a blacksmith shop. We helped ourselves and had the horses quickly shod. Fortunately we were not molested by the enemy. At night, stormy weather set in and we took refuge in a large barn."⁶

The cavalry ranged through the countryside, taking back roads, trying to out wit the enemy. Surprise him, or be surprised was the watchword. The exact route of Jenkins' Brigade is difficult to plot, but we know where the troopers were during flashes of time. They headed southwest from Gettysburg. Eventually the entire Army of Northern Virginia would re-cross the Potomac at Williamsport and at Falling Waters, about 5 miles down stream. But now, on July 4th the battle to get back to Virginia had just begun.

"During part of the late hours of the 4th and the early moments of the 5th, cavalry men of both sides rode up and down the road by the wagons, shooting and yelling at each other. Some of the Confederates expressed surprise that the Yanks were following so quickly. ... What a night it must have been. ... The wind is howling. The rain is falling ... a member of the Sixth Virginia Cavalry spent the entire night on a narrow road, with steep

⁶ Schuricht, pp. 346-347.

hills on either side. We had lots of cattle with us to feed the army. These got loose in the mountains ... and they were constantly bellowing. The bellowing of the frightened cattle, the flashes of lightening, and the crashing thunder made the night hideous in the extreme." Then at midnight Kilpatrick's cavalry struck them.⁷

Kilpatrick claimed to have destroyed all of Ewell's wagons, captured 1,500 prisoners, large numbers of horses, mules, and Negroes. This was a gross exaggeration, but it buoyed hopes in Washington.

Stuart disposed his cavalry as follows: General Fitz Lee with two brigades on the Cashtown road: "the remainder, Jenkins' and Chambliss', under my immediate command, was directed to proceed by way of Emmitsburg, Md., so as to guard the other flank."⁸

Sunday July 5 Stuart continues, "At dawn we entered Emmitsburg. We learned that a large body of the enemy's cavalry had passed through that point the afternoon previous, going toward Monterey (this was Kilpatrick)... I decided to ... proceed by way of Cavetown, ... In and around Emmitsburg we captured 60 or 70 prisoners of war, and some valuable hospital stores."⁹ The march was continued south for 6 or 7 miles, then turned west toward Cavetown. "Here I halted the column to feed, as the horses were much fatigued and famished. The column, after an hour's halt, continued ... to pass Catoctin Mountain. The road separated before debouching from the mountain ... I divided my command, in order to make the passage more certain — Colonel Ferguson, commanding Jenkins' brigade, taking the left road, and Chambliss' brigade, which I accompanied, the other. Before reaching the west entrance to the pass I found it held by the enemy, already posted. Our passage was finally forced. ... I ascertained too, about this time, by the firing, that the party on the other route had met with resistance, and sent at once to apprise Colonel Ferguson of our passage, and directed him, if not already through, to withdraw and come by the same route I had followed. ... I had just attacked the cavalry and Kilpatrick, who had claimed to have captured several thousand prisoners and four or five hundred wagons from our forces near Monterey; but I was further informed that not more than forty wagons accompanied them, and other facts I heard led us to believe the success was far overrated. ... I moved toward Leitersburg as soon as Colonel Ferguson came up, who, although his advance had forced the passage of the gap, upon the receipt of my despatch turned back and came by the same route I had taken, thus making an unnecessary circuit of several miles, and not reaching me until after dark."¹⁰

⁷Schildt, Roads From, p. 34. ⁸McClellan, p. 350.

⁹Ibid. ¹⁰McClellan, pp. 351-352.

Colonel Ferguson may not have been a great commander, but he and Corporal Sansom and trooper Morrison were fighting their way back to Virginia, whether Stuart approved of them or not.

On the 5th, Lieutenant Schuricht and his 40 followers took their newly shod horses down the Cashtown road, following General Fitz Lee. They were attacked by Gregg's Second Division of cavalry several times. By dawn of the 6th they had gone 30 miles, reaching Greencastle.

Monday, July 6 Imboden's train of wounded took thirty-four hours to pass any given point. The route was littered with broken wagons. Men were left to die by the roadside. From Greencastle to Williamsport was another 15 miles of agony, but the head of the train reached there in the afternoon. Imboden required every citizen in town to cook provisions for the wounded.

Not all of the wounded were riding in those jolting wagons. A pastor in Greencastle noted that most of those in the wagons were wounded below the waist; those wounded above the waist were forced to walk. Arms were swollen twice the normal size. "No one, with any feelings of pity, will ever want to see such a sight even once in a lifetime."¹¹

On the 6th Lieutenant Schuricht was still looking for Jenkins' Brigade. Stuart was commanding all of the cavalry attached to the Army of Northern Virginia. He sent "Grumble" Jones to Funkstown to cover the eastern front of Hagerstown. Chambliss' brigade proceeded direct from Leitersburg to Hagerstown along with Beverly Robertson's brigade, both reduced to a very small command. Leaving Jones' line of march at Cavetown, Stuart "proceeded with Jenkins' brigade by way of Chewsville towards Hagerstown. ... it was ascertained that the enemy was nearing Hagerstown with a large force of cavalry from the direction of Boonsboro, and Colonel Chambliss needed reinforcements. Jenkins' brigade was pushed forward, and arriving before Hagerstown found the enemy in possession, and made an attack in flank by this road. Jones coming up further to the left and opening with a few shots of artillery. A small body of infantry, under Brigadier General Iverson, also held the north edge of the town, aided by the cavalry of Robertson and Chambliss. Our operations here were much embarrassed by our great difficulty in preventing this latter force from mistaking us for the enemy, several shots striking very near our column. I felt sure that the enemy's designs were directed against Williamsport, where ... our wagons were congregated in a narrow space at the foot of the hill near the river, which was too much swollen to admit their passage to the south bank. I

¹¹Schildt, Roads From, p. 48.

therefore urged on all sides the most vigorous attack to save our trains at Williamsport. Our force was perceptibly smaller than the enemy's, but by a bold front and determined attack, with a reliance on that help which has never failed me, I hoped to raise the siege at Williamsport... Hagerstown is six miles from Williamsport, the country between being almost entirely cleared ... the two places connected by a lane - a perfectly straight macadamized road. The enemy's skirmishers fought dismounted from street to street...

"The cavalry, except the two brigades with General Fitz Lee, was now pretty well concentrated at Hagerstown, and one column, under Colonel Chambliss, was pushed directly down the road after enemy, while Robertson's two regiments and Jenkins' brigade kept to the left of the road, moving in a parallel direction to Chambliss. ... The first charge was gallantly executed by the leading brigade, the 9th and 13th Virginia Cavalry participating with marked gallantry. ... Jenkins' brigade was ordered to dismount and deploy over the difficult ground. This was done with marked effect and boldness, Lieutenant Colonel Witcher, as usual, distinguishing himself by his courage and conduct. The enemy, thus dislodged, was closely pressed by the mounted cavalry ... the repulse was soon converted into a rout by Colonel Lomax's regiment, the 11th Virginia Cavalry, which now took the road ... and with drawn sabres charged down the turnpike under a fearful fire of artillery.¹²

General Kilpatrick's 3rd Division was pretty well man-handled by Stuart's troopers on the 6th. The Federals lost about 400 officers and men that day; Stuart lost 254, exclusive of Jenkins' brigade, which as usual, offered no report. The men from Wayne County had fought well, however.

General Imboden, with his train of wounded, was sorely pressed by the Union cavalry under General Buford. Stuart prevented Kilpatrick's troops from joining Buford or the wagon train might have been destroyed. Fitz Lee with his two brigades fought well, but the wagon masters fought so well that the fight became known as the "wagoners' fight." Imboden was lucky. He had 10,000 animals and nearly all of the wounded of the Army of Northern Virginia. He also had most of the flour, cattle, sugar and coffee collected in Pennsylvania. One more bold charge by the Union cavalry would have swept his lines away.¹³

Lieutenant Schuricht was right in the middle of the fighting. "I marched to Hagerstown, Md. I was enjoying a delicious dinner at the Washington Hotel when one of my troop informed me that the enemy was in town. I called my men together ... and we

¹²McClellan, pp. 357-358.

¹³Schildt, Roads From, p. 83.

hastened to assist a small Confederate force. We came too late. Colonel Davis, commanding, had his horse killed, and was taken prisoner, and his men were falling back. Fortunately, a regiment of Confederate infantry (this was Colonel Iverson's troops) entered the city at this critical moment and we proceeded to drive the Yankees out of the city. They were in strong force, and skirmishing was kept up until half-past 5 o'clock when Jenkins' brigade came to our succor (they also were able to capture Colonel Davis' captors; he was freed and walked back to town). ... We encamped near Hagerstown."¹⁴

Tuesday, July 7 General Meade would start his infantry toward Maryland today. The cavalry would bear the brunt of the battles fought during Lee's retreat. The Federals' 1st and 3rd Division under Buford and Kilpatrick, had no more than 9,000 troopers available for front-line duty. On the Confederate side, Imboden had 2,100 men, plus 23 pieces of artillery, and 700 armed wagoners. Stuart, including Fitz Lee's and Jenkins' troops, had about 5,000 troopers. Two regiments from Early's division had joined Imboden giving him about 3,500 effectives. With 650 survivors of Iverson's infantry brigade, the two forces were about evenly matched: 9,000 Union troopers; about 9,150 Confederate soldiers.

This would be a good day for the wounded Confederates, a sad one for the Union prisoners. The ferry boats at Williamsport transported the wounded and 5,000 prisoners to Virginia across the Potomac. General Imboden escorted the prisoners to Staunton. The Yanks were permitted to eat a little wheat from the nearby fields.

The torrential rains continued to fall making life miserable for both the blue and the gray soldiers.

Wednesday, July 8 The rains stopped, the men of both armies wrung the water from their shirts and sox, and made fires to brew coffee. The ferry boats continued to take the wounded to the Virginia shore, returning with much needed ammunition. However, the River was too high and the transportation too sparse for Lee to risk withdrawing his entire army while under danger of attack by the Union forces. All he could do was wait.

Lieutenant Schuricht was in the thick of the fighting this day. "Early in the morning I received orders to report with my company to General Robert E. Lee's headquarters. The General was already waiting ... He directed me to attack the enemy's outposts whenever I should meet them, and to send a messenger to him in such an event. We had not advanced far when we saw a Federal vidette, and charged upon it. We surprised the outpost, killing two. I sent word at once to General Lee ... and soon after I received order

¹⁴Schuricht, p. 347.

to advance to the field of action in the direction of Boonesborough. The enemy made up a very strong force of cavalry, artillery and infantry. General Fitzhugh Lee attacked the left wing of the Federals, General Jones their centre, and Jenkin's Brigade was to fight the right flank. At 10 o'clock, and about two miles from Boonesborough, we came under the enemy's fire. We dismounted, and the whole brigade charged the enemy's position behind stone fences and in the woods, yelling almost like Indians. We drove them back about a mile, and held our ground, in spite of a terrible carnage of bullets and shells. At 7 o'clock I received order to slowly fall back, when the enemy made desperate efforts to cut us off in a defile near Antietam bridge, but got out of the scrape unhurt. ... On our side several officers and men had been killed. I lost three men, and my uniform jacket showed a bullet hole. When we fell back we had only two cartridges left for every man."¹⁵

"From the 8th to the 12th of July Stuart covered the front of Lee's army, which had now taken a strong position, and was securely entrenched while waiting for the waters of the Potomac to fall. These days were occupied by severe fighting between Stuart's command and the divisions of Buford and Kilpatrick, at Boonsboro, Beaver Creek, Funkstown, and on the Sharpsburg front. The cavalry fought mostly dismounted, and was aided on either side by small bodies of infantry. ... Stuart reports an aggregate loss of 216 in these engagements, while Generals Buford and Kilpatrick ... report a loss of 158. Stuart accomplished the object he had in view, which was to delay the enemy until General Lee was secure in his chosen position."¹⁶

Thursday, July 9 "Today, Meade's Army of the Potomac inched a little closer to Williamsport and the river. Robert E. Lee consolidated his lines from Downsville westward. Quite a few cavalry skirmishes took place. It was an exciting day for the folks in Beaver Creek, Funkstown, St. James, Williamsport, Fairplay, Keedysville and Rohrersville. Once again troops and the implements of war moved through their little communities."¹⁷

"At 7 o'clock in the morning (Jenkins' Brigade) again advanced towards Antietam, and lively skirmishing ensued. We fell back, fighting constantly. At 5 o'clock in the evening we were reinforced by a regiment of infantry, and our assailants were repelled. These bloody engagements, surely, are but preludes of battle."¹⁸

"General 'Grumble' Jones and his men engaged the troopers in blue on the Boonsboro Road at the Beaver Creek Bridge. The ground was too soft from the recent rains to

¹⁵Schuricht, p. 348. ¹⁶McClellan, pp. 363-364.

¹⁷Schildt, Roads From, p. 97. ¹⁸Schuricht, pp. 348-349.

permit cavalry sweeps, so the men fought on foot. Fitzhugh Lee, Chambliss and Hampton's troops, now commanded by Baker and horse artillery provided an exciting day for the blue cavalry.

"Jenkins advanced from the Williamsport Road and hit the Union forces on the flank, causing a withdrawal toward Tanner's Gap."

"Stuart then got word that large numbers of fresh Union cavalry were on the way. The Rebel ammunition was running low, and as Union artillery from the mountain commanded all approaches, Jeb gave the order to fall back toward Funkstown, with the exception of Jenkins' Brigade which was ordered to retire via the Williamsport Road."

"As the last gray cavalry unit was crossing the bridge over Beaver Creek, a squadron of bold Union cavalry galloped forward looking like it was going to charge. The first North Carolina waited for them to draw nearer, but they must have smelled a trap and veered off across the fields."¹⁹

Friday, July 10 "On July 10 the Army of the Potomac had no more than 80,000 officers and men available for combat, while Lee had at least 50,000 troops with which to confront them. This ratio of eight to five seemed to show Union arms as having an overwhelming advantage. In reality the Army of the Potomac, though inspired by victory, had lost much of its hitting power from excessively high casualties in veteran soldiers and officers, and Lee was heavily entrenched in a strong defensive position."²⁰

"Early in the morning, the first division of Major Pleasonton's Cavalry, three brigades commanded by Brig. Gen. Buford were dismounted and formed in line as follows: The reserved brigade, under Gen. Merritt, being on the right, the first under Col. Gamble in the center, and on both sides of the National pike, the second under Col. Devin, on the left. This line was supported by two sections of Tidballs' Light Horse Artillery. They advanced up the Boonsboro pike, driving the Confederate skirmishers before them and made a vigorous attack on Stuart's right (Jenkins' brigade), but were repulsed in fine style. Lt. Col. Witcher's 34th Battalion, who fought as dismounted cavalry, were posted behind a stone fence, on the Hauck farm, and sustained the brunt of this assault. These troops behaved gallantly and held their ground with unflinching tenacity."²¹

Killed and wounded in this engagement were 479 Union officers and men. Stuart lost 156.

¹⁹Schildt, Roads From, p. 101.

²⁰Coddington, p. 569.

²¹Schildt, Roads From, p. 109.

Jacob Stonebraker, a citizen of Funkstown where the battle was fought, watched the fight from the garret of a house. "The wounded were brought into town, and Mrs. Chaney's large dwelling was taken for a hospital. The surgeons had a table in the yard under some trees and amputated arms and legs like sawing limbs from a tree. It was a horrible sight."

"As fast as the wounded were dressed, they were carried into the house and laid on the floor in rows. The citizens administered to their wants; many died and their cries and suffering were distressing to behold. Simon Knode, an old Methodist deacon, added very much to the confusion as he prayed and sang to the dying."

"On Sunday, after the battle, some of our citizens buried the Confederate dead that had been left in the corn field just where they had died."²²

"General Stuart had succeeded in masking General Lee's main line until the entrenchments were completed."²³

Saturday, July 11 Lieutenant Schuricht reports on a quiet day. "At daybreak we again advanced about half a mile, to protect the infantry, throwing up a long line of zigzag rifle ditches and abattis. At noon we fell back to the rear of the infantry, and were ordered to the right flank of our line of battle, which, I am told, is to be commanded by General Longstreet. ... At 3 o'clock in the afternoon Jenkins' Brigade is drawn up in line of parade, and first an order of General Robert E. Lee was read, complimenting us on our good services before and during the battle of Gettysburg, and expressing his confidence that we will render similar good services in the impending battle. This was followed by a circular of General Stuart, stating that the cavalry, after having successfully checked the advance of the enemy, would be posted at the flanks of the army to take very active action in the coming battle. Any task entrusted to his men they are expected to fulfill, and officers and men must impress upon their minds that no wavering or giving away can possibly take place during the coming struggle. ... All of us were aware of the dangers surrounding us — the Potomac swelled by the heavy rains of the last few days, impeding our retreat, and the enemy's forces much larger than our decimated and almost exhausted regiments."²⁴

Sunday, July 12 Schuricht continues his diary. "The day was full of alarm and excitement. The news of the surrender of Vicksburg had reached us, and a report was

²²Ibid., p. 110.

²³Ibid., p. 111.

²⁴Schuricht, p. 349.

circulating that a strong Federal army was concentrating at Winchester, Virginia, to cut off our retreat. ... At three o'clock in the afternoon, our brigade received orders from General Fitzhugh Lee, to proceed to our left wing, between Hagerstown and Williamsport, and there we remained for the rest of the day and the following night, ready for action."²⁵ No attack ever came from Meade's army.

"At 3:00 p.m. that Sunday the wagons of the Army of Northern Virginia started to cross the swift and swollen river. But to ferry 4,000 wagons was a big job."²⁶

Monday, July 13 At 5:00 p.m. Pete Longstreet started the First Corps across the Potomac. A wagon went off the bridge and damaged it badly. It would be 9:00 a.m. on the 14th before all of the First Corps got across. And all the while it rained. "The dust that had accumulated by the passing of the armies on their march to Gettysburg was now a perfect bog, while the horses and vehicles sinking in the soft earth made the road appear bottomless. We would march two or three steps, then halt for a moment or two; then a few steps more, and again the few minutes wait. The men had to keep their hands on the backs of their file leaders to tell when to move and when to halt. The night being so dark and rainy, we could not see farther than 'the noses on our faces,' while at every step we went nearly up to our knees in slush and mud. Men would stand and sleep."²⁷

"General Pettigrew had the post of rear guard. He with his brave troops, beat back charge after charge of Kirkpatrick's Cavalry."²⁸ Pettigrew was aided by the cavalry which was dismounted into the trenches. Fitz Lee's brigade holding the line of Longstreet's command; Baker's (Hampton's) brigade that of Hill's Third Corps; and the remainder (including Jenkins' Brigade) held the line of Ewell's corps. The Confederates, knowing the cavalry was guarding their rear, allowed Kirkpatrick to approach too near, thinking they were friends. General Pettigrew was killed in the clash that followed.

Tuesday, July 14 By 8:00 a.m. the cavalry was across the River. They were back in Virginia. Home, but for Andrew and M. M. this was now a hollow word, West Virginia had joined the Union in June.

Jenkin's Brigade had spent one month, 30 hard days, in Maryland and Pennsylvania. They would continue to fight sporadic battles until the 22nd, but the great invasion of the North was over, and while the War would continue for nearly two more brutal years, the Confederate States of America were doomed to defeat after Gettysburg.

²⁵Ibid., p. 350. ²⁶Schildt, p. 121.

²⁷Schildt, Roads From p. 125. ²⁸Ibid.

Meade never received the credit he deserved for the Federal victory; Lee did not receive all of the criticism he may have deserved for the Confederate defeat. Jeb Stuart was roundly criticized by many who thought he should have done more to protect the northward-advancing Army; Longstreet was castigated for his extreme reluctance to take the offensive once the battle was joined.

Of the fifty-one general officers that crossed the Potomac into Maryland and Pennsylvania, seventeen would not return with their troops. Albert Jenkins was wounded and would not return to his brigade for nearly a year. Eleven colonels were killed or wounded. They had paid a terrible price.

On the 15th of July Lee wrote to his wife, "The army has returned to Virginia dear Mary. Its return is rather sooner than I had originally contemplated. ... We are all well. I hope will yet be able to damage our adversaries when they meet us, and that all will go right with us."²⁹

Corporal Sansom and Private Morrison were safely back in Virginia and ready to continue their war, also. Not all went right with them, but they survived the war and prison camp to old age in Wayne County. They had a right to their pride.

²⁹The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee, edited by Dowdy and Manarin, 1961, p. 551.

EPILOGUE TO GETTYSBURG

On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln said a few words at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg. In part he said:

"... We are met on a great battlefield of that war ... The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. ..."

I am sure that Andrew Sansom and M. M. Morrison must have agreed with Lincoln on at least this one issue. Amen!