

*Historical Notes* to accompany letter dated:

7/5/63: 085

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It is often said that the *Battle of Gettysburg* represented the "highwater" mark for the Confederacy in its rebellious efforts to establish itself as an independent and sovereign nation. If that is true, Cyrus Hardaway's letter written on July 5, 1863, two days after *Pickett's Charge*, must be considered the absolute low point in his entire military combat experience. Unlike all his earlier letters recounting the battles of the *Peninsular Campaign, Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville*, there is nothing that compares with his words from the *Gettysburg* battlefield, "I have been through one more terrible battle and thank God I am still safe and sound. But not so with my companions. Smith Haight is dead and Edwin Nelson is I am afraid mortally wounded . . ."

Since Hardaway's last letter dated June 16th, Berdan's Sharpshooters and the Army of the Potomac had continued their pursuit of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia in its invasion of the North. Always maintaining a position to the east of and between Lee and the nation's capital, the armies ultimately collided at the idyllic village of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863. Lee's cavalry had swept east after the engagement at Brandy Station and was unable to return to join Lee in time to give him adequate scouting and screening.

In late June, Lincoln had grown tired of and distrusted Hooker's judgment and on June 27th, Lincoln removed Hooker from his command of the Army of the Potomac. At almost the same time, Hooker resigned over a dispute regarding troop movements near Harper's Ferry. General George Meade was immediately appointed and assumed command of the Army of the Potomac; Meade's appointment represented the fifth change in that army's command in less than a year.

The Confederates were mildly successful on the first two days of battle but were unable to drive Meade from the well chosen Union positions. On July 3, 1863 the climactic engagement, *Pickett's Charge*, occurred. On July 4th, Lee was forced to retreat south into the Shenandoah Valley. Confederate losses were in excess of 28,000 while the Union acknowledged 23,000.