

## MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES



### *Loyal Legion Vignettes*



#### GETTYSBURG JULY 1963 PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

By

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**My honored predecessor, the late Clarence Edward Macartney, the author of many volumes on Lincoln and the Civil War, once wrote about "sacramental Gettysburg." John Richard Green, the author of that misnomer A Short History of the English People pronounced Gettysburg the most monumental battle in history. As the onetime president of Cornell and historian, Andrew D. White declared: "The battle at Gettysburg settled the question whether or not the government should be of the people, by the people, and for the people."**

**It was with stirred emotions that many of us went to Gettysburg on the memorable occasion of the centennial of the battle, which lifted a small, hitherto obscure Pennsylvania county seat town into world renown and everlasting fame. Some years ago in his academy in Paris, Raymond Duncan, picturesquely attired in the garb of an ancient Greek as his daily costume, the brother of the celebrated dancer, Isidora Duncan, spoke with me concerning his extensive genealogical research, inquiring about the location of Adams County, Pennsylvania, where he had learned that some of his antecedents had resided. He was much intrigued when he learned from me that it is the county of which Gettysburg is the county seat. Few persons could tell you about Adams County. Every intelligent person could supply some information about Gettysburg.**

**Sir Edward Shepherd Creasy produced his Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World in 1851, too early to have included Gettysburg. Only one American battle, Saratoga, was treated. As one reviews some of the battles Creasy describes, he is impressed how meager would be the knowledge most persons could impart concerning the battles of ARBELLA, CHALONS, METAURUS, and PULTOWA. Yet it is**

likely everyone could tell you something about Gettysburg.

In my early years I had been entranced by the reading of the volumes published by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania dealing with the monument dedications at Gettysburg and, in particular, the reunion of the surviving participants at the fiftieth anniversary of the battle in 1913. It is remarkable that three of our members, Dr. Robert J. Hunter, Colonel Charles McKnight and Colonel Noel Bleecker Fox, who were present at Gettysburg this July, had been present in 1913 and 1938.

What a galaxy of luminaries were present then! Among them were the controversial General Daniel E. Sickles; Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison, whose father and maternal grandfather were Camden and Philadelphia clergymen; Henry L. Stimson, destined to serve as Secretary of State during World War II; Thomas R. Marshall, the Vice President of "good five cent cigar" fame; Congressman J. Hampton Moore, later Philadelphia's mayor; Barry Bulkley, who was the son of Dr. John Wells Bulkley, the young physician who was first to reach Lincoln's side following the assassination and who read the Gettysburg Address; John K. Tener, the onetime star on the baseball field, who was the Pennsylvania governor; Governor James M. Cox, of Ohio, who several years later was to be a candidate for the presidency; Speaker Champ Clark of the House of Representatives.

In that still formal era and despite the intensity of the heat most of the speakers appeared with high silk hats, wearing cutaways and frock coats.

On July 4, President Wilson, clad in a Prince Albert, addressed the multitude in the big tent. Like Lincoln, his speech divulged his knowledge of the Bible, as there fell from his lips such phrases as "stricken in years" and "we contend not with armies but with principalities and powers and wickedness in high places." Little perceiving what the following year 1914 and the years ensuing immediately thereafter would bring in crisis, he declared, as he turned from the old soldiers, whose day had turned into evening, "Our day is not over; it is upon us in full tide."

In 1938 at the seventy-fifth anniversary, while some veterans of the conflict still tarried on the earth, Dr. Joseph Fort Newton, a familiar and esteemed figure at our Philadelphia meetings, delivered a commemorative sermon and with great brilliance and superb poetry conjured the glory and pathos of Gettysburg.

What of the events in the year 1963 in the town where prior to the Revolution Scotch-Irish and German strains intermingled. Under a broiling sun from whose heat nothing was hidden we stood at the Peace Monument as our own General Milton G. Baker of Valley Forge Military Academy presided. With admiration we heard Wm. Buchanan Gold, Jr. and Brooke M. Lessig, with a dignity, felicity of speech, and eloquence befitting the hour, represent our organization. With ringing voice, Pennsylvania's Governor Scranton delivered the principal address.

The dinner at the historic hotel in the center of town was a notable event. At the speaker's table, among others, was Postmaster General J. Edward Day, who resigned his post a few days later and who revealed himself in our conversation as an avid genealogist. Seated next to me was Robert E. Lee, IV of San Francisco, the great grandson of the general and next to him was George Gordon Meade, IV, great grandson of the Union general. Participating in the program was the Reverend David B. Birney, III, an Episcopal rector in Allentown, Pa., the great grandson of General David Bell Birney, the Philadelphia lawyer who was a native of Alabama, son of the antislavery champion, James Gillespie Birney and who in October 1864 returned to his home on Race Street smitten with malaria, dying a few days thereafter.

An interesting feature of Tuesday's parade was the procession of descendants of the generals. In addition to those previously mentioned were descendants of the Confederate General Henry Heth of Virginia, who was a cousin of George E. Pickett and Clay Early, arrayed in Confederate uniform and bearded and a member of the family of the line of General Jubal B. Early.



Writing of the presence of descendants, General Meade's own granddaughter and other great grandchildren of the Philadelphia general, who was born in Spain, were at the Loyal Legion dinner. One of our members, Edward Breed, who was present, is a direct descendant of Jonathan Edwards, probably the greatest intellectual America has produced and surely the greatest metaphysical mind in our history.

In 1913 Pickett's grandson, a son and grandson of General Longstreet as well as Miss Henrietta Meade, General Meade's own daughter, were honored guests.

At Gettysburg College campus where I was entertained, it was my privilege to meet a Mr. Tyler, a young Richmond attorney, and member of the Virginia Civil War Commission. He is the grandson of President John Tyler (1790-1862) who was our nation's leader twenty years prior to the Civil War and at his death in 1864 was a member from Virginia in the Confederate Congress. Young Mr. Tyler is the son of the late Dr. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, the child of the President's second marriage. Dr. Tyler was president of William and Mary College from 1888 to 1919, also being distinguished as a genealogist.

We missed the distinguished presence of General Ulysses S. Grant, III, who was at the Vicksburg commemoration and who brings not only descent but actual, personal memories of his great forefather and many other celebrities of the American scene into our assemblages.

One of the interesting personages, with whom I renewed acquaintance, was Dr. Louis C. Warren of Fort Wayne, Indiana and long the chief research historian in the vast repository of Lincoln lore at the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company. Dr. Warren was guest speaker at our Chicago meeting a few years ago. Dr. Warren is a minister of the Disciples Church and while serving a pastorate not far from Lincoln's birthplace in Kentucky, delved deep into the memorabilia of the sixteenth president and thus came to his long time post. Dr. Warren in our conversation spoke of a visit, which he had over forty years ago in Kentucky from the late Dr. Henry Merle Mellen, long the recondite minister of the First Presbyterian Church, Atlantic City, New Jersey, and who by his wide reading, imposing presence, and oratorical power profoundly impressed me in my early youth. Among the many facets of Dr. Mellen's scholarly interests was Lincoln. Dr. Warren escorted him to the scenes of Lincoln's earliest years and photographed him as he stood musing before a pond, where the boy Lincoln is reputed narrowly to have escaped death. Lincoln's hour had not yet come then as it had not struck during his first inaugural when Greeley feared the ceremonies would be interrupted by the crack of an assassin's pistol.

The parade on Tuesday afternoon in its picturesque first division was an amazingly realistic reproduction of the Civil War era, with its men in blue and gray, its wagons and horses and mules, against the background of Gettysburg's principal street. One was given the marked impression that he was there in 1863. The parade was led by a towering figure, walking alone, and quite vividly impersonating Lincoln.

Lincoln impersonators constitute a somewhat fascinating study. Dr. Warren told me that in Fort Wayne there is an entire file on this never ending stream of persons, simulating Lincoln on public occasions. Foremost among them was a New York clergyman, the Rev. Lincoln H. Caswell.

In the parade was a considerable company wearing the insignia of the Bucktail regiment, which had been largely recruited among the lumbermen of the northern tier of Pennsylvania counties. They had been commanded by General Thomas Leiper Kane of Kane, father of the noted surgeon, who twice operated on himself. General Kane had been incapacitated earlier but was near the scene of action, helping to direct his forces from the chair of his temporary invalidism. Meanwhile he had given command to Colonel George Ashworth Cobham, scion of a noble English family, who in the early nineteenth century had come from England and erected a castle in a heavily forested area of Warren

County. Calhoun was killed fifteen months later at the Battle of Peach Tree Creek in Georgia. Having in my childhood known officers and members of the Bucktail regiment, who fought at Gettysburg brought the event of a century past much closer to me.

During the parade I stood near the historic Presbyterian Church, where the wounded had been conveyed after the battle and where Lincoln had attended a service on the day of the cemetery dedication. President Eisenhower is now a member there. The minister there forty years ago was the eminent scholar, Dr. W. Childs Robinson, now of the Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia and who on Easter, 1945, at Warm Springs preached the last sermon heard by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Near me stood the man who impersonated Lincoln, after he had concluded his line of march at the parade's head.

Earlier that day I revisited many of the shrines of history. It is an interesting phenomenon that battles have often lifted into significance edifices and sites otherwise unnoticed. At Gettysburg there is the famed Peach Orchard, occupied by General Sickles and his men. History has at least two other widely known orchards, Anton Chekhov's early twentieth century drama, *The Cherry Orchard*, and an olive orchard, which is hallowed for time and eternity as Gethsemane. Gettysburg has its wheatfield, once drenched in blood but perchance an augury of the day when swords will be beaten into ploughshares.

There is Splangler's Spring, a brook by the way for the refreshing of men in blue and gray. There are the several farm houses commandeered by the officers such as the Leister farm, which Meade used as headquarters.

I remember standing one summer day at Waterloo in Belgium and noting the two farmhouses used by the British and henceforth immortalized: the Hougomont farm and the smaller structure, La Haye Sainte. There are other parallels between the 1815 battle in which Wellington's army brought defeat to Napoleon and that at Gettysburg. In both instances the opposing armies were drawn up on two parallel ridges, separated solely by a very shallow valley. Gettysburg has its Cemetery Ridge and Seminary Ridge, the latter so named from the Lutheran Theological Institution, whose main building was used by General Lee as his watchtower and whose present president, Dr. Donald Heiges appropriately participated in Monday exercises.

Waterloo is unlike Gettysburg in that her tumult has found depiction in two of the classic novels of the later nineteenth century, namely, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. It remains for some future novelist to produce the magnum opus, which will contain a portrayal of Gettysburg.

Near the center of the town stands the quaint railway station, the same structure which was there in 1863 and at which Lincoln alighted to deliver his address. What history, both personal and national is attached to depots! 'Ve know how the closing scenes of Count Leo Tolstoi's career transpired in a Russian station. Someone should write a volume about the famous depots of history. We have them in our own personal histories.

During my brief visit I took occasion to visit the David Wills house opposite the hotel, where Lincoln was entertained and polished his speech. There one is awed in the darkened, dimly illumined chamber to be greeted by an almost eerie wax effigy of the martyred president. Hard by the battlefield is the house where the sole civilian casualty, Jennie Wade, met her end as the result of a stray bullet. Not far away is the house of her birth. I was conducted to the cellar, where her body was removed from the kitchen, where she fell while baking bread in the household of her sister, who was confined with a newborn child. That child, having reached over his three score and ten allotment of years, died some years ago in Billings, Montana, far away from the tragic scenes attendant upon his entrance into life.

Surely the most dramatic natural setting on the battlefield is Devils Den, whose cavernous defile



became a veritable fortress for the confederate sharpshooters and whose walls of rocks constituted a morgue for the rotting corpses of the slain. Of all the statuary, the most striking and spectacular is the figure of General Gouverneur Kemble Warren, a onetime West Point professor of mathematics, set upon the natural base of rocks on the eminence of Little Round Top.

The heat, overwhelming though it was, was peculiarly reminiscent of the battle days and of the equally horrendous days that followed, when thirty-five thousand wounded remained to be nursed and thousands of putrefying bodies thronged the roads and fields, while swarms of flies were allured by the pervasive filth and decay, and the area for miles hovered under the repelling, ghastly and poisonous stench of death.

What an array of illustrious generals foregathered on that field! Peruse the roster of both armies and find among them: Oliver O. Howard, for whom the university is named and who in later years was heard in many pulpits; Abner Doubleday, of baseball fame; Winfield S. Hancock, who was an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency; Fitzburgh Lee, who was heard from again in the Spanish American War; J. E. B. Stuart; J. D. Imboden; Henry W. Slocum; John White Geary, who died in office as Pennsylvania's governor in 1873; Carl Schurz of St. Louis, honored for his work on Civil Service reform, and such exotic names for that day in America as General Alexander Schimmelfennig, Walter Krzyzanowski, Leopold von Gitsa. Among the casualties of Gettysburg was a son of the Scottish missionary and explorer in Africa, David Livingstone. It is noteworthy that of no war have the generals become so widely known and studied, especially with reference to their biographies, as those of the Civil War.

I was impressed anew by the varied groups, who have been captivated by the study of Gettysburg and the entire Civil War period. In a sightseeing bus traversing the battlefield I conversed with two young employees of the B.O.A.C., who had flown over from London to be present and commuted daily from their hotel in Harrisburg. They are members of a Civil War study group in the British capital. Returning by bus to Philadelphia, I conversed with an exceptionally bright senior from one of Philadelphia's Roman Catholic high schools. Of Italian and Austrian descent, both of his parents being second generation Americans, he is an ardent and intelligent devotee of Civil War history.

I left Gettysburg in the twilight of that commemorative July 2, aware that all of the centennial observance would not be finished in the opening days of this month. November holds a date of equal import, the nineteenth. The name Gettysburg has gained as much renown from the imperishable speech as from the battle. Speaking at the Gettysburg Reunion in 1913, Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis of Plymouth Congregational Church, Brooklyn, said: "Edward Everett's lengthy oration was a bushel of diamonds carefully polished. Lincoln's brief speech was a handful of seed corn that has sown the world with the harvest of history. The greatest thing about the battle of Gettysburg is that it made possible the speech of Lincoln that has changed the history of liberty for all time to come."

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