

Washington, D. C., December, 1892

Hon. Fitz Hugh Lee

My Dear General:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 15th instant, in which you propound certain questions regarding the battle of Gettysburg viz.

"1st. The distance from the place where Picketts Division formed to the place where it assaulted the union line of battle."

2nd. "How far had they moved before getting under fire?"

3rd. "What troops first awaited them, -- what was their number, and about what was the whole Federal force available, and which could have been used promptly for their repulse", also "was there any time during the 2nd and 3rd days encounter when the Federal left could have been assaulted with any chance of success?"

I will give you my views upon this subject cheerfully.

Struckout

(Though I must do so in the absense of all data.)

Picketts Division was formed on the morning of July 3d in two lines of battle which ran diagonally to the union position which they assaulted, with Kemper's and Garnett's Brigades in the front line.

This line lay during the cannonade that proceeded the charge, with the right of Kemper 1860 yards, the left of Garnett 1160 yards, and the center of Armistead 2660 yards from the Union line.

A ridge, along which runs the Emmittsburg Road, and behind which General Pickett formed his Division, and on which several battalions of confederate artillery were placed, lay between the two armies.

As Pickett's Division advanced over this ridge, the left of his line became first exposed, the Division coming under fire at an average of 1100 yards from the union position.

Struck

I have no maps or other data here with which to verify this statement.

The Codori farm buildings on the Emmittsburg Road lay directly in the line of March, and to a certain extent covered the Troops from the fire of the union infantry, although the charging line was enfiladed by the line of Hazlett's battery on Little Round Top.

When the front line reached these buildings, Kemper's brigade passed to the South, while Garnett's brigade went to the North of them.

Kemper's advance was resisted by the Sixteenth Vermont infantry deployed as skirmishers, commanded by Colonel Wheelock E. Veazey now a member of the interstate commission, and by detachment from Harrow's and Hall's brigades.

Garnett's command was met on the skirmish line by two companies of the one hundred and sixth Pennsylvania of Webb's brigade, and, detachments from Hall's brigade, all of which after a short but sharp encounter were brushed away.

As Kemper's brigade continued to advance, it was met by the direct fire of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Vermont of Stannard's brigade, also by two advance regiments of Rowley's brigade, by Harrow's and a portion of Hall's brigade of infantry and by Brown's, Rorty's, Fitz Hugh's and Parsons' batteries of artillery, and also by the oblique fire of Daniels', and Thomas' batteries, by McGilvery's artillery brigade, and by Hazlett's Regular battery on Little Round Top.

Cordori's buildings having been passed in order to close the line, and while still under this terrible front and flank fire, Kemper's brigade closed, closed to its left by a flank movement while within less than four hundred yards of the union lines.

The Thirteenth Vermont Regiment left its position and made a corresponding movement to its right by the flank.

When Kemper's Brigade again united with Garnett's Brigade, it changed direction to its Right, and the two brigades advanced to the Stonewall, followed by Armistead's Brigade in the Second line whose men mingled with Garnett's and Kemper's men at the wall while joining Heth's Division in line on Pickett's left. The two commands advanced, Pickett's Division upon Webb's Brigade, while Heth's command charged Hays' Division.

Webb's Brigade was formed with the Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania and a detachment of the Seventy-First Pennsylvania lying behind a stonewall, while the remainder of the Seventy-First lay sixty yards to the right and rear behind another stonewall bringing this rear line in echelon with the front line.

Cushing's regular battery was on the crest in rear of the left wing of the Seventy First Pennsylvania, and on a line with the right wing of that Regiment, and to its left, while the Seventy-Second Pennsylvania was held in reserve under the crest of the ridge, to the left and rear of Brown's Battery, which was on Cushing's left. Subsequently Cowans' New York Battery relieved Brown's battery and partially covered the position previously occupied by Cushing's battery whose commander had been killed and his guns dismounted.

When the confederate line charged the union troops at the stonewall, the advance detachment of the Seventy-First Pennsylvania having no connection on its right and being threatened by Heth's Division fell back and formed behind the rear stonewall and united with the remainder of the Regiment except a detachment serving on two guns of Cushing's Battery which in the meantime had been run down to the front wall, and the Seventy-Second Pennsylvania was ordered up to fill the gap.

As Pickett's Division advanced large numbers of Kemper's men sought shelter behind some rocky bush-covered knolls, others advanced with Garnett's Brigade and threw themselves behind the wall, (General Garnett was killed, killed within twenty-five feet of it) where they engaged in a hand to hand conflict with the Sixty-Ninth Pennsylvania, which continued to hold its own.

Armistead's Brigade following with Heth's Division joining on its left came quickly up to the support of Garnett's men with whose they mingled, and when they halted at the stonewall, General Armistead, drawing his sword for the first time, placed his hat on its point, and raising it as he sprang over the wall, cried, "Boys we must use the cold steel, who will follow me?" A few score men followed him over the wall, and

five including Lt. Colonel Martin of the Fifty-Third Virginia continued up the slope towards the Seventy-Second Pennsylvania some fifty yards, when both Armistead and Martin were shot down; Martin shot through the body, and General Armistead to die. While lying on the ground General Armistead, gave the grand hailing sign of a Mason in distress, and Colonel Banes General Webb's Assistant Adjutant General (Now President Market St. Bank Philadelphia) detailed three men to bring him in. He fell 33 yards from General Webb's line on the Ridge, and on being brought in surrendered his sword and pistol to Colonel Banes, by whom he was sent to the rear. He was met by Captain Bingham judge advocate on General Hancock's Staff, now a member of Congress from Philadelphia, (himself wounded) who told him his official rank, and proffered his assistance, whereupon General Armistead requested Captain Bingham to take his watch and spurs and other affects with the request that General Hancock send them to his family, which was done.

General Armistead was taken to a Division Hospital of the Eleventh Army Corps. in charge of Dr. Brinton and put in care of Surgeon Van Annon of a New York Regiment.

At the moment when General Armistead's men broke over the stonewall General Hancock was riding past the left of the second line of Hall's Brigade, when Colonel Deveraux of the Nineteenth Massachusetts regiment ran to him and asked permission to take his command to General Webb's assistance, which was granted, and the Forty-Second New York and the Ninettenth Massachusetts charged up and attacked Pickett's men as they attempted to come over the wall, and these regiments were followed by all the remaining regiments of Hall's and Harrow's brigades and by the Twentieth New York Militia, & 8th N. Y. Vols, and One Hundred & Fifty-First Pennsylvania, of Rowley's brigade.

At the time when Kemper's brigade united with Garnett's brigade after crossing the Emmittsburg Road, and while both were advancing to attack Webb's brigade the Thirteenth Vermont which had followed Kemper's movement by a flank between the lines of battle "changed front forward on first battalion", and joined on the left by the Sixteenth Vermont (which had rallied from the skirmish line and coming up extended the lines across Kemper's flank into the apple orchard near the Codori buildings) opened fire into Kemper's right flank at a distance of less than 100 yards.

The Eighth Ohio, First Massachusetts Sharpshooters, and a detachment of the One Hundred & Twenty-Sixth New York, (the later under Captain Armstrong, now of the Indian School at Hampton, Virginia), formed across the left flank of Heth's Division, and Longstreet's whole assaulting column found itself within a vortex of fire, through which it was impossible to advance and difficult to retreat. Thousands fell dead or wounded, or surrendered themselves prisoners of war, and Longstreet's assault, one of the grandest recorded in history was repulsed!

Pickett's Division, (not including Heth's on its left) was met by seventeen regiments of infantry and fourteen batteries of artillery.

Your question asking the number of the force that met Pickett's Division, I am not prepared to answer, not having yet given that part of the subject sufficient attention to do so to my own satisfaction.

I could readily learn from the morning reports of June 30th, the number reported for that date, but it should be borne in mind that a terrible battle had intervened, fought on the

second of July, in which every one of these regiments participated, and that in many of them the losses were very heavy, which added to those who embraced the opportunity to go to the rear with a wounded comrade and failed to return until the battle was over, would make the number present on the third instant very uncertain.

Regarding the success of a flank movement to embrace the union left, I have always regarded the result of such an evolution as very uncertain, although it was a subject of anxiety. But Stannard's Brigade and the entire third Corps coming up on left covered it the first evening, and it was Hancock's first thought on the evening of the first day as he was returning to TaneyTown. Meeting the Second Corps coming up he directed General Gibbon, in command, to halt one mile before reaching Round Top, where the men lay on their arms for the night, with skirmishers and videttes thrown well to the front to give timely notice of such a movement. Geary's Division lay only a mile away and near that the entire Third Corps which had come up, and both would have been available for supports.

On the evening of the Second, Longstreet did not arrive until half past three, and had such a movement been attempted then, the union flank could not have been reached until 5:00 o'clock, even had this movement been unobstructed. Whereas the Second United States Sharpshooters had already been deployed in front of the union left in anticipation of such a move.

The entire Fifth Army Corps lay massed on Rock Creek, but a mile and a half in rear of Round Top, and at 2 P.M. General Sedgewick arrived with the Sixth Corps and halted between the Fifth Corps and Round Top, both of which would have been available, and in addition to this, General Longstreet could

not have executed such a movement without presenting his flank to the Third Army Corps, in position west, and in front of Round Top, of which evolution the Second United States Sharpshooters would have given General Sickles timely notice with such a force on the ground ready to resist a flank movement its chance of success would not have been good. On the third day Kilpatrick's Cavalry was moved to that flank, and Merritt's Brigade of Regular Cavalry arrived and formed on his left, for the express purpose of watching Longstreet's right.

I have added many details for which you may have no use, and that which I send you in off hand without data of any kind for reference.

I have the honor to be,

Very truly yours,

A post script in pencil as follows;

I am almost ashamed to send this Ragged letter but I know what you desire in the matter and not the finish, and I am overwhelmed with work.